

U.S. Department of Education
2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Owen Harrington
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Dunbarton Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 20 Robert Rogers Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Dunbarton State NH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 03046-4808

County Merrimack County

Telephone (603) 774-3181 Fax (603) 774-3186

Web site/URL https://www.dunbarton.k12.nh.us/ E-mail oharrington@desnet.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Dean Cascadden E-mail dcascadden@bownet.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Dunbarton School District Tel. (603) 224-4728

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Clement Madden
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	19	11	30
1	22	19	41
2	17	13	30
3	23	17	40
4	15	11	26
5	16	19	35
6	26	13	39
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	138	103	241

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.2 % Asian
 - 0.1 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 91.7 % White
 - 4 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: ≤1%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	2
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	241
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %

Total number students who qualify: 27

8. Students receiving special education services: 18 %

43 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>5</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>12</u> Developmental Delay | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>10</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 7

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	97%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2019.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

The SAU 67 mission statements are "Care for each person every day. Teach to touch the future. Learning is our focus." The DES motto is "DES: Where eaglets learn to soar."

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

PART III - SUMMARY

Dunbarton Elementary School (DES) is a true community school. At DES we take great pride in being the jewel of a town of roughly 2,800 people. As such, we share much of ourselves with the inhabitants. Our gymnasium/cafeteria is used as the Dunbarton Community Center for town meetings, community suppers, and PTO events. This interface between the town and school is a good representation of the close-knit community. Every year, for Veteran's Day, we invite our town Veterans to a breakfast hosted by the students, who then shake each Veteran's hand individually. This is who we are.

From a socioeconomic perspective, Dunbarton is in the enviable position of having a median household income of \$106,800.00. Many of the residents have at least some college experience, and roughly 36% of residents have a Bachelor's or Master's degree (Niche.com, April 2020). Our community values education, and understands that having a superior school is an asset. Just two years ago a major renovation project overwhelmingly passed during the Dunbarton School District meeting with little-to-no pushback.

The students at DES learn from their first day in kindergarten that they are members of a school community. They learn quickly that they have a voice, that they all matter, and that they are all members of a collective. We stress the importance of community here, and have chosen the theme of "Empathy" as a school credo. Our Empathy Committee meets regularly, devising various lessons and school wide activities. DES students are able to define what empathy means to them, because we remind them every day of its meaning. We all want our students to understand and value the importance of empathy for their individual success and for the success of their generation and the world at large.

We have made it our focus to individualize education for each child. With that goal in mind, we have instituted many programs such as Responsive Classroom, the CAFE model of teaching literacy, Guided Reading, Lucy Calkins Writing, enVisionmath 2.0, and Mystery Science.

More important than the programs is the use of professional development for educators to stay on the cutting edge of current teaching practices. This year classroom teachers partook in a year-long professional development series with nearby Bow Elementary School, during which educators were engaged in learning more about 21st century skills in the teaching of mathematics. In this classroom teaching lab, staff members observed a math expert infusing current best practices into mathematics instruction. There was ample opportunity after each lesson to engage with one another and the expert about what worked in the lesson and why. The willingness to be better educators by striving to do our best has reaped immediate results in the DES classroom.

Professional development like this is emblematic of our ethos that "the education of each child matters." The focus is not on leveled instruction; to the contrary, it is on learning--and giving each child purchase in that process. We have a vibrant intervention and special education program at DES. Often those staff members can be found collaborating in a classroom, providing consultation to a fellow educator, or team-teaching a lesson. Although intervention and special education students often receive small-group or individualized instruction, the focus is on classroom learning and making sure the student is able to access his or her learning in the least restrictive environment.

Perhaps the best representation of DES has been the process of updating our school motto during the 2019-2020 school year. Each classroom teacher allowed their students the opportunity to create a new motto, which we then compiled into a list of draft mottoes. We then invited students, staff, parents, and community members the opportunity to rank each one. It came down to 10 mottoes, from which an executive board of students (chosen by their peers) selected the new motto. Our school mascot is the eagle, so the students chose: "DES: Where eaglets learn to soar." We live by this motto-- so much so that, every time a person enters our school, the first thing they see is a large, colorful mural, created by our students, with our motto front-and-center. Not only does the theme of the motto resonate throughout the building, but every student at DES has had a hand in creating it, figuratively and literally. It is a beautiful sight and it is the perfect representation of who we are and what we stand for. DES: Where eaglets learn to soar!

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

Dunbarton Elementary School (DES) is a member school of SAU 67. At the SAU level, we have created our curricular scope and sequence based on the Common Core. We have broken these curricular areas into various competencies. Through the use of competencies, we are able to break down our learning goals into manageable pieces that each educator is able to focus on when teaching, and, as such, easily be able to determine if a student is truly learning the core focal points of each curricular area.

We also use a home-grown, well thought out, and systematic approach to the vetting of new programs to meet our curricular needs. We most recently used this system when we selected our current mathematics program: enVisionmath 2.0. Part of this approach is the use of a tool created by our Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment which allows us to fully vet a program, determining its effectiveness at both the national and local level.

The major goal of the overall curriculum at DES is that each child be given the opportunity to learn to the best of his or her potential. We strive to meet this goal by the aforementioned competencies as well as the vetting tool as well as the use specific and targeted professional development to ensure educators at our school engage in current best practices in education.

This is achieved through district-lead academies, summer work, and outside professional development opportunities. Overall, the curricular approach is the understanding that both students and educators are lifelong learners.

1b. Reading/English language arts

At DES, we use three approaches (Guided Reading Instruction, as defined by Fountas and Pinnell; The Daily CAFE Model for Reading; Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Writing) to define the backbone of our Reading and English/Language Arts learning opportunities. We use these strategies in an effort to ensure that instruction and learning opportunities are consistent from classroom to classroom, and to foster collaboration among staff members.

In addition, we have a strong reading intervention program that serves the dual purpose of providing reading intervention directly to students, as well as offering literacy coaching to our practicing educators. We provide in-classroom modeling of lessons as well as observation of classroom teacher implementation of lessons, and our Reading Specialist and Reading Interventionist regularly offer other professional development opportunities for our staff. Most recently, the reading team led a book study of the professional literature, *Disrupting Thinking: Why How We Read Matters* by Kylene Beers and Robert E. Probst. By integrating our delivery of direct instruction for struggling readers with a focus on continual advancement of our classroom literacy instruction, our reading and language arts curriculum stays fluid and current.

Most important in our programming, student learning is as individualized as possible, with an emphasis on student choice. Student choice is ingrained in choice for reading materials or writing subject matter, and consistently available through student participation in workshop models for both reading and writing. The choices offered through instruction create the opportunity for all students to be engaged in, and inspired by, their own learning.

Furthermore, Reading and English/Language Arts is heavily individualized by the sheer nature of the programs delivered. Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading, Lucy Calkins Writing, and the Daily CAFE method, all lean heavily on meeting students where they are in their learning journey, and providing the appropriate amount of support or challenge for each learner. By implementing these programs, as well as

individualizing the instruction and providing choice for students, we are providing opportunities for students to foster a love of reading and writing, and we are further enriching their lives by setting the foundation for lifelong learners.

1c. Mathematics

EnVisionmath 2.0 is the core math program at Dunbarton Elementary which is supported by various resources and teaching strategies employed by each educator involved. The basic teaching of mathematics at each grade level is to give each student an opportunity to explore and wrestle with a math concept, explore the concept with a peer or peers, and then share their thinking. Following this opportunity, teachers then explore the concepts further with students and find ways to come to conclusions with their thinking. Once that has been established, students are given the opportunity to explore and practice the concept further.

We have taken the initiative this year to go beyond enVisionmath 2.0, and have given teachers the opportunity to participate in a lab model of professional development. To accomplish this, we had a leader in the field of mathematics model lessons using enVisionmath 2.0 as the framework, accentuating each lesson with cutting edge practices to engage each learner in the process. This had an immediate impact on each classroom and each student, further engaging everyone in their learning and understanding of mathematics.

We also use the competencies, that were created with Common Core as their guiding platform. Through the use of competencies in mathematics we are able to ensure that students are learning the inherent concepts of each competency and are able to build upon each as they move through the various grades and competencies. By using a common program, engaging in common professional development, and wrapping it all around a common competency structure, students are provided a consistent learning structure in which they are given every opportunity to succeed and grow as mathematicians.

Similar to our language arts structure, we also have a mathematics intervention program that doubles as a coaching mechanism for both students and staff. Many times the math coach or interventionist can be seen in the classroom delivering their services. This serves as an opportunity to model for teachers as well as providing services for students in their least restrictive learning environment: their home classroom.

1d. Science

At elementary schools across the nation, science and social studies often take an unfortunate back seat to reading, writing, and math. DES strives to be an exception to this phenomenon. We make it a priority to find ways to weave science into our other curricular areas. We have found ways to do this through reading and writing as well as math lessons. We also provide one day each week in the lower grades (K-3) for students to engage in science-specific, hands-on lessons/experiments, and feel that this practice is vital for our students' understanding of scientific practice and concepts.

Most teachers in our building use Mystery Science as the core teaching platform, and then give students the opportunity to engage in hand-on experiences. In the upper grades (4-6), students have more dedicated time for science instruction/learning. Again, we use Mystery Science as the learning platform and ensure for as many hands-on experiences as possible.

We have also structured our science around the Next Gen Science standards to ensure for a clear and consistent delivery of content. Similar to SAU- level competencies, this allows all invested parties (teachers, students, other school personnel, and parents) to understand where a child is in his or her learning journey.

An exciting example of how we are focusing on the importance of science education in our school is that we have trained two of our teachers to be Next Gen science trainers for the remainder of our staff. Because we did this with the support and collaboration of the SAU, we are currently in the first stages of reviewing science curriculum K-12 to ensure consistency throughout the district as a whole.

As a school community, we recognize the value of science to our students and make every effort to meet their needs.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Social studies at DES is taught through various reading and language arts activities. When we are able to carve out dedicated time for specific projects and/or learning opportunities, we do so. We use the Common Core Standards in social studies as our framework for the social studies curriculum. In grades K-3, much of the learning takes place through the various ELA opportunities, but in grades 4-6 there is more dedicated time for social studies learning. Students in these upper grades use the foundation from lower grades to branch out into broader areas of social studies.

Our central location in New Hampshire provides students opportunities, especially in the older grades, to take field trips to places like Strawberry Banke, the historic and unique state house, and other local museums. These opportunities are hands-on fun and immersive opportunities for our students to grasp core social studies topics that apply to their own lives.

Perhaps the greatest gift we give to our students in the area of social studies is the opportunity to learn from their community elders. We have many community members who are lifelong residents that have a passion for history as well as education. Bringing these individuals in as guest speakers allows for interactions that hit on so many different levels of learning. The pinnacle of this experience can be seen in 3rd grade, when there is a model of the town of Dunbarton that is created by students in the spirit of gingerbread houses. Our town elders come in to provide instruction concerning historical landmarks/ buildings throughout the town. Students then recreate those via the art of gingerbread-house making. We bring history alive at DES.

1f. For secondary schools:

1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At DES we are firm believers in the importance of our “specials” (art, music, technology, and physical and mental health) as enriching and necessary forces in the education of our children. As such, we have a robust specials schedule for our students. All students are exposed to visual art, music, physical education, health, technology, library, and social/emotional learning. Our sixth grade classes experience LEAD, which is taught by a Dunbarton Police Department officer. Students may also choose the option of attending strings and/or band lessons.

In art classes, our K-6 students learn art’s history and influence on the world, as well as how to tap into and hone their own artistic abilities. One of the best examples of this is the student-designed and executed mural that graces our Common Area. This mural features our motto: “DES: Where eaglets learn to soar.” Our art teacher worked with this year’s Artist-in-Residence to help the students create this masterpiece. It is breathtaking and powerful!

Music can be found everywhere at DES. As well as playing instruments and singing, our students are encouraged to appreciate and understand music. We are interested in instilling in them the lifelong skill of music appreciation. We also make it a point to work with music teachers throughout the SAU to ensure that the musical instruction our students receive will serve them well as they ascend to the middle and high schools.

In terms of physical education, our teacher exposes the students to many sports and activities to peak their interest in further exploration as they get older. The students also participate in the annual “Jump Rope for Hearts” challenge, raising money for the Heart Association while challenging themselves physically.

Health class is taught by our school nurse. This gives our resident health expert the opportunity to enhance the bond she has with the student population. They learn about their bodies and how various practices and

habits can enhance or diminish their overall health. Students at DES understand the importance of physical and mental health thanks to this program.

Technology and Library Science are taught in tandem at DES, with students exploring information gathering via both programs. In recent years we have started to teach our students how to code, recognizing that coding skills will be a prerequisite for overall success in life, as it becomes a key component to all technology interfaces. In addition, we are in the process of turning our library/media center into a learning commons, recognizing the need for a dedicated space for exploration, technology, information, and communication.

To round out our specials offerings, we provide students with a guidance curriculum along with Project LEAD (formerly DARE, provided by the Dunbarton Police Department). We believe strongly in the development of the whole child and the inherent value of cultivating emotional intelligence, which is a far greater indicator for life success than standard intelligence.

At DES, we recognize that life is more than reading, writing and arithmetic. Students need a variety of skill-and-knowledge sets to learn to work together as a society to make the world a better place.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

At DES, we use multiple assessments and points of data to determine whether or not students are performing at grade level. For ELA we use DIBELS, DRA, STAR Reading, Lucy Calkins Writing assessments, and the NH Statewide Assessment System (NHSAS). In math we utilize STAR, AimsWeb, NHSAS, and enVisionmath 2.0 assessments.

We hold data meetings three times per year to meet with grade-level teachers, reading and math specialists, the special education coordinator, and the school principal to review the data sets and determine if the students are performing at, above, or below grade level. Those students who are determined to be performing below grade level are then referred to our Response to Intervention (RTI) program for further review and to determine if there are other measures necessary to give them the boost needed to bring them back to grade level.

Once students are brought into the folds of RTI, they are then reviewed at each data team meeting to determine the effectiveness of the current program, which is then adjusted as necessary. Eventually a student may be released from RTI or referred to special education if the data shows limited-to-no increase, or an actual decrease, in skill level.

Our RTI program is mainly based in reading and math, but also includes some OT and speech components. While most services are provided within the classroom, there are dedicated spaces within DES for more intense (small group) reading and math instruction. We are lucky enough to have two reading specialists delivering reading services, and in math we currently have one teacher and one paraprofessional interventionist. Next year we will have a math specialist and the same teacher providing services.

3b. Students performing above grade level

While we have built a strong program and process for students performing below grade level, we are currently building a program of equal success and intensity for those performing above grade level. These students are given opportunities for differentiated instruction within the classroom. They are able to choose their specific reading material, explore their creative writing further, choose topics and depth of learning in informational writing, and are given opportunities to explore further in math.

Sometimes the in-class instruction simply isn't enough. To bridge this gap, we provide opportunities for further exploration. Our library aide leads intensive, explorative reading groups with students who are ready to make this jump. These are more akin to book-study groups than traditional reading groups. We have also

incorporated the idea of “book, head, heart” in our reading groups, which invites students to delve further into their thinking and feeling while reading.

This year in math we have a student who was ready to make the leap into Algebra. In an effort to meet his extraordinary needs, we provided him an alternative space to learn Algebra I via the Virtual Learning Academy (VLACS). He was clearly ready and succeeded to a high degree. However, he craved the opportunity to learn math along with his peers, so he was given ample opportunity to engage in group work with the remainder of his class. He was free to explore math concepts, learn from his teacher and peers, and share alternative methods for solving problems. It was a true win/win.

As with students below grade level, the goal for those who are ready to achieve more is to provide opportunity within their general classroom among their peers. No matter the level of understanding or grade level equivalent of knowledge, all students crave a shared experience in learning.

3c. Special education

Dunbarton Elementary School has three full time special education teachers/case managers with a shared caseload of 55 students. These students range from preschoolers through 6th grade. In order to best meet the needs of the students, each teacher specializes in either reading, math, or writing. This specialised instruction carries over strategies and techniques from year to year, utilizing programs such as the WILSON Reading Program, the Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program, Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention, Foundations, Visualizing and Verbalizing, Key Math, On Cloud Nine, Read Naturally, and Zones of Regulation, among others.

Instruction is delivered according to individual student needs, either through in-class support, small group instruction, or one-on-one. DES holds weekly “Core Meetings”, during which special education teachers and specialists discuss questions and concerns, troubleshooting difficulties in instruction, accommodations, testing, and even challenges in students’ home environments.

As the needs of the school are ever-changing, so are the services provided by the special education team. A Student Services Center (SSC) was recently developed for student use. Students have access to the center if they need a quiet space to complete an assignment or assessment, or if a student is experiencing distressing events. The special education team has been certified in CPI and often uses the verbal techniques prescribed to help de-escalate student behavior.

The special education service providers work closely with interventionists and teachers to make the transition from Response to Intervention to special education as seamless as possible. Upon receiving a referral, specialists in occupational therapy, speech/language, physical therapy and behavior complete observations and/or a screening in order to get informal services set up right away. This rapid response by our special education team is one of the many strengths of Dunbarton Elementary School.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Engaging students is much simpler than it seems. We must remind them that it is their school and their learning process. At DES, students learn this from their first day of kindergarten when they begin the process of creating classroom rules. Instead of telling students what the rules are, we ask them (based on Responsive Classroom ideals) to share with us their hopes and dreams. This allows them to have ownership in their own education.

We also provide opportunities for student choice in learning, whether it is what to write about, how to express themselves through an art project, how to code a robot, which book to read, or whether or not to join a club--all children at DES have choices. We also provide rigorous academic challenges for all students. We do not water down learning for students who are below grade level. On the contrary, we accommodate their learning needs and continue to challenge them in order to satisfy their learning curiosities.

We strive to create a community at DES. At the start of each school each year, we hold multiple whole-school meetings in which students are broken into 14 different groups, each composed of students in grades K-6. Sixth graders lead each group and all the older students are responsible for the younger ones. This fosters leadership, caring for others, and a sense of compassion and empathy.

When students feel entrusted with choice in learning and the ability to make and follow their own rules, they are naturally engaged. This is not a shallow ethos. This past year we entrusted our students with the creation of our new motto, and the adults could not have done a better job. We also entrusted 6th graders to work with kindergarten students as reading buddies. In fact, we often task older students with working with younger students. We find this provides the construct for creating a better society. We have built a school where students are responsible for their own success based on their actions and choices, entrusting them with doing the right thing. We simply tell them to “take care of each other.”

2. Engaging Families and Community:

As a public school, we understand that we are an extension of the Dunbarton community. We respect the fact that we are public servants, and make it a point to strive to be a source of pride to the community we love so much.

As a member school of SAU 67, we poll our parents twice a year with the use of a Panorama Survey tool. Through this, parents are able to express their feelings about the overall success of the school as well as individual aspects of it. We look forward to this data set, as it allows us to better understand what is working well for families and what may need to be adjusted to better meet their needs.

We also welcome parents to the school with an open door policy. If there are concerns, frustrations, or misunderstandings, we encourage them to address these at the source. The school principal has instituted an open door policy that is respected by all involved, and many misunderstandings have been resolved amicably due to this transparent practice that allows for humanity and empathetic reasoning to prevail.

We also appreciate and welcome parent and community volunteers. This has become a bit of a lost art in education today, but not in Dunbarton; we have a large volunteer force, headed by an active PTO. We want our parent volunteers to visit their children’s classes to lend a helping hand and see how much pride we take in our school. These parents and other community volunteers are a rich resource that we offer to our students, who benefit from their expertise.

DES also has a tradition of interacting with the community at large. We host annual community events such as town and school voting, portions of the Old Home Day celebration, the town’s Dunbarton Memorial Day celebration, a school Veteran’s Day celebration, and the PTO’s annual Harvest Moon Supper. We enjoy sharing the richness of our school culture with the town.

Because we strive to be an open and inviting community school, when we presented our town with the need to do a tremendous construction project to renovate and upgrade our facility, the warrant article passed with overwhelming support. The steadfast and trustworthy nature of the Dunbarton School Board and the open and honest dialogue between them and the community translated into a significant amount of support for the multi-million dollar project.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

All schools have an opportunity to become a collaborative thinktank of educational opportunity for all invested parties. Far too often this opportunity is squandered with the federal, state, and local red tape that gets in the way of true education. At SAU 67 and DES, we are striving to do our best to create a collaborative culture of excellence for all involved.

The Dunbarton School Board sets aside a generous amount of funds each year for individual teacher professional development. The teachers understand that they are trusted to spend public funds in a judicious manner that will have a direct benefit to their students

The DES administration solicits the knowledge and expertise of the teachers and other professionals working directly with students in order to set professional expectations. Who better to share what is working and what is not?

Most recently, we at DES have been using book studies as a way to incorporate positive change in our school. As a staff we have read *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices that Support Diverse Needs* by Cathy Vattero and *Disrupting Thinking: Why How We Read Matters* by Kathleen Beers and Robert E. Probst. We are in the process of engaging in a book study with staff, parents, and a former N.H. Commissioner of Education with the book *What School Could Be* by Ted Dintersmith. The process has been wonderful and brought together disparate individuals with a common goal - to improve the education of Dunbarton's young minds.

Creating a culture of professionalism can be hard work, but it comes down to simple concepts: respect and empathy. We must respect each other and be empathetic to one another. If we are able to do this to a high degree, we can reach the goal of providing a high level education to each student that walks through the doors of DES each day.

4. School Leadership:

School leadership is generally thought of as a daunting task filled with multiple distractions each day - school discipline, upset parents, decrees from on high, meeting various staff-level needs-- the list could go on and on. But school leadership is a shared exercise, or else it is futile. The best school leaders are truly cheerleaders and followers. Those who try to do it all alone quickly discover that it is an impossible task.

At DES we all embrace the idea of sharing leadership. We each have our strengths and passions, and it would be a shame to have those go untapped. A perfect example is two third graders who led a passionate campaign to do two things: 1.) to change the brand of pizza being served in the cafeteria to a local business' pies, and 2.) to stop using plastic cutlery. Instead of being dismissed with a pat on the head, they were given the task of writing letters to the Food Service Director on behalf of their causes. Parents were called and meetings were set up. The students plead their cases and changes were made. Those students backed up their claims with surveys and factual data. They were leaders.

Curriculum and building-level changes are generally slow moving processes that involve all stakeholders. When we instituted the Daily CAFE into our ELA repertoire it was done thoughtfully and with input from the classroom teachers. We had some teachers who piloted and shared their experiences. We visited and inquired with other schools to see how it worked. Since the implementation, we now have other schools visiting us. We all led this change.

When we instituted all day kindergarten, we sought the support of seniors in town to be on our committee. They had no vested interest other than the betterment of their community's educational offerings. We shared our knowledge and sought theirs. They agreed in its potential and became leaders in the push for its adoption with an overwhelmingly positive vote.

School leadership does generally stream through the school principal as an organizational structure. Great schools are not led by one person--they can't be. They are led by a collective force of unity. DES is a compassionate learning environment because we champion the progress of our learners through a team effort bent on the success of its students, culture, and community.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Dunbarton Elementary School deserves to be added to the roster of National Blue Ribbon Schools largely because of the practices we employ, and the practice that has had the biggest impact is our school-wide focus on empathy.

We have identified the development of empathy as key to students' development into responsible members of the school community and, ultimately, the larger community. Teaching students about empathy requires a strong commitment from the staff. To achieve that end, our school has become fully vested in Responsive Classroom, which is an evidence-based approach to teaching and discipline that focuses on engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmental awareness.

Students learn how to listen, notice, and care about others by watching other students and adults and how they interact with each other. Our goal is to get students to have empathy not only for their peer group, but for everyone, no matter their differences. Students see that the staff members care for everyone in the school, and it is expected that students do the same.

Getting students to notice empathetic behavior is only the beginning. It is also important to encourage students to act on what they are noticing. For this skill, we engaged in interactive modeling. In a schoolwide community assembly, teachers demonstrated common behaviors and appropriate reactions that demonstrated empathy. This led to having the students recognize opportunities to demonstrate empathy themselves. Our empathy committee came up with different examples of acts of kindness that could be executed at school, and allowed students to model their own. Students reported acts of kindness that they noticed, and the students who performed the act received a sticker to put on a common bulletin board. This allowed us as a school to acknowledge all of the acts of kindness that were going on and to promote our school-wide theme of empathy. Teachers also integrated the theme of empathy into classroom activities such as writing, social studies, literature and community service.

Our principal made himself available to everyone for some chat sessions in the common space, which gave the students an opportunity to express themselves to him, and allowed him to get a pulse on the students' feelings of being respected, safe, and cared for at Dunbarton Elementary School.

There is little doubt that our school-wide emphasis on empathy is having a big impact on our school community.