

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Grantham Village School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 75 Learning Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Grantham State NH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 03753-3406

County Sullivan County

Telephone (603) 863-1681 Fax (603) 863-8377

Web site/URL https://www.gvshawks.org/ E-mail kreed@gvshawks.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. Sydney Leggett E-mail sleggett@sau75.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Grantham School District Tel. (603) 863-9689

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 Mrs. Brittany Pye
(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, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) 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. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

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, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	12	6	18
K	19	10	29
1	23	18	41
2	20	20	40
3	20	19	39
4	19	11	30
5	20	9	29
6	14	15	29
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	147	108	255

*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
 - 3.6 % Asian
 - 0.1 % Black or African American
 - 7.2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 84.7 % White
 - 4.4 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 9%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	22
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	244
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Arabic, Portuguese, German, Tagalog, Indonesian, Korean, and Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
9 Total number ELL

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

Total number students who qualify: 19

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %

34 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>6</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>9</u> Developmental Delay | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1

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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	15
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	92%	95%	96%	95%	95%
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 2020.

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.

Our motto is "Out There Starts Here!" Our mission is that all students participate in an educational process that blends social, emotional, physical, and intellectual learning that prepares them for the global world.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Grantham Village School has operated in three different instructional models throughout the 2020-21 school year. We began with a hybrid model (2 days in person and 3 days remote); in early November we transitioned to 4 days in person and 1 day remote; in April, we made our final transition to 5 days full in person instruction. We opened up as appropriate to the health and safety regulations of COVID.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

At the entrance of Grantham Village School (GVS), students are greeted with warm, smiling faces as they get ready to face the day as a Hawk. They know they will be safe, respected, and connected to the community, not only within school walls but throughout their lives. The GVS motto, “Out There Starts Here,” perfectly encompasses our mission to create an academic, social, emotional, and cultural atmosphere that will prepare students to be the best they can be now and beyond.

Grantham, NH is a small, rural town just south of the thriving Upper Valley area of New Hampshire, with a population of about 3500 and where the hills in town are named after the earliest, hardy New England settlers. Though small in size, the residents of Grantham both old and young embrace outdoor living, a love for learning, and most especially the intentional development of a strong community. When picturing Grantham before COVID, you might have seen a packed lunch room of parents and kids at a family lunch, a celebration of student talent and learning at a concert or STEM fair, or numerous volunteers at the library, creating a sense of family among people of many backgrounds. But even COVID has not broken our spirit of the community. In fact, through tough times Grantham was able to increase accessibility and participation, with more people showing up to conferences and remote morning meetings. During COVID, the school ensured that every family had adequate access to nutritious food. When some students remained remote as school reopened, GVS hired an academic liaison and created the GVS Academy to provide a direct contact for support and remained part of their classroom communities. These relationships are at the core of all we are able to do and be for our students, and we recognize our responsibility to cultivate meaningful relationships for both our success as a school and as a vital member of the community.

Strong student-staff relationships and innovative programs offer a supportive environment for kids to grow as learners and whole people. The WIN--or, “What I Need”--time established in many classrooms allows for varied levels of intervention or proactive learning time, building student confidence in subject matter and giving them internal tools to succeed, like problem-solving, self-direction, and the confidence to ask for help. WIN is often another opportunity for students to connect with the Grantham community through classroom volunteers. Other programs, like the Artist in Residence and Four Winds, are designed to open students’ minds to the social and natural world around them, preparing them to think inquisitively, create boldly, and collaborate effectively. Staff creates Themed Fridays, like Superhero Day and 80’s Day, to build a sense of community among students and adults both. Collaborative morning announcement videos help connect students across cohorts, a practice that began because of COVID but will continue after. In addition to planned activities, regular interactions between students and staff members continually enforce student empowerment. A recent email to the school from a parent states, “I am so impressed by the willingness of GVS teachers and administrators to take and consider student suggestions. This teaches such an important life skill, and I am so appreciative that this atmosphere exists at GVS.” The culture of GVS is one of caring growth, for both kids and adults, as we challenge each other to live, learn, and play as our best selves.

Of course, at the center of everything we accomplish as a school and community are the unwavering spirits of our students. Through one of the toughest years of many students’ lives, GVS kids continue to prove their love of learning and their capacity for empathy. Before and during the pandemic, GVS has hosted food drives and pet food drives, both of which were started and driven by student members of the Hawk Squad, a leadership program for upper elementary students. Kids also eagerly participate in trail cleanup days and veterans recognition events, demonstrating the size of their hearts even at a young age. Although every school knows their kids are special, GVS kids set themselves apart with their capacity to truly care for others as they continue to thrive as individuals. Even though Grantham doesn’t have its own middle or high school, our Grantham seniors return to GVS each year at graduation, donning their caps and gowns, walking the halls to the cheers and tears of old teachers and the current students who look up at them and see their futures.

Being a GVS Hawk is about taking care of one another and becoming lifelong learners and citizens. They recite the Hawk pledge every morning following the pledge of allegiance to remind them of who and where they are. Because of the way we cultivate our community, we become stronger together even through obstacles. Because of formal and informal learning opportunities, we are able to face problems curiously and

optimistically. Because of the kindness ever-present among students, we lift each other up in ways that benefit all. Grantham is a kindhearted, welcoming community that supports growth of all kinds for all its people, both on school grounds and beyond.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Grantham Village School (GVS) balances core curriculum, instructional strategies, interventions, and targeted assessments to provide a high quality education to all learners. Our success lies in the continual reevaluation of these key elements as applied to each current population of students, families, staff, and resources. We make our school stronger by looking at what each child needs at the time.

GVS adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2014, initiated by writing competencies and units of study. A close scrutiny of programming led to the adoption of new or revised programs, but despite these positive changes, students at the time were underperforming when compared to past data, so we began reexamining practices. At the forefront of this discussion was this main principle: regardless of competencies, programs, or assessment tools, providing a safe environment, building strong relationships, creating interactive and engaging lessons, adapting curriculum to provide appropriate levels of challenge, and fostering a love of learning for learning’s sake are what we believe to be key to student achievement at GVS. Since that turning point, there has been continued, sustained growth in student learning. This foundational principle sustained learning even throughout COVID as seen through our annual assessments, on which our students recently demonstrated growth in seven out of eight areas assessed.

Our core work has focused on the deep examination of instruction and assessment. Teachers create units designed to promote inquiry-based and problem-solving learning. They develop a repertoire of performance-based assessments to bolster understanding of students’ thinking as they take the pivotal step to apply their knowledge and skills. We stretch this through a collaborative approach to assessment, wherein students have a voice and choice in developing assessment probes they believe best showcase their learning. Our competency-based reporting helps students and families learn about growth mindset and striving for progress, not perfection, and our efforts have yielded transformative results for students and staff alike. Grade-level teams and Professional Learning Communities look at these assessments throughout each year and use them to prepare for each incoming class. As one of our teachers states, “We don’t look at the kids through the prism of data, we look at data through the prism of kids.”

It is critical to note that GVS is not about programs; our fidelity is not to a program but to the child. We are careful to distinguish between jumping on a bandwagon and methodically trying a new approach, and whether learners struggle to grasp new concepts or they need a little challenge, our educators find a way to give them what moves them forward.

Reading/ELA: Our language arts curriculum is centered on building firm foundational skills in word decoding and encoding strategies through phonics in younger grades and Greek and Latin roots instruction in older grades; fostering a love of reading with annual updates to both classroom and the school libraries and daily time for independent reading of choice books; and writing instruction in the workshop model that focuses on the writing process and includes student-teacher and peer-peer writing conferences. Walking into a classroom at GVS, you will be greeted by a literature-rich environment, surrounded by books of high interest as well as classroom leveled libraries. Students engage in both whole group shared reading experiences as well as small group focused literacy lessons daily. Whole group lessons, though developed to meet the needs of the current population, follow the Common Core standards; while small groups are fluid and needs based. Students often may be found enjoying independent reading time in a variety of flexible seating options. We regularly monitor student progress through the LLI system from Fountas and Pinnell, NWEA, and STAR; this data, accompanied by teacher observation, drives small group development and instruction. Shared reading incorporates many strategies from Lucy Calkins Reading, though teachers use their professional judgement to adapt lessons to meet their students’ needs. We are excited to be in the process of developing a new MTSS, with an initial focus on early literacy. This development team, in coordination with our literacy committee, are researching best practices in ELA as well as intervention programs and strategies.

Math: Early numeracy builds strong math conceptual knowledge and skills through use of manipulatives and practical applications. GVS utilizes Everyday Math, supplementing with additional programming as needed.

PreK and K focus on number sense, with grades 1-4 highlighting addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division respectively. By the time our students reach grade 6, most are taking online Algebra courses to move ahead when they transition to middle school. Emphasis is placed on automaticity for fluency, word problems/practical applications, risk taking, sharing thought process through discussion, and conceptual understanding. In addition to number sense, each grade level includes elements of geometry, algebraic principles, and especially data and statistics, as these skills will become increasingly important in our students' world. Students who are not at grade level in mathematics have access to additional resources and support through our Title I Math program and we monitor all students progress with STAR and classroom assessments.

Science: Science is inquiry and place-based at GVS, reinforcing that discovery and questioning create the best science habits. NGSS standards and science practices as well as programs such as Mystery Science are utilized to guide these discoveries, and our teachers use the natural world around them as often as possible to help children explore the mysteries of the world around them. Though no formal science programs have been adopted at GVS, teachers have had training with inquiry-based science professionals and practicing scientists. Exploration of animals and plants in grade 1 leads to better understandings of organisms in grade 3; pushes and pulls in Kindergarten create the foundation for understanding introductory engineering principles in grade 5. Our grade 6 science teacher collaborates with our local middle school to coordinate the NGSS science bands for the middle grades to foster a smooth transition. To walk into a science lesson at GVS is a magical moment. You may experience students working collaboratively through the scientific process, creating machines that they engineered, or tromping through the forest and rivers on our grounds. Our science curriculum is regularly enhanced by visits from and/or to our local nature education resources, such as Four Winds and the Vermont Institute of Natural Science, and our 6th grade students have a traditional end of year trip to Nature's Classroom as one of their culminating experiences.

Social Studies: Social studies follows the natural progression of students understanding the widening spheres of their world, starting with classroom and family, moving to our school, then town and state, and finally to our country and world. For example, in fourth grade students learn about New Hampshire history by creating their own maps of our state and the Revolutionary War through a research paper with sources curated by the fourth grade teaching team. In fifth grade, students study Native American history and culture and build models of Native American life centered around long houses, and they study explorers who charted routes to the Americas and to the Far East. In sixth grade, students begin the year with a unit on early man, which culminates in a visit from Dartmouth College Professor Jeremy DeSilva, who shares models of fossils and tells about his experiences in the field. Next, sixth graders learn about the ancient civilizations that are the basis of Western civilization, like Mesopotamia and Greece. Accessing accurate information, gaining multiple perspectives, and understanding these worlds combine to help learners to use social studies to find their voice and place.

This past year we learned to maintain the essential elements of core instruction in a pandemic. Online learning and tools were new to many, and we saw in our staff the growth mindset that they teach, encourage, and honor in their students. Staff worked to integrate content area curriculum to maximize learning and minimize screen time, and our assessments took new shape through videos on Google Classroom, Screencast-O-Matic, SeeSaw, and apps such as FlipGrid. Due to higher than historical needs, summer of 2020 brought remote academic programming to a larger population of students, giving us the opportunity to address more specific needs for our most vulnerable students, offering remote 1:1 and small-group remediation when most needed.

GVS recognizes change as our constant. Not all past or current practices will meet the needs of our changing population and world, but we will continue to thrive as long as we meet our students where they are.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

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

The Grantham Village School (GVS) Preschool started only two years ago through overwhelming community support. This is a public preschool serving children ages of 3-5 that is available to the residents of Grantham. Our maximum class size is 12, and we have a primary commitment to students who are at-risk for special education or are already identified with special educational needs. Any additional spaces in the program are open to peer models, and all students participate in activities in a fully inclusive classroom.

Preschool is based on the belief that all children develop at different rates, and that the best way to learn about the world around them is through play and social interaction. The preschool teacher and paraeducator identify and address concerns as early as possible, and parents/guardians are integral partners to the successful beginning of a school career.

Our curriculum is based on the New Hampshire Early Learning Standards and focuses on the development of early learning skills in a language-rich environment, including communication, cognitive, gross and fine motor, social, problem solving, and creativity. Our daily schedule includes teacher-directed whole-group lessons to small-group work and individual exploration. Whenever possible, students with identified services have them provided as part of the general classroom. Everything we do, including snack and recess, are part of our curriculum and offer important opportunities for learning.

Even just two years into this program, we are seeing the benefits of students making a seamless transition to Kindergarten through the understanding of routines; being familiar and comfortable with the school environment; and leaving the classroom for Unified Arts courses to form relationships with these same teachers they will have throughout their time at GVS. We look forward to examining more long-term data on the success outcomes of preschool after at least one more year.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Grantham Village School offers five Unified Arts (UA) programs, comprising two full-time programs (physical education and music), and three part-time programs (art, library, and technology education). Every student receives each UA once per week (twice for PE), with preschool offerings when possible. Due to COVID cohorting, this year UAs are scheduled in one cohort for two consecutive weeks, and our teachers embrace this opportunity to dive in deeper. Each UA program offers specific content and skills, integrating with core content areas to enhance and deepen student understanding. Our UA teachers are a source of innovation, committed to maintaining stability, fun, and connection.

Art encourages students to explore visual forms of self-expression, experiencing process, critical thinking, voice, perspective, critique, and purpose. We want students to be artists, to understand the meaning behind creation and how emotions and thoughts fuel creative work. COVID has transitioned to the “art cart” this year, but our intentions stay the same and students have choice-based programming in their own classroom.

Music curriculum shows students all the ways they can create and perform. Kids sing, play, use their bodies, play instruments, and find new ways to express themselves through music. Through learning to play individually and as a group, kids learn skills that carry over into all other aspects of school and life. We have a developing strings program, a bell choir, and band and chorus. COVID restrictions don’t prevent us from doing what’s important. We perform and learn together online, push into classrooms to perform musicals, and still find time and space to provide lessons in pods of instruments.

Library classes promote a love for books, experiential learning, and research skills that progress developmentally. We have a beautiful library, with a “book-nook” and various tables for MakerSpace activities. We maintain reading skills and passion during COVID, by providing e-book access and designing a book “quarantine routine” to meet health protocols.

Technology is aimed along two tracks of competency: digital citizenship, and technological literacy. All grades participate in a curriculum designed to create positive and proactive engagement with technology premised on being safe, respectful, and responsible citizens of the internet and our modern technological world. COVID provided us with opportunities to problem solve, resulting in many young experts; kids of all ages are Zoom-savvy, which both opens doors and requires increased accountability for digital

citizenship. It's clear to everyone at GVS that technology will never again be thought of as "separate."

Physical education (PE) focuses on health, life-long activity, and using and challenging your body for fun and fitness. Even though we live with rough New Hampshire winters, we're outside as much as possible, snowshoeing and exploring. COVID reminded us of the importance of moving and getting fresh air. During our remote period, our PE created a remote school-wide Olympics for families at home; grade levels and teachers became teams, and weekly broadcasts and leader boards were presented through videos. It was a brilliant way to keep our community healthy and engaged, clearly demonstrating GVS's innovative spirit and dedication to kids.

3. Academic Supports:

The continuum of services available to all learners at Grantham Village School (GVS) is comprehensive, inclusive, and a source of pride in our school community. In order to provide the best possible services as a small school, the District hires a combination of employees and contracted service providers comprising a Special Education Administrator (part time), two case managers, a Reading Specialist and interventionist, a Rehabilitation Therapist, a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and Registered Behavior Technician, an Occupational Therapist and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant, a Speech Language Pathologist, School Psychologist, and a Down Syndrome specialist. The school itself has a special services suite for related services and sensory activities when needed.

The number of students on IEPs is approximately 12 percent of the student population, and each year children are exited from special education because the achievement gap no longer exists for them, which is a direct result of early identification, careful planning and progress monitoring of goal completion. Students who are not eligible after referral are usually given an educational support plan, 504 (if eligible), or in-class support from an interventionist for preventive services. GVS draws families in search of an excellent education on behalf of their students, and each child has a team on their side often prior to walking through the doors. When a child arrives at GVS with potential concerns, grade level teams put supports in place, monitor classroom-based assessments, review stamina and skill sets compared to same-aged non-disabled peers, and check for possible disability through screening and diagnostic assessments. Our Student Study Team will analyze data and review observational data and decide the next steps.

GVS tailors instruction and interventions to meet the needs of students across a wide range of disabilities. A student with autism who has difficulty with language may receive a totally different research-based math program at their instructional level, one more visually supportive but less language-based. Students more than one grade level below in math may be provided a small group or 1:1 math intervention at their particular instructional level with additional support and skills practice using a more multimodal approach. With this more tailored approach, students work at their pace, fill in missing math skills, and through this method and others similar we are often able to close the achievement gap.

GVS believes that English Language Learners should not learn fundamentals of English in isolation; they best develop their language skills with rich academic content in immersion of all subject areas. Projects that allow students to practice new language skills include oral presentations, partnership work, and participating in authentic academic conversations, which cultivates a pervasive appreciation and acceptance of diversity.

During a regular year or utilizing non-traditional methods during COVID, we provide a wide range of effective and research-supported interventions in the most inclusive settings possible. A successful classroom is where a student feels known, appreciated, and comfortable taking both

emotional and intellectual risks to build confidence and perseverance that students carry with them throughout their school careers and beyond.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Grantham Village School (GVS) holds strong to our fundamental belief that school is fun. We want students to feel stability and positivity from the school and their teachers. Regardless of our changing COVID instructional model, staff and students implement every learning and cultural tradition we can, though of course they often take on different forms. Our “We’ve got this, Grantham!” attitude carries us through every change, and instead of worrying about complex logistics or what we can’t do, we adapt to find every way to say “yes.”

Scheduling has been adjusted in every instructional model to maximize time with students, which includes juggling resources for whole-class online meetings for direct instruction, small-group sessions for individualized assistance, and 1:1 meetings to check in both academically and emotionally. In person, we have kids stay in their classrooms while our staff moves about to decrease COVID contacts and increase teacher-student contact.

We’ve engaged students through new video contests and old school traditions; when fully remote, kids and families submitted videos of themselves dancing/lip syncing, and our physical education teacher made these into a montage for viewing. These cultivated shared community and a sense of much needed togetherness. Traditions like “book buddies” between older and younger grades continued through online platforms, and we held whole-school online assemblies and zoomed our annual talent show. Our school counselor continued “lunch bunch” groups online, then sustaining them throughout summer as “breakfast buddies” to uphold our connection and care. Our students who are fully remote join our classes remotely at least once per week to remain a part of their class with friends.

One perfect illustration of our culture of learning and fun happened during our initial move to remote instruction. In 48 hours, we reallocated funds to have bags packed and ready for drive-through pick-up or home delivery. Each bag held textbooks and workbooks for learning, devices for students without one, a selection of library books, games and puzzles, special materials for special needs, and a personalized collection of caring and fun items. There were new journals to write about experiences, a favorite prize they’d usually get in class, something silly, pictures from their classroom, and most had personal notes to each student with messages of inspiration. Every student received a bag, and every bag--bursting at the seams--sent the same message: you will still learn, you are still cared for, and we will still have fun together.

We made it clear to the kids that we were smiling beneath our masks.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging families and community through partnerships has always been a cornerstone of the Grantham Village School (GVS) success. Each child engages in many worlds beyond our school, and each contributes to holistic development.

For many years, families have been invited to celebrate learning at our first day of school picnics, curriculum nights, grade-level expositions, and our standing-room-only Parent-Teacher Bingo Night. Our partnerships thrive on a combination of personal contact and fun; for example, our local Police Chief is happy to “lock up” our Principal for the day to help with community fundraising. Grantham encompasses a sizable planned community that welcomes our entire student body for Winter Wonderland Day, where all teachers and staff spend the day learning outdoor activities in the natural space within this local resource. Leveraging our area resources, our students have opportunities to work with Dartmouth Professors, and we contract with two local outdoor education institutes to bring school and community together. With Dartmouth professors, our students have the opportunity to see science in practice; for example, each year after studying the advent of human existence, our 6th grade students meet with a Professor of Anthropology and are able to see and hear about his trips to South Africa and his cutting edge research on

paleoanthropology. As an opportunity for authentic experiences, students also travel to Dartmouth labs to learn how to use their high level microscopes and discuss supporting versus refuting scientific theories in practice. Our partners in nature, for example Prescott Farm, have come in to grades 3 and 4 in their study of trees; not only will they explore the science and nature side of trees, but also learn about what types of careers might involve this knowledge. Ultimately, our partnerships get our students engaged in their community, excited about learning, and dreaming about their futures.

Engagement became more complicated --and equally more important--with the onset of COVID. We had to adapt. From the onset of our pandemic closure, our Superintendent, Principal, Technology Director, School Nurse, and School Counselor held an open-to-all online forum once per week to provide updates, listen to feedback, and answer questions. This reinforced that we're always here, we're always listening, and we're always working together. In addition, when we realized how inundated our parents/guardians were with emails, our Principal started reading her weekly newsletter into a podcast so people could listen at their convenience; our morning announcements are now on video for all. Grantham Village School continues to have a spirit of togetherness and support during a critical time. We have strong parent voice on our Progress Monitoring Committee, meeting twice per month and reporting out to the community about how GVS is navigating our school year and what we can do to improve. When we need information, we reach out through surveys, always with a high and fast response rate.

The hallmark of great partnerships is that they go both ways; for every outreach GVS extends, our partners respond. Our Parent-Teacher group fundraises for teacher supplies and celebrates our staff with fun prizes and gratitude. A local sewing group presented us with over 1,000 hand-sewn masks in all sizes and patterns for our first day of school. Our network of relationships maintains the flexibility, transparency, communication, and fun that keeps us moving forward.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Grantham educators have the same thirst for learning they love to see in their students.

The district supports all staff with eight professional development days annually and provides course reimbursement for educators pursuing a higher degree. Every teacher and paraeducator is allotted funds each year to attend workshops and online webinars. Every new teacher and paraeducator is assigned a mentor for successful onboarding, and mentors are paid stipends through district or grant funding.

Structurally, our Professional Development Committee combines administration, teachers, and support staff to examine goals and set the professional development calendar each year. This committee manages course and workshop reimbursements to ensure they are distributed equitably. Every five years, this group completes the significant task of revising our professional development master plan for the state. Individual plans are based on a three-year certification cycle with an annual progress review with the building principal. Prior to final certification, our Superintendent runs small collaborative groups during which educators share their learning. This practice contributes to bringing professional development out of isolation and provides yet another opportunity for collegial professional growth.

Throughout the school year, teachers meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), one primary and one intermediate. PLCs are run by teachers, for teachers, providing an open, safe place to share ideas and examine their practices. Prior to each meeting, the PLC leaders send a collaborative agenda template, setting the stage for topics to rise organically to the top for discussion.

With just two days to go fully remote during COVID, we found online professional development opportunities for all staff that could be done asynchronously. Our Technology Director regularly produced and released short videos and demos that were quick and accessible. To free up the principal during this time of great need, we contracted with an outside evaluator for all tenured teachers. The administration provided wellness professional development for staff, with the intention of creating time for them to remember to care for themselves. After one nutrition presentation, our staff created and contributed to our GVS "Caring for Caregivers" cookbook. On the surface, it's healthy recipes, but really it's a symbol of our care for each other.

To reflect on how we built capacity for professional learning during COVID, we realize it happened naturally every day, as every day certainly presented us with a new opportunity to learn. We transformed from being professionals seeking non-existent best practices in pandemic teaching and --quite literally overnight --became the professional creators of those best practices ourselves.

4. School Leadership:

As a small, one-school district, our school and district leadership operate as one team comprising the Superintendent, Principal, Business Administrator, Special Education Director, Facilities Director, and Technology Director. The Superintendent and Special Education Director are half-time employees. Grantham School District follows a shared leadership philosophy where every voice is heard, and we foster a system in which all stakeholders can champion their passions. We put this philosophy into practice through both collaborative decision making and distributed leadership.

Throughout decision making, input is solicited through surveys, focus groups, and open dialogue; this information is balanced with research on best practices and then finally weighed against the same two questions: What's best for kids? What's best for Grantham Village School (GVS)? This practice can be seen in everything from policy development to our budgeting process. Even an unhappy stakeholder will know that every perspective was given its due respect and consideration before a final decision was made.

GVS distributes leadership through various committees, including professional development, professional learning communities, progress monitoring (specific to COVID), technology, policy, wellness, emergency/safety, and curriculum. All committees comprise a cross-section of constituents, and through this we maintain transparency and strong relationships within and outside of the school. As an example, hiring committees include parents, community members, and students whenever possible, and this is a key reason for our staff longevity. The GVS HAWKS squad, our student leadership group, has a strong voice in all activities and is clearly the foundation for the next generation of empowered citizens.

While the organizational structure of GVS has the Principal at the "top," she is truly the "hub." She served as a teacher at GVS for 12 years prior to becoming Principal, and because of this she has the respect of everyone and the perspective of knowing the impact of her decisions. During COVID, she propelled our spirit and bolstered a constant culture of positivity that kept everyone going. She enthusiastically dressed up in every "Fun Friday" theme, and no one will forget Wild West Day, when the Principal dressed up as a cowgirl and rode around the halls on her blow-up horse.

Our leaders wear many hats, with no task too big or small, which became especially apparent during COVID. Knowing the magnitude of our work, we embraced our team approach more than ever, dove in together, and got things done. This is the leadership and support we strive to model for others.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Grantham Village School approaches culturally responsive teaching and learning through the core elements of empathy and care. These elements are fundamental to our conversations and subsequent decision making throughout professional development, instructional design, and policy making.

Professional learning programs for our administrators, faculty, and staff have involved exploration and recognition of our own cultural biases -- both visible and invisible biases -- as the essential step towards the common understandings that can foster progress towards equity. This past summer, every employee received a copy of the book *Biased* by Jennifer L. Eberhardt for summer reading to facilitate group discussions throughout the year. Other programs include training in Open Circle, ChooSELove, and Courage2Care, among others, where reflection, discussion, role playing, and decision making are practiced at the adult level prior to providing instruction or activities to students.

In the classroom and school, we intentionally create curricula and activities with an approach of universal design to open the door for every voice and individual. Examples of these lessons include student “passports” with which they travel the world holidays; schoolwide student reads, such as *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold with follow-up activities; and Civil War Day, which culminates an extensive unit for our grade 5 students encompassing history, culture, race, geography, and more. Our deep commitment to full inclusion of special needs students is just one model of practice to provide equity and create a school culture of respect for others. We want students to feel comfortable talking about differences as much as they learn to discuss our similarities and common interests; we want them to be comfortable and confident asking questions since that’s how we move forward.

At the wider level, our community embraces and celebrates our diversity through our annual multicultural potluck dinner, where families have the opportunity to proudly showcase ethnicities through shared food, games, and pictures. Our school board is proud to have passed a non-discrimination policy including transgender students a full year before our state did; this policy almost immediately manifested itself in a change to gender neutral bathrooms and revisions to school counseling and health curricula. When issues arise nationally or internationally, we approach them as is developmentally appropriate, but the essential skills stay the same: information, questioning, open dialogue, voice, empathy, and respect. Even though our town isn’t highly diverse, our “Out There Starts Here” philosophy means we provide students with the tools they need to move forward in the world with acceptance and care.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Our one instrumental practice is connection, but not internet connection. The true lynchpin to our success is the vital connection we have socially and emotionally with our students and their families. Grantham Village School (GVS) knew from day one of remote instruction that maintaining our success required a singular focus on the social and emotional well being of our students, their families, and our connection to home.

During the first few days, this meant getting breakfast and lunch to our students who needed it without one single day of interruption. It meant getting access where there was no access; e.g., when a local road was impassable, our guidance counselor grabbed an iPad and mobile hotspot and hiked up a trail through the snow to a student's cabin. When we realized this pandemic required more long-term planning, connections with families took on a much larger scope, becoming and remaining the cornerstone to continuity of learning. Staff completed professional readings and collected resources to make available to parents and caregivers.

Of all these efforts, however, the one practice that stands out among the rest is our opening day conference time with families. The first day of school took on a meaning as never before, and we needed it to be an exciting and celebratory school opening as usual, but we were also cognizant that students and families are likely returning after six months with some trepidation. Our Department of Education granted schools an additional three days of preparation, and this is where we leveraged our social and emotional connection. As a whole staff, we set aside all other lesson planning and classroom setup to use this time for online conferences. We had to zoom these conferences, but there were clearly benefits to this. It reminded us of the old days and doing home visits, as we were invited into each child's home, where we sat down with parents, talked, and learned. In turn, our staff had the opportunity to walk around the classroom with the computer and show parents where their child would sit, each lunch, learn, and make friends. For three days and nights, our teachers connected to parents about who their kids are, how they were feeling about the return to school, what their goals, hopes, and fears were, and how we would work together. Questions were answered, relationships were formed, and comfort set in for the beginning of a school year like no other.