

U.S. Department of Education
2021 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 Ms. Traci Dyer
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name North End School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 122 Stevens Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Cedar Grove State NJ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 07009-1147

County Essex County

Telephone (973) 256-1454 Fax (973) 256-8224

Web site/URL
<https://sites.google.com/cgschools.org/northendschool/home> E-mail dyer.traci@cgschools.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* Mr. Anthony Grosso E-mail grosso.anthony@cgschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Cedar Grove Township Tel. (973) 239-1550

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. Christine Dye
(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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	14	6	20
K	23	30	53
1	30	29	59
2	22	27	49
3	21	19	40
4	27	29	56
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
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	137	140	277

*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
 - 6.1 % Asian
 - 2.5 % Black or African American
 - 10.8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 2.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 77.2 % White
 - 1.2 % 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: 7%

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	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	267
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Arabic, Chinese, Creole-pidgin, Greek, Gujarati, Italian, Philippine, Polish, Spanish, Serbian, Telugu, Tagalog, Turkish, Urdu

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
8 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1 %

Total number students who qualify: 2

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %

56 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>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>11</u> Developmental Delay | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 9

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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	14
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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	97%	96%	96%	95%	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 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.

North End School is a digitally connected community where learning is collaborative, relevant, and adaptive to the 21st century learner.

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.

North End School began the school year operating in a fully virtual model until we were able to secure enough substitutes for the faculty members granted accommodations due to pre-existing health conditions. On September 29, 2020, we transitioned to a hybrid model and students attending school in person were assigned to cohorts by last names (A - L & M - Z). Cohort A and B alternate each week, Monday through Thursday, and Fridays have been reserved for virtual learning and deep cleaning. Students attending in person dismiss for lunch and all students participate virtually from home during afternoon activities. The only exception to this is regarding one of our preschool programs. Children in this class have been given the opportunity to participate each week, Monday through Friday, due to the special needs of the class. This classroom has also been housed in a different location so as to not be impacted by any closures due to positive cases of Covid-19.

Beginning April 12, 2021, cohorts will attend in person Monday - Friday and deep cleaning will take place at alternative times. Following the Center for Disease Control's recent updates to social distancing protocols, we have been preparing for combining cohorts. On April 26, 2021, all students wishing to attend school in person will do so Monday through Friday. We will continue to adapt to any changes put into place by our local and state health departments.

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

North End School is a student centered educational environment located in northern New Jersey. Our objective is to provide a multifaceted educational program to meet the needs of each student as an individual and as an integral member of society. We promote college and career readiness skills and empower our students to become critical thinkers and digital learners. Although the Cedar Grove community has been evolving over the past several years, it continues to value the importance of education. Once a predominantly caucasian community, new residential growth and development has drawn families from the surrounding areas, including New York City, to make Cedar Grove their new home. As a result, our school community has started to become more culturally diverse.

It should be noted that we have a very active parent organization, the North End Family School Association (NE FSA). This organization works tirelessly to enhance and support our educational programs. The NE FSA consists of an executive board that meets regularly to oversee ways in which this group can enhance the educational programs in place in our school community. Meetings are held with the community in September, November, January, March, and May. These meetings engage our parents and families in a multitude of ways, including but not limited to: planning and organizing family events such as Bingo & DJ Night, Bowling & Movie Day, Big Brother/Big Sister activities with our kindergarten and fourth grade students, a Safety Walk for our PK & Kindergarten students, and much, much more. Each of these events has a committee that coordinates and plans the special events. The FSA also assists with various community outreach programs such as: collecting various items including non-perishable food items, gently worn coats, new mittens, hats, and gloves for our local food pantry. They also coordinate other drives including: Pennies for Patients, Table to Table, and many more. Although we haven't been able to do many of the activities our FSA assists with this year, we have continued to seek an alternative to simply canceling an event.

The strong sense of community is a key component of our school environment. We continuously seek ways to engage students, not only academically, but also socially and emotionally. Specifically, we have established programs to involve our students in creative ways. For example, our Panther Peer program includes our fourth grade and preschools students. Selected Panther Peers work on specific skills each week with our youngest learners. During our lunch and recess time, Panther Peers interact with our preschool students to encourage socialization, increase speech and language opportunities and build upon character education themes. The Panther Peers have weekly training sessions to prepare them for the focus of the week's activities. Another way we engage our students is by implementing our safety patrol program. Again, fourth grade students serve in this important role. Safety patrols assist our younger students during lunch and recess activities. Each spring, interested third grade students are also invited to participate. Safety patrols escort students to the restroom or the nurse's office, assist with conflict resolution, and engage the children in schoolyard games. This program not only assists with supervision of students, it has also decreased the amount of disciplinary issues that occur during this unstructured time of the school day. Another way we engage our students is by our daily, morning announcements. Again, fourth grade students are given the responsibility of leading us in our daily Pledge of Allegiance, as well as any other announcements regarding the theme or concept of focus for the day, week, or month. This year, we've added the Wheel of Spirit Days to our program. Fourth grade classrooms brainstorm an acceptable list of spirit day options and each Thursday spin the wheel to determine the next week's spirit day. While it may seem as though all of the engaging activities include our fourth grade population, it should be noted that our younger students admire these older children and look forward to serving in one or more capacities when the time is right. They are also able to provide input to spirit day options and sometimes younger students are able to earn the opportunity to serve as Panther Peers and/or safety patrols.

Our School Safety Team, (composed of: our principal, guidance counselor, two teachers, our learning consultant, and a parent), meets regularly to review and discuss our annual plan. This plan includes our methods to appropriately address activities related to educating our community and preventing Harassment, Intimidation, & Bullying (HIB). The plan also highlights strategies to improve the climate and culture of our school. Within this plan, monthly themes focus on character education topics that become a part of daily announcements, spirit days, and activities to promote a positive school environment. These themes not only

become a part of bi-monthly guidance counseling lessons, but they are also evident during morning announcements, classroom morning meetings, and other activities and events held throughout the school year.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

North End School prides itself on being student-centered. Within the scope of the literacy curriculum, our program focuses upon providing students with a firm foundation of skills for developing literacy and to capture language experiences all children need in order to grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Our English Language Arts program, which is aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, provides students with skills that enable them to read, write, communicate, listen, and think critically in order to empower them to become independent, life-long learners. Students will have the opportunity to read a variety of increasingly complex narrative and informational texts for purpose, understanding, and meaning. Likewise, as skills are mastered, strategies are taught to develop comprehension of written text across all genres. Students also apply their developing writing skills by producing personal narratives, informational pieces, and opinion pieces. We accomplish the goal of educating the entire child through the Daily 5/CAFE literacy structure that supports our literacy series, Good Habits, Great Readers. Leveled instructional materials and differentiated instruction provide the backdrop for activities that reinforce key skills and concepts related to New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Within the scope of our mathematics program, the standards for mathematical practice are targeted in a variety of ways. In mathematics, teachers encourage the use of manipulatives and students experience a lesson in all three developmental stages: concrete, pictorial, and abstract. We invested an incredible amount of resources, including professional development and materials, to provide our teachers with the foundation of effective mathematics instruction. At North End School, we are currently using the program, Go Math, as a resource for our mathematics curriculum. Our science program supports the philosophy of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Our students develop an understanding of the disciplinary core ideas relative to physical sciences, life sciences, earth and space sciences, and life science. This is accomplished through experiential learning, engineering and technology, and through exposure to rich non-fiction text. We utilize resources within the program, Inspire Science, as the foundation for our science curriculum. Inspire Science sparks students' curiosity through fascinating real-world phenomena. Students investigate, problem-solve, argue, and discuss scientific phenomena to make sense of the world from their perspective. Although our social studies curriculum is in the process of being revised to reflect recently updated standards in the State of New Jersey, our teachers currently integrate social science themes into weekly language arts lessons as a way to increase exposure to non-fiction materials.

Teaching practices have shifted to include the terms synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Although our teachers used more asynchronous techniques at the onset of the pandemic, we have made great strides in increasing synchronous instruction this year. Our teachers and staff have become quite skilled with these terms and use technology to support our students, especially those that are only participating in our classrooms virtually. We have several computer based programs that our teachers use during asynchronous times of the day, including Reading A to Z, RAZ Kids Plus, Moby Max, and Lexia. While nothing can replace the interaction between teachers and students within a classroom, our staff use these programs to assign students academically appropriate activities to practice and refine skills. While the majority of our school day is expected to include synchronous instruction, there are times asynchronous activities are appropriate and as such, provide another layer of differentiation to our daily program. This is especially true for our youngest learners. Our older students are more adept at working in a virtual environment, so the majority of our students in grades 2 - 4 participate in synchronous instruction throughout the vast majority of the school day. Younger students, specifically preschool through first grade students, alternate between synchronous and asynchronous instructional practices, in conjunction with small group instruction, in an effort to provide more differentiated instruction for children when appropriate.

We use a variety of benchmark assessments to aid our teachers in differentiating instruction by providing more individualized learning. These include but are not limited to the Developmental Reading Assessment, the STAR assessment, DIBELS, and placement tests within the program, Lexia. Our students are also given the standards based, benchmark assessments from the data management platform, LinkIT! Data from these assessments provide important information related to mastery of specific grade level standards. Although it is difficult to glean whether results of fully virtual students are completely accurate, our teachers are using this and other classroom assessment data to drive subsequent, individualized instruction. Teachers utilize

various technology platforms to assess students formally and informally. Specifically, running records captured in Reading A to Z provide valuable information as do the detailed reports from the Lexia program regarding usage and skills attained. Think Central provides online assessments for mathematics, as does Moby Max, both related to mastery of grade level skills and standards. Our afternoon schedule provides our teachers with time to work with small groups of students based on data and academic needs. While teachers rotate through small groups or work with individual students, other children are given the opportunity to participate in enrichment activities with our art, music, physical education, world language, and curriculum support specialists. This has proven not only beneficial to our students, but they thoroughly enjoy having the opportunity to choose a special to attend virtually if they are not required to meet with his/her teacher in a small group.

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

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

We currently operate two preschool classrooms. Typically, these classrooms function as integrated preschool classrooms. While some of the children in these classrooms have been identified as having a developmental delay or some type of disability, other children are tuition-based students and serve as role models for his/her peers. This year, due to Covid-19, one of the classrooms is functioning as an integrated preschool program, while the other classroom has been reserved for the children with more severe disabilities. The children in this program have been afforded the opportunity to attend school every day due to the nature and severity of the disabilities, while the children in the other program have been combined to attend in one cohort due to the small amount of children participating in person. Our preschool programs use the Creative Curriculum as the backbone of the program. The Creative Curriculum is research-based and supports the development of the whole child. This comprehensive program features exploration and discovery as a way of learning through various themes referred to as studies. These studies can last anywhere between 4 - 8 weeks, depending on various factors including student choice and interest in what they are learning. It should also be noted that our preschool teachers collaborate with one another, in addition to our kindergarten teachers, to ensure students are developing the necessary skills to be prepared for kindergarten. Students' success is measured in a variety of ways including reviewing progress towards meeting goals and benchmarks identified in student's Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), as well as data collected from assessments within the Creative Curriculum. Although specific data has not been collected, our preschool and kindergarten teachers have found that children, specifically those without disabilities, participating in our preschool program are better prepared for entering kindergarten than other peers entering from community based preschool or daycare programs.

We also have a Saturday Preschool Program that is facilitated by our FSA. Children that will enter kindergarten during the following school year are invited to participate in a monthly activity held on the first Saturday of every month. Typically these monthly activities take place at North End School, but due to Covid-19, they have been limited to virtual participation. Each month, a guest speaker attends the session and provides the children with an experience that will assist them with transitioning to our school based program at North End. Parents are also present during the activities and are given additional, pertinent information related to kindergarten. We find these activities, whether virtual or in person, have eased tensions related to sending a child off to school for the first time.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students are afforded the opportunity to participate in art, music, physical education, and world language. This year, in order to limit opportunities for exposure to Covid-19 while maintaining the integrity of established cohorts of students, the majority of our specialists push into classrooms as opposed to classes going to the art room or the media center, etc. In addition to art, music, world language, and physical education, we also have a curriculum support specialist that consistently integrates science, technology, engineering, mathematics, as well as literacy activities, into our daily program. All students participate in these integrated lessons two times per week.

Students are introduced to the basics of Spanish in our world language program. Weekly music classes prepare students for annual concerts while teaching the fundamentals of music, useful and practical music classroom activities, and a solid performance ethic. Typically, our fourth grade students are also given the opportunity to participate in a strings ensemble. However, Covid-19 prevented this from happening this school year. Many art lessons grow out of the students' work in academic areas and our art specialist incorporates different media while developing a sequential skills program. Students participate in two physical education classes per week designed to teach skills, strategies, cooperation, and enhance team building. Our school nurse addresses a number of programs in classrooms to promote a healthy lifestyle and the wellness of students such as hygiene, the benefits of exercise, dental care, nutrition, and germ prevention. Our shared guidance counselor does bi-monthly lessons focused on character education topics, in addition to social and emotional wellness concepts. North End School is dedicated to providing our children with a variety of subjects to create a well rounded child. We recognize that our special classes are another way in which we engage children in positive ways which ultimately promotes and advances education.

3. Academic Supports:

Data drives instructional practices at North End School. Specifically, all children are assessed at three times throughout the school year to identify children's progress towards achieving grade level academic expectancies. Last year, we transitioned to using the benchmark assessments within the LinkIt data management platform. Children scoring below specific data points are also given additional assessments to confirm eligibility into one of our intervention programs. Children scoring above specific cut points and meeting additional criteria are referred to our gifted and talented specialist to determine eligibility into that program. As previously mentioned, classroom teachers differentiate instruction based on specific needs. They offer additional support for children by using breakout rooms within Google Meet and/or through small group instruction provided during our virtual afternoon activities.

Small group literacy and math intervention is offered to eligible students in kindergarten through grade 2, while eligible students in grades 3 and 4 receive additional academic support through our Basic Skills Instruction (BSI) program. We also have an afterschool program for third and fourth graders, referred to as Pathways, for eligible students needing academic support in literacy and mathematics.

Our Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) Committee provides support for classroom teachers struggling to meet a child's needs. This committee is composed of: the principal, guidance counselor, two classroom teachers, the nurse, the K-2 intervention specialist, and the learning consultant. After receiving a referral from a teacher, the committee meets with the team (that includes the committee members, the teacher(s), specialists involved with the child, and the child's parent), to identify an intervention plan developed to address the child's specific academic or behavioral need(s). This committee follows the response to intervention model and meets regularly to determine if an individualized intervention plan is working or needs to be adjusted.

We also provide support to our students with special needs in a variety of ways. North End fosters a collaborative, co-teaching model in which a general education and special education teacher work together to teach students with and without disabilities in a shared classroom. Eligible students needing additional academic support can receive this through a continuum of services provided at North End. This includes but is not limited to: targeted intervention through the use of a multi-sensory approach to teaching literacy, and/or specific support from a related service provider to include speech and language services, occupational or physical therapy, or guidance counseling. It should also be noted that some children have been identified as eligible for additional academic support in a smaller class at a slower pace in one of our replacement classrooms. Although we have

very few children that have English as a second language, our program and ELL specialist supports students as they acquire a new language. Through the use of a pull out model, our ELL specialist meets daily with eligible students to provide appropriate academic support in a small group setting.

Cedar Grove's Gifted and Talented/School-wide Enrichment program provides specialized enrichment experiences to students. School-wide enrichment activities are made available to all students and also meet the needs of an identified population through a pull-out program and alternatives such as cluster interest groups and mentorships. To participate in the academically gifted program, students undergo an identification process, based on test results and teacher recommendations. Such students manifest behaviors in three general clusters of characteristics: above average intellectual ability, task commitment, and creativity. In the School-wide Enrichment Program, we maintain a broadened concept of giftedness, and a focus on the development of potentials in groups not ordinarily included in special programs for the gifted and talented. Here the program teacher provides in-class skill and process-training support as well as enrichment opportunities for the general school population. Offerings provide differentiated instruction and enriching opportunities for all. Our gifted and talented teacher provides strategies and resources for classroom teachers to integrate within daily lessons to encourage critical thinking and problem solving skills.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Although this year has presented many challenges, we have worked diligently to find ways to motivate and engage our youngest learners. Our annual activities had to be altered to meet protocols in place as a result of Covid-19. Many of the activities typically held at North End School require parent volunteers to ensure success and unfortunately we were unable to accommodate visitors within our school building. For example, our annual Halloween activities were altered to include pumpkin crafts completed at home that were provided by our FSA. Students were encouraged to wear his/her costumes, and although we didn't have our annual parade, children were excited to participate virtually. Instead of simply canceling annual activities, we have sought alternative ways to conduct them. Another example is related to our spirit days. Typically, each summer we build our yearly calendar of activities, to include monthly spirit days, while keeping in mind various activities held at certain times of year. This year, our fourth grade classes determine our weekly spirit days by brainstorming a list of appropriate options and randomly selecting the winner by having the opportunity to spin the wheel of spirit days. This has created an excitement within the building and other grade levels have the opportunity to share ideas for weekly spirit day themes, too. Typically, during our Read Across America (RAA) activities, a multitude of adults visit our school to serve as guest readers. However, guest readers were limited to virtual activities, yet this proved successful. Parents and guests were able to read a favorite book, while sharing how reading impacts their lives each day. Visitors were still able to share important information about his/her career, another valuable part of these activities. Book challenges still occurred and the theme for the year, Lucky to Love Books, enabled festive dress-up days and a leprechaun even caused mischief in each classroom, virtually and in person! While we weren't able to do the typical annual events, we found alternative ways to engage our students throughout this challenging year.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The parent portal in Genesis, our student data management system, provides parents with important information including grades, attendance and important events. This system enables the administration to send important information via email to families. The administration sought alternative ways to engage families during the pandemic. The principal started the "Daily Dose of Dyer" last spring as a way to share information and engage with families. Often in a short video form, these messages were intended to engage families who may not take the time to read a lengthy email. Each day a recording of the principal reading aloud a picture book was also sent to families as an optional activity for families.

As previously mentioned, the North End FSA is an integral part of the North End community. Through targeted fundraising each year, they are able to provide materials, additional technology equipment, assemblies, and cultural experiences that enhance the instructional program. Virtual FSA meetings have increased participation as many parents are able to attend without the need to secure evening child care. Our FSA executive board serves as key communicators, disseminating information through social media outlets and weekly e-blasts. Additionally, North End School is an active partner with multiple local organizations in an effort to teach our children the importance of giving back to others. As previously mentioned, students collect for several charitable organizations including our local food banks, which is incredibly important as more and more families are considered food insecure during this challenging time. While our students have not been able to participate in community based field trips this year, we are looking forward to re-establishing our connections within the community, especially with the local assisted living center, in the near future.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Our staff has high expectations for our students and themselves. To meet these expectations, staff members actively participate in graduate classes, workshops and training held in and outside of our district. We previously instituted the ed camp model and our after school and summer teacher academy activities provide opportunities for professional growth. Although providing in person learning for our staff has been

challenging during the past year, we have shifted to provide more virtual learning opportunities for our teachers and staff. This year, our school district joined a consortium, called ChangeMaker. This group is also partnered with Learner Mobile and they are able to deliver immersive learning experiences with engaging content, video, and interactive modules that maximize staff growth and success. Teachers and staff are able to access professional development opportunities related to their own needs and on his/her schedule.

Although our classroom teachers and specialists collaborated regularly in the past, teaching during a global pandemic has increased the need for collaboration among our staff. Grade level teams meet regularly and the increased collaboration is evident during reviews of Google Classroom sites, informal and formal observations, as well as grade level team meetings. Teachers are sharing ideas regarding integrating technology and how to maintain high levels of student engagement. As previously mentioned, the majority of our specialists push into classrooms as opposed to classes going to the art room or the media center, etc. One positive, unintended consequence of this change has been the opportunity for our curriculum support specialist to serve as a role model for our classroom teachers. This specialist consistently integrates science, technology, engineering, mathematics, as well as literacy activities, into our daily program. This has indirectly increased our teachers' knowledge of utilizing a variety of technology platforms during this challenging time. By witnessing the curriculum support specialist integrate a variety of activities and technology platforms into daily lessons, it has also created a safe space for our teachers to take risks and try new approaches modeled by this colleague. Materials and how-to videos have been made available on our virtual media center site and this has been consistently updated by our curriculum support specialist to also provide additional resources to our staff.

It has been challenging to maintain a positive morale during this challenging time. Our families have faced many challenges over the past year and our faculty and staff are no exception. Virtual instruction has caused many of our staff members to feel as though they are under a microscope and some community members have expressed dissatisfaction with the current learning model on social media outlets. This has created added stress to our learning community. Recognizing staff member's efforts has been critical at this time. Our administrative team continually seeks ways to create and maintain a positive environment. One example of this was the manner in which our board of education recognized the recipients of New Jersey's Governor Educator of the Year. Huge banners were created and displayed at each school building recognizing this year's winners. Grab 'n Go treats have been provided by our FSA at various times throughout the school year and raffle tickets have been distributed to give staff members an opportunity to win various prizes. Although these are only a few examples, our team feels it is very important to continuously create ways to recognize the tireless efforts of our teachers and staff during this unprecedented time in education.

4. School Leadership:

Creating a collaborative environment is the focus of the leadership philosophy of North End. Our School Improvement Panel (ScIP) consists of the principal, teachers, and a parent representative. Decisions related to instructional practices are made with input from the ScIP and focus on our district's goals. Under the leadership of a newly appointed superintendent of schools (August, 2020), our administrative team has refined the focus of our school improvement planning efforts. Previously driven by goals and objectives related to New Jersey's Future Ready initiatives, our board of education recognized the need to shift priorities to cultural awareness and the social and emotional well being of our students and staff. Specifically, due to the impact of Covid-19, resources including time, people, and money have been earmarked to support these incredibly important components impacting student achievement in our schools. As such, our ScIP is in the process of redefining our goals for the remainder of this school year as well as prioritizing key areas of focus for the 2021-22 school year. In addition to this shift, North End's Pandemic Response Team, composed of the principal, teachers, our school nurse, and a parent, meets regularly to discuss protocols and procedures in place related to operating during a global pandemic. This team works diligently to institute protocols and guidelines recommended by our state and local health departments as well as the Center for Disease Control. Maintaining open lines of communication is critical at this challenging time. Although it is imperative that we adhere to the privacy rights of our stakeholders, it is equally important that this team discuss any situations as they arise and identify any action steps required to maintain order and stability within our school. We have been fortunate to have relatively few positive cases of Covid-19 this year, however, our Pandemic Response Team is well versed in the concept of contact

tracing and meets with teachers and parents as necessary to keep our community safe and informed. Working together has been incredibly helpful as we navigate these uncharted waters in education and we are hopeful to emerge even stronger when we no longer have to face the fears of living and teaching during a global pandemic.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

As previously stated, a shift in our district's goals happened with not only the appointment of a new superintendent, but also due to issues surfacing related to social movements and events. Although we have made great strides in our district as it relates to inclusionary practices, last spring, like many communities throughout the United States, Cedar Grove was impacted by the events that occurred related to the concept of Black Lives Matter. Children of diverse backgrounds began to express negative feelings through social media platforms and protests ensued. As such, the board of education charged our superintendent with the task of instituting change to ensure equity, cultural awareness, and respect in our classrooms and schools. To that end, our superintendent created the Equity and Diversity Action Committee (EDAC) and each school has stakeholders representing and serving in this critical role. Within this committee are various subcommittees, each with their own focus related to the overarching concepts of equity, diversity, inclusion, and respect. These committees are also in the process of outlining action steps and developing a plan for professional development opportunities for staff.

Our superintendent has addressed issues publicly at our bi-monthly board meetings and has also sent written correspondence to families regarding any events occurring within our schools or community. At the elementary level, and specifically at North End School, our focus has been shifted to identify and procure a vast array of children's literature to be used as teaching tools for these sensitive topics. Grade level teams, with the guidance of the EDAC, have collaboratively selected texts to enhance our school and classroom libraries. Our district's curriculum supervisors have also supported our staff by creating valuable resources including but not limited to a Cultural and National Observances and Celebrations Resource Guide that assists teachers during lesson planning efforts. While we have made strides towards our approach to ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion, this continues to be a work in progress for North End School and Cedar Grove Township School District.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At North End School and throughout our district, we believe that technology enhances the curriculum and it is used to improve teaching and learning. Identified by the State of New Jersey as a Future Ready school in 2019, North End already had a strong foundation in place to address the need to shift to teaching in a virtual world. The district's previous one-to-one initiative, related to technology devices for each child, prepared us for transitioning to virtual learning last spring. Although our teaching staff was at various stages of being able to use this technology effectively, we have grown tremendously throughout the past year. Our teachers have become proficient in the use of the G-Suite Enterprise for Education resources, along with a number of other applications and platforms allowing live feedback and increased engagement in a virtual setting. Another important aspect of the previously awarded Future Ready status was the concept of embedding student choice and voice into daily lessons and instructional practices. Teachers have become more comfortable with giving children choices related to expected learning tasks, a strategy we know increases student engagement. While we recognize the importance of maintaining standards-based instructional practices, it is equally important to find ways to promote high levels of interest and engagement. Collaborative efforts tied to giving children a choice and a voice have been a major shift that we feel has contributed to our academic success. Although it should be mentioned this is also a work in progress. Some staff members have embraced this concept, however, others have yet to relinquish control to students to decide how best to demonstrate proficiency as it relates to expected tasks. Teacher leaders were becoming more comfortable with sharing ideas and data related to this concept and we are hopeful we will not lose sight of this strategy during this challenging time.