

***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 Mrs. Lori O. White  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 6701 Respass Beach Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Suffolk State VA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 23435-2735

County Suffolk City

Telephone (757) 923-4169 Fax (757) 925-5602

Web site/URL https://nses.spsk12.net E-mail loriwhite@spsk12.net

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. John B. Gordon III E-mail johngordon@spsk12.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Suffolk City Public School District Tel. (757) 925-6750

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 Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck  
(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):
- 11 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 3 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 19 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	11	14	25
K	58	46	104
1	53	59	112
2	55	52	107
3	63	58	121
4	76	67	143
5	75	74	149
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
<b>Total Students</b>	391	370	761

\*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 % Asian
  - 42 % Black or African American
  - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 36 % White
  - 10 % 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: 14%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	58
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	54
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	112
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	819
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.14
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	14

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Chinese (Yule), Spanish (Castilian), Vietnamese, French, Tagalog, Amharic, Arabic, Thia Italian, Chinese (Madarian), Twi

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
13 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 28 %  
 Total number students who qualify: 211

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %

65 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>16</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>12</u> Developmental Delay    | <u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>12</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>4</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: 4

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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	35
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.	17
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 22:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	97%
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.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

The mission of Northern Shores Elementary School is to provide all students challenging opportunities that will enable them to succeed academically, socially, physically, and emotionally.

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.

Northern Shores Elementary School opened on September 8, 2020 in a virtual learning model for the majority of students. Only those students enrolled in targeted special education programs returned to school in a hybrid learning model. This model provided this population of students with two days a week of in person instruction and provided virtual instruction the remaining three days of the week.

Beginning March 15, 2021, all families were offered the opportunity to return to school in a hybrid model (two days of in person instruction with three days of asynchronous learning) or to remain on the virtual schedule. Approximately 60 percent of students returned to the hybrid model and 40 percent remained in the virtual learning environment. In order to address the multiple learning models selected, teachers were assigned as virtual or hybrid instructors based on individual grade level needs. This division of labor forced the redistribution of some students across classrooms and teachers. Maintaining focus on student learning and success, grade level teams met to discuss individual student needs and all available data to assign best fit classroom placements for each student. As school reopened for all students, students already in a hybrid model with special education programs experienced an increase in face-to-face instructional time from two days a week to four days a week.

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**

---

Northern Shores Elementary School (NSES) was established in 1996 in Suffolk, Virginia and serves the largest elementary student population in the Suffolk Public School Division. Although large in population, the school has the dynamics and feel of a smaller neighborhood school. The school is nestled in a middle-class neighborhood, Burbage Grant, located in the northernmost part of the city. The majority of NSES families reside in this neighborhood or in the adjacent Harbor View and Riverfront communities.

The mission of NSES is to provide all students with challenging opportunities and experiences that will enable them to succeed academically, socially, physically, and emotionally. Students experience real world learning through the use of research-based strategies and differentiated instruction. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) activities and performance-based assessments play a vital role in challenging students to apply concepts in a practical environment. Students are further encouraged to become responsible 21st century digital citizens through the use of interactive technology such as instructional websites, online testing, Canvas, and Google Classroom. Social emotional learning opportunities are embedded daily while physical wellness is promoted through a variety of activities and events throughout the year.

NSES is proud to consider itself a fully inclusive school. This means that all students regardless of background, ability level, or needs are part of our one NSES family. Classrooms are designated to address specific programming needs; however, the success of each student is wholly dependent upon all members of the broader school community. This is demonstrated daily through the commitment and collaboration of all staff. Collaborative planning, co-teaching, team teaching, and flexible grouping of students can be observed on a daily basis.

Regarding special programs for students with disabilities, the school includes Alternative Integrated, Alternative Adapted, and Alternative Functional curricular programs. The school also consists of two Early Childhood Special Education (ESCE) program classes for students between two and four years of age. All of the students in specialized programs are given opportunities daily to engage with their typically developing peers. Other special programs include targeted instruction for English Language Learners and students identified as gifted learners.

Innovation and ingenuity are also encouraged and embraced. Teachers continually demonstrate both of these qualities, as well as their collaborative spirit, in efforts to increase student achievement. For example, a unique collaboration between the music and gifted teachers resulted in the creation of a modified instrument using a circuit board device. This enabled a student who could not physically manipulate the instrument to participate with peers. Another innovative collaboration focused on engaging students with disabilities in game-like activities that targeted executive functioning skills, specifically working memory. This collaboration was facilitated by the gifted teacher and special education staff. This not only created opportunities for students to practice these important skills but also allowed students an opportunity to build self-confidence and social skills.

Parental and community involvement are highly valued and contribute significantly to the school's overall success. Prior to school closures, it was not uncommon to see volunteers, parents, and family members working with students in the classrooms, eating lunch with students, and participating in school-wide events such as the fall festival, career week, field day, and other academic and behavioral celebrations. The most recent survey data indicates that ninety-four percent of parents recognize that the school "encourages families to be involved" in their child's learning.

NSES is especially honored to serve our large population of military connected families. Military families experience a unique lifestyle often enduring numerous and difficult transitions. Recognizing the need for military family support in the school community, the Anchored4Life (A4L) program has been implemented in collaboration with community members and the local military liaison. The A4L program is a student transition program that helps students learn to be happier, more resilient, and more confident in life. Change can be challenging for most. This program helps students develop the skills needed to bounce back from



experiences such as frequent moves, deployments, navigating new schools, and making friends. Annual training occurs that includes student, staff, and parent representatives. This training builds leadership skills among student members and allows them the opportunity to help others by meeting and integrating new students and families to the school community. Student leaders are tasked with providing specialized kits to students identified as experiencing difficult transitions. For example, a student experiencing an impending deployment might receive a box with a teddy bear and corresponding strategies for the student to cope. Similar kits are available for students experiencing other transitions such as the loss of a loved one (including pets), divorce, new siblings, and more.

Additional military partnerships are established and ongoing. Military representatives have volunteered as tutors, read aloud to students of all ages, and have shared their experiences during career week. While COVID-19 closures have paused these activities, they are sure to resume when it is safe to do so in the face-to-face environment. Due to its strong support of military connected students and families, NSES received the Virginia Department of Education Distinguished Purple Star designation.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

---

### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

The school implements the Standards of Learning (SOL) for Virginia Public Schools as provided by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) in all academic areas: reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. In a traditional learning year, each content area is allotted a specified amount of time in the daily instructional schedule with a focus on literacy and numeracy. Cross-curricular integration is encouraged and is most evident in grades four and five where teachers are paired and team teach groups of students. A traditional school day offers nearly six hours of instructional time for core content areas for students in addition to daily immersion in resource/exploratory courses. While the school division reevaluates curriculum frameworks annually, the curriculum for the 2020-2021 school year was adapted in consideration of the school closures due to COVID-19. Teams met throughout the summer months to adapt the curriculum to include standards that were not taught during the 2019-2020 school year.

In the virtual environment, teachers have had to modify their instructional planning to accommodate the limited amount of time they are able to provide live instruction to students. The virtual school day schedule provides both synchronous and asynchronous learning for students five days a week. Synchronous learning, with the teacher, occurs at a minimum of twice a day for whole group instruction in literacy and numeracy. Afternoons are reserved for targeted small group instruction to include remediation and enrichment opportunities with both teachers and teacher assistants. This shift in available face-to-face instructional time has forced increased cross-curricular integration at all levels.

Often science and social studies are provided to students in the asynchronous learning days via pre-recorded lessons shared by their teachers. The science curriculum encourages students to engage in scientific investigation with a focus on scientific and engineering practices and living systems and processes. The social studies curriculum teaches students to become critical thinkers of local, state, national, and world history. Students are provided opportunities to identify and analyze artifacts and resources while also learning to compare and contrast ideas and perspectives to better understand the world around them.

Literacy and numeracy are a priority area of focus at NSES. A specific focus of teaching Concept of Word (COW) in kindergarten through third grades provides a foundation for building successful readers. Daily implementation of guided reading strategies also allows teachers to provide differentiated instruction to all students in the classroom. Teachers recognize and prioritize the focus on building number sense as a basic mathematical skill. Teachers approach this through the persistent use of manipulatives and visual representations and the implementation of math and number talks in their daily instruction.

Teachers strive to maximize student engagement through their daily planning and instructional practices. Grade level teams meet a minimum of once weekly, and most daily, to create innovative lesson plans that incorporate research-based strategies while also considering the unique interests and talents of the students in their classrooms. Student interest inventories are commonly used to assist teachers in providing relevant real-life learning experiences for the students. In addition to core content instruction, students are also taught goal-setting and reflective practices at all grade levels. This promotes and teaches students how to practice meta-cognitive strategies and apply them to their learning building more confident and successful learners.

Assessment practices are inherent in any successful educational environment. NSES staff utilizes a variety of formative and summative assessments to gather data and further drive instructional decisions. Each content area administers local common assessments at specified points in the instructional calendar. These assessments include project-based learning assessments as well as more traditional assessments that include multiple choice and written responses. Students across the division in grades pre-K through three also participate in Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) three times a year. Students in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten also participate twice a year in the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) assessments of mathematical, self-regulation, and social skills. Students in grades one through five participate in diagnostic assessments of both reading and mathematics twice a year using iReady instructional software. This comprehensive software program provides teachers with specific data on student performance and also creates individualized digital learning paths for students based on their specific

diagnostic results.

Formative assessments occur on a daily basis in the context of each classroom. These assessments include individual student conferencing, exit tickets, learning logs, student discussions, and much more. While all assessment data is used for the purposes of instructional planning, summative assessment data is used to drive building-wide decisions for purposes of remediation and enrichment planning. This data is used across grade levels to develop targeted remediation plans using flexible grouping options throughout the year. This not only allows students to receive targeted instruction and support but also allows teachers and staff to maximize available human resources and instructional time.

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

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

NSES has one Early Start classroom that serves four-year-old students who are identified as needing an additional year to prepare for success in kindergarten. Pre-screenings are conducted to determine the individual needs of each applicant. Eligibility criteria includes, but is not limited to, family income, education of parents, language and development assessment of the child, and homelessness.

Northern Shores implements the STREAMin3 curriculum that was developed by the University of Virginia. STREAMin3 curriculum integrates Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, and Math through an inquiry-based approach. The implementation of this curriculum requires intensive and ongoing professional development for the classroom teacher and teacher assistant. Building level administration also sought to obtain Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) certification to offer quality ongoing support and feedback that aligns with the new curriculum.

Social emotional learning is an integral part of the curriculum. Students are taught to identify and manage their emotions using a variety of strategies including deep breathing techniques. Students are taught to think broadly about the world around them and how their behaviors and actions impact that world. Practicing making choices, sharing, measuring, patterning, numeracy and operations, letters, and sounds are all part of their daily learning experiences.

While in the virtual learning environment, students met a minimum of twice daily for virtual morning meetings (social and emotional learning) and to receive instruction in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Recognizing the importance of brain development and motor activity, teachers provided resources for families to promote hands-on learning activities in the home environment. Given the opportunity to return to either return for hybrid instruction or to remain virtual, all students chose to return to the hybrid model.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

There are five resource classes included in the curriculum for all students K-5. These include art, music, library, computer science, and physical education. In a traditional face to face learning year, students experience instruction in each of these areas one time per week for forty-five minutes giving them a daily resource block. These areas infuse critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, and citizenship into the learning experience for students. Resource teachers work in collaboration with content area colleagues to ensure their lessons and activities align with and support one another.

This format has been adapted to fit the virtual learning platform. Due to the size of the school building and daily learning schedule, resource teachers were not able to deliver live face to face instruction to all students daily. As such, resource teachers provided students with interactive modules for art, music, library, and physical education. These modules were presented in the Canvas online learning platform and included self-recorded video instruction from the resource team. By creating online modules and pre-recording lessons, students were still able to participate in a daily resource class and build connections with resource staff.

As virtual learning progressed, the resource staff was determined to offer more live instruction to students to promote and maintain engagement. Resource teachers began offering a collaborative weekly live session for combined grade levels during the second nine weeks. Teachers took turns leading the interactive activities each week. This modification was a success as indicated by the high attendance rates each week. Each session served no less than one hundred students.

When students returned to face-to-face hybrid instruction, resource teachers returned to teach their respective lessons using a push-in model for hybrid students. Virtual students continue to receive both pre-recorded and interactive lessons using the online learning platform.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

The first strategy used to provide academic support for all students is proactive planning. Careful consideration is given when creating class assignments. Each year teachers assist with the proper placement of their students for the next school year using multiple data points. This process allows staff to meet the needs of each student while also creating successful student groups. Due to COVID-19 school closures and the priority on social emotional well-being, whole student groups were looped to new teachers this school year to capitalize on existing classroom communities and streamline teacher communications. The pre-service schedule includes time to allow vertical collaboration among teachers to share learning profiles and corresponding strategies that have proven successful.

It is a priority at NSES that support is provided to all students. School-wide goals include closing achievement gaps as well as increasing the number of students who reach advanced proficiency benchmarks and take advanced coursework in their middle school years. NSES staff has received training in the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS) and has begun the process of creating its own model at the building level. Teachers have developed student profiles and look-for items to identify tiers of necessary supports for students and corresponding strategies for intervention.

Students who are performing below grade level are provided targeted responses to meet their individual learning needs using Responses to Intervention (RTI) strategies. Individualized student learning plans called Strategies Offered for Success (SOS) are developed in partnership with teachers, guidance counselors and families to provide targeted intervention for students. These plans can address academic, behavioral, and even emotional needs for students.

Efforts to increase achievement for students with disabilities have involved the ongoing reorganization of staff assignments to allow for more collaborative planning opportunities and an increased focus on the use of student performance data. Increasing collaborative opportunities has also served to increase ownership in student learning among all staff. While staff implements research based best practices for this population, the staff also holds high expectations for this student group while celebrating each steppingstone along the way. All students are also provided the opportunity to interact with their general education peers to the greatest extent possible allowing students the opportunity to grow emotionally and socially.

Acceleration and enrichment opportunities are provided for those students who are demonstrating at and above grade level proficiency. The gifted program begins with enrichment for kindergarten through grade two. It offers creative activities and lessons based on the advanced needs and the maturity of students. The Quality Utilization Enrichment of Students' Talents (QUEST) program reaches academically gifted students in grades 3-5. These students receive direct instruction from the gifted resource teacher. Emphasis is placed upon critical thinking, creative problem solving, developing independent research skills, and stimulating creativity.

For English Language Learners, individual tutors are selected to meet the specific needs of the student. Tutors provide direct one on one instruction to students for up to five hours per week and frequently collaborate with teachers to develop and implement strategies for the success of this student population.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

---

### **1. Engaging Students:**

Student engagement is vital in creating a positive learning environment for all students. It is an active process in which a love of learning is cultivated and nurtured in all students and spans the acquisition and practice of both academic and social emotional skills. The most recent student survey data indicated that 94 percent of NSES students believe that the school prepares them to be successful by supporting their learning and providing a high quality education.

NSES promotes student engagement in many ways. In the 2019-2020 school year, the school began the formal implementation process of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). A team was developed to participate in ongoing professional development and consists of a cross-section of staff members to represent all grade levels and special programs available at the building. The team has developed a school-wide matrix defining the expectations that all NSES community members are “Kind, Safe, Eager, and Respectful”. The matrix is explicitly taught to students and behaviors are modeled by staff members throughout the school. The matrix includes expected behaviors for all areas of the building and was adjusted to reflect both virtual and hybrid learning environments in the 2020-2021 school year. During school closures, teachers select students of the week to represent their classrooms, and one student is drawn at random to be the grade level student of the week. These students are then recognized on the school website and social media platforms via pictures and videos. In addition, the PBIS team members conducted home visits to each student who was chosen as “Student of the Week” to provide them with their weekly swag bag of goodies. As the school has transitioned back to a hybrid model, these practices remain commonplace and students are continually recognized for making smart choices, academically and behaviorally.

Northern Shores Elementary also celebrates and promotes student engagement through a variety of available school clubs and activities. Nearly 100 students participate in activities and clubs annually. These clubs appeal to a variety of student interests and include the Student Council Association (SCA), Battle of the Books Team, Garden Club, Globe Club (a collaboration with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration), Girls on the Run, Girl’s STEM Club, Anchored4Life Club, Talented Music, Talented Art, and even a student run Safety Patrol.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

The strong commitment to community stakeholders is one of the greatest assets at NSES. Twelve active business partnerships are maintained with local businesses. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and business partners maintain a strong and visible presence in the school. These PTA board members and volunteers frequently assist in classrooms, provide school supplies, organize fundraisers, and help foster a positive school culture by providing items and gestures of appreciation for teachers, staff, and students. These partners in education are known to participate in our annual career week festivities, provide tutoring services for students, conduct classroom presentations, and even help facilitate our annual fall festival and field day events.

Additionally, there are three local entities that partner with the school to provide services directly to students and families. Each agency provides a staff member that is present in the physical building daily. Western Tidewater Community Services Board (WTCSB) specializes in providing mental health and wrap around community support to students and families in crisis. The National Counseling Group (NCG) works directly with students to provide mental health services during the school day. Due to our high military student body, a Military Family Life Counselor (MFLC) also works in the school building to support our military students and families throughout their education journeys.

Prior to school closures in the Spring of 2020, the physical building was often full of life even after school hours. Community organizations such as the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts used the facilities for weekly meetings. These collaborations lead to mutually beneficial practices. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts have

updated school grounds (flower beds, rock gardens, etc.) on numerous occasions. The local women's league even created a book library that lives outside in the garden planted and maintained by our Garden Club members.

Efforts to maintain community and family engagement during the closure have included the development of socially distanced events. At the conclusion of the 2019-2020 school year, staff held a drive-through parade for students and families. This year wellness activities such as the Reindeer Run and the Turkey Trot were held on school grounds using QR codes to participate. This allowed families to participate safely and at their own leisure. Even back to school orientation events transitioned to an online model. Parents and students could choose to watch pre-recorded introductory videos and/or participate in live online meet and greet events with staff.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

The staff at Northern Shores is valued. At the beginning of school closures, the administrators personally delivered gift bags to each staff member. An ongoing practice is providing updated information in the Dolphin Tales, the weekly newsletter. Each week there are staff "shout outs" where various staff members are highlighted for their positive contributions. Monthly, the administrators give each staff member a themed token of gratitude. The principal and assistant principal deliver the items personally to each staff member. Although the items are not of high monetary value, they are appreciated by the staff.

Ongoing staff development is provided which builds on previous learning opportunities. Recent professional development includes growth mindset, social emotional well-being to include restorative practices, morning circles and morning meetings, and the new SEL curriculum formally implemented by the district. Guided Reading practices and Number Talks that allow students to visualize mathematical concepts and improve their number sense have also been implemented. Each teacher is required to have at least 15 hours of professional development every year, and most exceed that expectation. Paraprofessionals play a vital role in professional development. Opportunities are offered and attended by them as well.

Every new staff member is provided a mentor. Mentors are tasked with acclimating new teachers to the climate of the school. They also advise new teachers about instruction, curriculum, procedure, practices at Northern Shores. Being a mentor is a significant contribution to the development of a new professional, and because of that, the entire grade level assists in the mentoring process. When available, teachers also serve as collaborating teachers to college students pursuing a teaching degree.

Each summer several teachers volunteer to serve on district curriculum writing teams. Their tasks may include creating and reviewing district-wide assessments and other materials related to instruction. Because of those experiences, they are able to share and model what they have learned to the staff.

Recently, Suffolk Public Schools began to designate Fridays for professional development for all instructional staff. For school-wide professional development, teachers, and other staff members, are often the facilitators. Some facilitators are chosen, while others volunteer based on interest and expertise. When staff members provide the professional development sessions, the motivation of attendees is higher, it also gives staff members opportunities to experience leadership opportunities.

The administration's approach to creating a professional culture is to make sure every one's opinions are heard. Every professional development request is reviewed, and most are approved. When staff members request to share learning experiences with the staff, it is highly encouraged. The Northern Shores' staff is diverse in educational experience. They are supported by building administrators and each other.

### **4. School Leadership:**

A strong leadership team is germane to the overall success of every school. The implementation of the school district's and school's visions begins with the building leadership. The administrative team consists of the building principal and the assistant principal; however, the shared leadership philosophy embraced by both of them is evident in the construct of the broader school-wide leadership team.

The leadership team consists of one grade level chair pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, one resource teacher representative, one special education, and one gifted teacher representative. The leadership team is involved in all major decisions made at the building level. The administrative team believes in the knowledge, expertise, and opinions of the team to make decisions that maintain a student-centered focus. All decisions and corresponding actions are made through the lens of doing what is best for students.

Each grade level representative on the leadership team acts as the grade level chairperson and teacher leader. It is the responsibility of the team leaders to serve as liaisons between the building administrators and the grade levels. The leadership team meets a minimum of once per month, more frequently through transitional times such as the recent school closures, summer reopening planning, and as students transitioned back to a hybrid learning model. It is the responsibility of the team leaders to not only disseminate information, but more importantly, to gather feedback from their teams for continual school improvement. Monthly meetings are held with the fourteen members of the leadership team to collaborate and facilitate information.

John Hattie's "Collective Teacher Efficacy" is a framework embraced and modeled by the leadership team and teachers throughout the building. The building administrators understand that teachers have the most significant and direct impact on teaching and learning. Their ideas are important and they have autonomy to make decisions that affect their students.

Another high yield strategy used at NSES to increase student achievement is the development of exceptional teachers through the provision of high quality and immediate teacher feedback at regular intervals. The administrative team has a daily goal of observing no less than eight teachers and to provide written feedback to them within twenty-four hours. The principal and assistant principal meet daily before and after school to discuss the observations of teaching and learning. Discussions include areas of both glows and grows and help identify future areas of focus and improvement.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Culturally responsive teaching is everyone's responsibility. Educators are perfectly positioned to be leaders for equity. At NSES, all instructional staff have received professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching and learning. Zaretta Hammond, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, personally provided some of the professional learning opportunities. In addition, the school district continued learning opportunities with Book talks related to the theme that will continue for the rest of the school year.

Each homeroom teacher facilitates a morning meeting to begin their day. The idea of the "Morning Meeting" came from the Responsive Classroom model. It engages students and builds a sense of community. It also provides opportunities for social and academic engagement. The model encourages students to sit in a circle for about 20-30 minutes at the start of the day, but due to safety concerns, the teachers have modified the way the "Morning Meetings" are managed. Teachers conduct these meetings in the in-person classroom and in the virtual classroom. There are four components of the morning meeting: greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message. The teachers are able to organize the strategies within the component to make it relevant to their students.

Another way to ensure we are culturally responsive at Northern Shores is to maintain positive collaboration with parents and other stakeholders. Teachers are respectful to the differences in their students' cultures, and they teach with those differences in mind. Especially since the global pandemic, teachers are even more sensitive to students and family needs. Teachers communicate with parents at least once a week. Parents are a significant part of the academic team. Having classes loop to the next grade level together also assisted with the overall collaboration and relational trust.



Each teacher and support staff members were provided professional development opportunities in the area of social-emotional development as a district-wide initiative. This will continue throughout the school year, virtually and face-to-face.

In the most recent school survey data, 80 percent of students report at least one adult “knows me well” and shows interest in “my education and future”. Ninety-seven percent also responded that teachers care about “how they do in school”, and ninety-nine percent feel that teachers expect students to “do their best”.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

There is no singular strategy that has more impact in the fundamental beliefs and corresponding actions at NSES that is greater than embracing the “power of yet”. Staff has participated in professional development in neuroplasticity and growth mindset that has included a book study using Carol Dweck’s Growth Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. Staff has also been provided mini-lessons, ideas, and strategies for age-appropriate implementation. Students begin learning what it means to have a growth mindset from the first day of school.

Setting goals, developing plans, and self-reflection are a daily practice. We believe that mistakes are opportunities for learning and improvement and that goals are not endpoints but rather markers of progress and success in our educational journey. We believe that productive struggle is healthy and challenges our personal growth - though it may be uncomfortable at times. It is common to see individual student and classroom goals posted on the walls of the hallways and classrooms throughout the building. Students begin goal setting as early as Pre-Kindergarten.

School closures in March 2020 presented us with an opportunity for growth. We were not done “yet” and learning did not stop at NSES. Though the school division did not require new learning opportunities and experiences for elementary aged students, the teachers and staff at NSES continued to offer virtual sessions with students many switching to online learning platforms of their own volition. Staff worked tirelessly to develop their own sense of normalcy when faced with this crisis while also working to provide that same sense of normalcy to the families and students in our school community. Teachers and staff communicated frequently with families, made home visits to provide resources, and even held a drive-through parade all in efforts to maintain valuable relationships and foster student growth.

Building and maintaining growth mindsets for students and staff is an ongoing process. With each new challenge, we adapt and grow to lead our students and community to success. With this fundamental belief system in place, the implementation of all other strategies are done so with great intention and fidelity.