

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 855 College Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Dover State DE Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19904-8723

County Kent

Telephone (302) 672-1980 Fax (302) 672-1985

Web site/URL https://csdndes.ss19.sharpschool.com E-mail shani.benson@capital.k12.de.us

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. Vilicia Cade E-mail vilicia.cade@capital.k12.de.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Capital School District Tel. (302) 672-1500

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. Chanda Jackson-Short  
(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**

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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	0	0	0
K	30	39	69
1	24	27	51
2	26	33	59
3	22	25	47
4	27	27	54
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
<b>Total Students</b>	129	151	280

\*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):
- 1.5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3.5 % Asian
  - 52.3 % Black or African American
  - 9.8 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 25.7 % White
  - 7.2 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 18%

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

It's likely that COVID increased the number of students moving in and out. As we entered into hybrid learning, we saw students moving due to family situations outside of our control.

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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	27
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	30
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	57
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	324
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.18
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	18

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

Spanish, Urdu, Haitian Creole, French, Mandarin Chinese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 6 %

16 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100 %

Total number students who qualify: 280

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 10 %  
28 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 with an IEP or 504 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>4</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>9</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	91%	96%	95%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2021.

<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.

At North Dover, we are nurturing opportunity, resilience, and respect together through hard work!

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

THE CAPITAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, CREED, RELIGION, GENDER (INCLUDING PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH AND RELATED MEDICAL CONDITIONS), NATIONAL ORIGIN, CITIZENSHIP OR ANCESTRY, AGE, DISABILITY, MARITAL STATUS, VETERAN STATUS, GENETIC INFORMATION, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, OR GENDER IDENTITY, AGAINST VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL OFFENSES, OR STALKING, OR UPON ANY OTHER CATEGORIES PROTECTED BY FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL LAW. INQUIRIES REGARDING NONDISCRIMINATION POLICIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE TITLE IX, DISTRICT 504 AND ADA COORDINATORS: CAPITAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, 198 COMMERCE WAY, DOVER DE 19904.

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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North Dover is one of seven elementary schools in the Capital School District. It is home to approximately 320 little Senators who are each unique in their learning styles, background experiences, and talents. We operate on the philosophy that each student can and will learn if presented information in a manner that is designed with them in mind. When taking a walk through our halls, you will find a school buzzing with excitement for learning, reading, exploring, innovating, problem solving, and dreaming. We are a school founded on the idea of family, connectedness, instructional excellence, and support. At North, there are many examples of generations of families being educated in our halls due to the rich learning experience that has been provided to each family member. We strive to engage families in more than just academics, but center that engagement around the child as a whole. It is our intention to be sure each child is aware of his or her own uniqueness that makes him or her a part of our school.

As you enter the building, there are affirmation statements meant to begin each student's day with encouragement. Little Senators are greeted at their bus or car doors with a “good morning” and friendly smile, allowing families to have a moment to engage with staff, share any concerns, or follow up on any important matters. That warm welcome continues throughout the halls that are lined with staff and safety patrollers there to support as needed. Overall, we seek to provide a safe, fun, engaging learning environment for each student, family, and staff. Our population is a diverse one with varying races, ethnicities, cultures, and socio economic statuses, creating a variety of needs. We seek to meet each person where they are and create a positive learning experience.

Our school provides a plethora of opportunities to engage students in various activities. We seek to aid students in achieving their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally. Academically, we offer a variety of programs to enrich, reteach, or engage students in a research based curriculum that provides learning opportunities rich in problem solving, exploring, critical thinking, researching, and much more. For students who are academically gifted, we have built in programs to further develop their skills. For students who present some learning gaps, we have supports in place to help each student achieve. Emotionally, our social emotional staff, along with all teaching staff, seek to foster kindness, love, and friendship in each and every student. We celebrate kindness through our announcements by providing blue bravos (recognition) for students going above and beyond. Students and staff fill one another’s buckets by thanking each other for acts of kindness or simply sharing something that is special about the person. Each of these small acts seek to have big emotional impacts for each student. Physically, we present students with lessons around a healthy lifestyle, making positive life choices, and personal hygiene. Our Physical Education teacher presents students with physical workouts each day and tailors it to the needs and interests of all students. Socially, we have a multitude of activities for students to engage in for social skill development. For example, we run our Basketball Buddies program which offers an opportunity for students to build connections with one another across grade levels.

As a school with a diverse population we seek to celebrate that diversity through research, literature, and sharing. We know that representation matters and we strive to have students see themselves throughout our hall displays, selected curriculum materials, and overall environment. One such initiative is Strong Girls Read Strong Books. This book club offered to students in 2nd through 4th grade provides students the opportunity to explore texts where the main character is a strong girl or woman of color. We have presented programs that allow our students to witness African Dance shows, listen to the infamous “I Have a Dream Speech” through an impersonator, and explore artists who look like the majority of our students.

In all, our school is one where family is supported, diversity is celebrated, expectations are high, instructional practices are relevant and engaging, and connections are imperative. At North, we seek to nurture opportunity, resilience, and respect through the foundations of hard work!



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

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

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

The overall approach and philosophy that is common across all subject areas is directly aligned with the Capital SD Teaching and Learning Model. This model contains the attributes of a CSD Graduate in the center and is surrounded by the following five components: Delivered in a Safe Supportive Environment, Built to be Standards-Based, Organized for Personalized Learning, Focused on Rigorous Instruction, and Measured through Dynamic Assessment. These components are the lens through which all teaching and learning at North is framed. Additionally, we have aligned a set of high yield strategies, based on the work of John Hattie, for instruction, social emotional learning (SEL), and environment. These research based strategies were selected due to their effect size on student achievement and are universal across the school. Over the last several years, the North Dover team, with support from the district, began to focus attention on the incorporation of blended learning practices into the instructional program. Teachers began leveraging these practices to enhance student learning experiences in meaningful ways. Examples of these enhancements include the following:

Using a LMS to create and deliver interactive instructional lessons and activities for all students; Creating a menu of learning options for students that allows them to choose from differentiated assignments; and Allowing students to choose their learning pathway with choice of assignments and how they will show evidence of their learning.

Another key aspect of our instructional philosophy at North, is the importance of creating strong connections across the curriculum by integrating SEL competencies into the design of all instructional lessons as well as creating clear cross curricular content connections for students. An example might include engaging in an author study of women in history who persevered through challenges to find success. Further, in PLC's teachers spend time analyzing content for each area and then linking common concepts/themes/topics throughout the day.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Our curricular program for English Language Arts is Wonders by McGraw Hill. The Wonders program is designed to develop students' reading, writing, and critical thinking skills that are aligned with state and national Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. Teachers strive to deliver instruction in an integrated manner, often across content areas, while focused on the areas of reading fluency and comprehension, writing, listening, speaking, literature, research, and language usage.

Reading and writing for a variety of purposes, speaking confidently, and listening effectively are all very important parts of literacy development that we focus on at North. To encourage the exploration of text, and to provide student voice and choice in the texts that they read, we engage students in literature circles and book studies.

Since the pandemic, a lot has changed for us at North. We had to switch quickly to remote learning with a majority of our teaching staff not prepared for this switch. We worked hard as a building and team level to learn as quickly as we could in these new formats of remote and hybrid. From this experience, areas for improvement became evident.

For the 2021-2022 school year, we are piloting two different reading curriculums: Wonders and Into Reading. As we pilot these curricula, we are seeking to determine how effective they would be for remote learning, as well as how they might impact some of the learning gaps that we are seeing caused by the pandemic. This year, we have noticed that many of our students K-4 are struggling to master some of the foundational reading skills missed while attending remotely. As a result, we have worked hard on explicitly

teaching foundational skills, not only in kindergarten and first grade, but extending into fourth grade.

In order to close the learning gaps that we saw at North, we analyzed our beginning of year screening assessments to determine which skills and gaps could be targeted through our Tier 1 curriculum. Once we reviewed this data, we then delved deeper into students' present levels of proficiency by giving additional diagnostic assessments in the areas of phonemic awareness and phonics (depending on students grade levels and present level of performance). At this point, we determined which areas of targeted support each student needed and provided additional push-in or pull-out support from a paraprofessional, reading specialist, or additional targeted instruction from the teacher in small groups. In these groups, we used research based intervention programs that provide explicit instructional in foundational skill, as well as Tier 2 materials provided from the curriculum that teachers were piloting. From there, we continued progress monitoring students using Acadience Reading. We progress monitor every two weeks and then meet every six weeks to look at student data and determine if the current intervention is effective. Additional formative assessments are completed in classrooms by individual teachers. These assessments include assessments provided by the curriculum being piloted and teacher created check-ins. From these assessments, teachers have been able to determine what skills students are able to master and those that may need to be further explored.

Our literacy team has started to dive deeply into the Science of Reading, Scarborough's Rope, and the Simple View of Reading, focusing on how to provide explicit and systematic instruction to our students at all grade levels. We are working with partners to enhance our reading practices for student achievement overall.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

At North, we utilize the GO MATH! Curriculum. The district is currently in a pilot to determine if we will move to I-Ready or Bridges. In kindergarten, the standards follow successful international models and recommendations from the National Research Council's Early Math Panel report, by focusing kindergarten work on the number core: learning how numbers correspond to quantities, number patterns, and learning how to put numbers together and take them apart (the beginnings of addition and subtraction). We provide students with a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals, as well as foundational aspects of geometry, data, and measurement. The standards stress not only procedural skill but also conceptual understanding, to make sure students are learning and absorbing the critical information and strategies they need to succeed at higher levels.

We also offer digital platforms for students to engage with math in an independent manner. Students are encouraged to spend time on applications such as Freckle, which is an adaptive application offering practice in Number Sense, Base 10, and Fractions to name a few skills. We promote reasoning and problem solving through games and high-level cognitive and project-based tasks, providing opportunities to deepen students' critical thinking and conceptual understanding. These tasks allow for rich math discussions promoting reasoning and allowing for varied solution strategies.

To measure overall improvement, we utilize Acadience to test kindergarten in the areas of number identification, next number, and quantity discrimination. In grades 1-4 we administer STAR math to measure student growth within the following domains: numbers and operations, algebra, geometry and measurement, and data analysis, probability, and statistics. We utilize benchmark assessment data, as well as formative assessments, summative assessments and progress monitoring to plan instruction that is tailored to the specific skills and needs of each student.

This year we noticed that many of our students are struggling with number sense and foundational operation skills missed while attending remotely. As a result, we focused on purposefully embedding prerequisite skills and "just in time" supports within our lessons. We utilized our math specialist to push in and provide on the spot support during the math block. We analyzed benchmark data to determine which skills to address within our whole group versus small group instruction. We gave diagnostic assessments, using the Bridges Intervention Kit, to determine which additional supports students needed push in support from a paraprofessional, push in targeted support from the math specialist or paraprofessional, or additional targeted instruction from the teacher through small groups. In these targeted support groups, we used the

Bridges Intervention Kit. Students were grouped within the grade-level based on the placement test. Additionally, teachers used tier 2 materials provided from GO MATH! Students are progress monitored every five lessons within the intervention kit and through Acadience in Kindergarten. We progress monitor and then meet every six weeks to review student data and determine if the current intervention and group is effective. Additional formative and summative assessments are completed by classroom teachers. From the assessments, teachers have been able to determine what skills students are mastery and where additional support is needed.

#### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Capital School District and North Dover offer a science curriculum aligned with Delaware State Standards. The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) consists of three dimensions of science learning. They are very distinct and equally important to learning science. These dimensions are combined to form each standard—or performance expectation—and each dimension works with the other two to help students build a cohesive understanding of science over time. The first concept, Crosscutting Concepts, helps students explore connections across the four domains of science, including Physical Science, Life Science, Earth and Space Science, and Engineering Design. When these concepts, such as “cause and effect,” are made explicit for students, they can help students develop a coherent and scientifically-based view of the world around them. The second concept, Science and Engineering Practices describe what scientists do to investigate the natural world and what engineers do to design and build systems. The practices better explain and extend what is meant by “inquiry” in science and the range of cognitive, social, and physical practices that it requires. Students engage in practices to build, deepen, and apply their knowledge of core ideas and crosscutting concepts. Finally, the third concept, Disciplinary Core Ideas are the key ideas in science that have broad importance within or across multiple science or engineering disciplines. These core ideas build on each other as students progress through grade levels and are grouped into the following four domains: Physical Science, Life Science, Earth and Space Science, and Engineering.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The Capital School District Social Studies Curriculum provides opportunities for students to learn to value and understand democratic beliefs and behavior and encourages them to act responsibly in our global community. The curriculum is aligned with state and national standards and addresses concepts in civics, economics, geography, and history. Students use tools such as maps, globes, timelines, charts and other geographics to learn about our world. Studying both primary and secondary resources such as artifacts, diaries, photographs, and newspaper accounts enables students to research topics, understand a variety of cultures and peoples, and analyze the causes and effects of events from the past to the present. Teachers use research-based practices and materials to create lessons that engage students in rich content while building skills in research, source evaluation, supporting their thoughts with evidence, using primary and secondary source documents and developing and supporting their ideas about their world. Students use technology resources, work both independently and collaboratively with peers often using multiple sources to produce a product. Reading, writing and interpreting data for a variety of purposes, speaking confidently, and listening effectively are all very important parts of lessons in the social studies classroom.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

At North Dover Elementary, we offer five related arts classes to students in all grades; Music, Art, Physical Education, Technology, and Library. Our music teacher provides band/instrument lessons in drums, trumpet, and violin, to name a few. This is offered to 3rd and 4th grade students with a few 2nd grade students participating. At this time, we are the only elementary school offering band to students as a means to build a

pathway to the larger musical programs that Capital School District has to offer. We also offer vocal lessons and Chorus to our 3rd and 4th grade students.

Through Library Media, our students are able to work in a makerspace environment that allows them to enter our “Think Tank,” which is our STEAM classroom, with the start of an idea and leave completing a complex project. Our lessons are centered around creating a positive mindset that focuses on the “Four Cs:” creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration. Our students in grades kindergarten through fourth are able to learn how to work together as a team, collaborate, and share. Our goal in the makerspace is to allow our students the ability to explore, create new things, and/or improve upon innovations that already exist using the Engineer Design Process.

Students participate in Art weekly in all grade levels. They are introduced to a variety of art techniques, explore various artists throughout history and investigate their impact on society. Students create their own works of art and display them throughout the building and on social media.

In Physical Education, students are introduced to a variety of sports, movement styles, and work to develop teamwork skills, good sportsmanship, and healthy lifestyle habits. The PE teacher works with classroom teachers to incorporate their key concepts into the physical education classroom to extend vocabulary and build background knowledge. She incorporates current events into her lesson. For example, she created a unit around the Winter Olympics and had students engage in some of the events in a modified manner.

We are a Leader In Me school working to develop leadership in students so that each learner sees him/herself as a leader. This has led to the development of a Student Lighthouse Team offering students the opportunity to have a voice in building decision making.

We offer a mentoring program called Basketball Buddies where students in upper grades mentor students in lower grades. The lessons begin with an S.E.L. (Social Emotional) lesson and then move into basic basketball skills. Additionally, we offer a soccer league (K,1) and basketball league (2,3,4) to get students active, thinking about teamwork, and engaging in sportsmanship. In an effort to build in these programs, we have been flexible with scheduling.

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

For students performing below grade level, we engage our Instructional Support Team. This team pulls together our school psychologist, school educational diagnostician, school instructional coach, administration, school counselor, school social worker, teacher teams, and our mental health partner, ESS. We review the data of the student and work together to develop a plan to intervene where the student may be displaying learning gaps. We do this on a six week cycle, giving each intervention the opportunity to impact change for the student. At each IST meeting and any time in between, we review the student’s progress and tweak the plans as needed. We offer small group support and any other needed support in the classroom for all Tier I and II students and offer pull out support for Tier III students. This strategy allows us to ensure that resources are paired with the individual student’s needs. In addition, we monitor and discuss students during both our Math and Reading professional learning communities (PLC) to ensure that students are continuing to show growth and that we are providing teachers and support staff with the materials and support that they need to help our students. This allows us to make better decisions at our IST meetings because we have kept in contact with teachers and are continuously monitoring students and their data. Student progress is monitored. As students begin to show progress, we adjust interventions. If students are not displaying growth, we revisit the intervention plan and make adjustments to ensure the right supports are in place.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Students who perform above grade level are offered opportunities for enrichment. Within the classroom, teachers offer enrichment groups that expand critical thinking skills, literacy skills, etc for students.

Teachers provide students with opportunities to lead book studies and literature circles, provide above grade level text to extend student thinking and empower students to step outside of their comfort zone. We encourage project based learning activities, where students get the opportunity to showcase their work to the class. Within the math block, teachers provide students with opportunities to demonstrate and grow their critical and problem solving skills through extension and real-world mathematics scenarios and the development of word problems or scenarios.

The next level of support is through enrichment with our Library Media Specialist. Once a week, she offers a class for students where they engage in a variety of activities providing them the opportunity to have autonomy in their learning, ownership over their learning experience, explore independently or within the group and approach projects from a variety of ways. She extends the experience through asynchronous work throughout the week. The asynchronous work extends to projects with families in an effort to engage families in the student's learning experience.

Next, we offer ACT. This is an accelerated learning program that pushes students' thinking and engages them in project based learning that extends into student research projects. At the school level, we do not go beyond ACT. If a student is gifted based on the testing provided, he or she may move to the ALPHA program housed at another school in the district. To ensure all students have access to the opportunity, every student is tested in the second grade.

### **3c. Special education:**

Special education students are provided the scaffolds, accommodations, and modifications necessary to enable them to meet and exceed their goals. We believe that all students are capable and work to ensure they are included in every aspect of the school and provided every opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. We believe it is imperative that all students are provided the necessary scaffolds or accommodations to access grade level content and materials. This is done through small group instruction, individual instruction, and whole group lessons that include a variety of approaches to learning. Students also have access to a variety of adaptive, digital platforms to provide additional practice on their specific learning goals.

At North Dover we have both single approach to mastery and team approach to mastery models. We work hard to ensure that our students are receiving the support that they need in the least restrictive environment with their peers. Those students who may need additional support and who would benefit from two teachers with more direct small group instruction are placed in a TAM classroom. In our TAM settings, students are able to have their accommodations met in a general education classroom, but with additional time with a special education teacher. In an effort to increase parent input prior to students' individualized education program (IEP) meetings, we work hard to make connections with our parents/families and include them in the decision making process, not just during the meeting, but also prior to meetings with parent input. We make it a priority to work with our families and to make sure they are comfortable throughout the entire process. Our families are an important part of the decision making process and we want them to know that no decisions are made without their voice being heard and understood.

### **3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

North Dover Elementary supports English Language Learners with options for push-in and pull-out services with an ELL instructor. We have ELL students who range from a level one (entering) to a level four (bridging) in their language level. The students' level is based on their performance on the yearly ACCESS test that is given to all ELL students. With this knowledge, classroom teachers and ELL instructors identify early in the school year the various accommodations and scaffolds needed to ensure content is comprehensible for students. One resource that is used is the WIDA Can Do Descriptors. The WIDA Can Do Descriptors are designed to help classroom teachers understand what students at different levels of English proficiency should be able to do in a regular content area classroom. The tasks are separated into four domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. When the ELL instructor works with students, she works on English Language development activities to help aid in building vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, reading and writing. The ELL teacher and classroom teachers provide language support for students that includes meaningful visuals, front load essential vocabulary, modeling, sentence starters or

sentence frames. At North Dover, we also believe in collaborating with families to ensure they are aware of students' progress and ways to help their children at home. We collaborate with families by sending home information in their home language. Classroom teachers and ELL teachers ensure parents are connected to the classroom's communication apps where parents can translate teacher's notes in their home language. Our district has also provided North Dover and other schools in the district with a 24 hour access to a company called, "Language Line." This allows teachers to quickly have access to a translator as they need it. Lastly, here at North Dover we are aware of the many assets our students bring to the classroom, some include knowledge, ability, experiences and cultural diversity. We incorporate these qualities to create an inclusive, diverse school environment ensuring students' school experience is authentic and relevant.

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

North Dover Elementary has approximately 9% of the student population that are considered displaced. For these students, we ensure van transportation is in place. We ensure they are given opportunities for after school activities by working with the van companies to provide transportation later in the day. If the family is in need, we operate a food bank and clothing closet that provides families with those necessities. Our school counselor works closely with the families to conduct any Best Interest Meetings, record any address changes, and be a first line of communication to provide needed resources. One of the resources we have at North Dover is a Family Crisis Therapist (FCT), who is an important part of our community. She is able to provide families with additional services such as outside therapy, support for housing and utility costs, help with getting students involved in extracurricular activities, parenting classes and or supports.

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

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

North Dover is a Leader In Me School, which is used as the Tier 1 framework for increasing student agency and building student leaders. The Leader In Me program has led to an increase in student leadership opportunities. We have a Student Lighthouse Team which helps to make building-wide decisions around what students would like to see in their school environment. It provides them the opportunity to be seen as leaders amongst their peers establishing themselves as role models. They demonstrate the seven habits school wide and help to build leadership capacity in others. Additionally, we have a Safety Patrol who help maintain safety in the building under the leadership of our school constable. These students serve as safety ambassadors, tour guides, and assist staff in a variety of ways.

North Dover seeks to engage students in a variety of activities and enrichment opportunities throughout the school year. From an academic perspective, we have offered groups like Strong Girls Read Strong Books, which is an afterschool book club for girls reading books with strong women role models, enrichment groups with our School Librarian focused on problem solving and critical thinking skills, Extra Time tutoring for Math and Reading, and STEAM opportunities to explore new content. We also foster continuous growth by creating opportunities for students to set goals and work toward incentives when they reach those goals. One example is our Freckle/Dream Box challenge which encouraged students to practice math skills that leveraged a digital platform to increase math fluency, number sense, and problem solving skills.

Socially and emotionally, we are supported by a few mental health related professionals such as our school psychologist, school social worker, and school counselor who offer one on one support as well as social groups that seek to improve anger management, develop strong relationships, or increase leadership skills. We also provide groups like Girls On The Run that aid in developing leadership skills in girls, Basketball Buddies that seeks to build connections throughout the school and develop leadership in the mentors, and Basketball/Soccer league which builds teamwork, sportsmanship, and a fun atmosphere for students.

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

North works closely with three of the area Universities: Wilmington University, Delaware State University, and Delaware Technical and Community College. Students from these universities partner with us to assist with events at the school. For example, Delaware State students assisted with a charity race, read to students, and served as a mentor to some of our students. These partnerships are beneficial to both parties. The students get the opportunity to connect with young adults they look up to and we get to give students extra attention.

With our Wilmington University partnership, we host Wilmington University Elementary Education pre-service teachers for their year long student teaching experience. They are immersed in the culture of the building, gaining valuable teaching experience from mentor teachers. This immersive experience provides authentic learning opportunities with creating a classroom culture, establishing structures for classroom management, engaging with parents and community, instructional strategies, and teaching practices. This experience supports North Dover teachers with the opportunity to grow their coaching and feedback skills.

When building community partnerships we have worked with organizations such as Spark After School and Summer Camp, Delaware State University student athletes, Safeway grocery stores, Lowes, and PAM Rehabilitative Services. These community partners have enabled us to provide reusable water bottles for each student in the building, provide food for families, donate garden supplies for a student gardening group, and cleaning items such as wipes and sanitizer.

We were recently a partner site for a Health Initiative that provided free healthcare to our community. We advertised these services and aided in having the building ready for use before services were rendered. This was a great partnership as students and families were able to come take advantage of free dental care, eye

glasses, and mental health services.

Currently, we are developing a “Wheels Day.” This will engage the community by bringing the Dover Police Department, the National Guard, and local farmers on site to share larger vehicles with students. Students will have the opportunity to look inside of the vehicles and get a close up that will hopefully help engage them in conversations around the purpose of the vehicles and future career opportunities.

We also have families in for Meet the Teacher, Academic Night, and a host of other festivities. Our upcoming night, May 4, 2022, will engage families in reading, math, and science activities. Students will help lead the charge as we engage our Student Lighthouse Team Leaders.

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

At North Dover, we pride ourselves on the strong culture in which we work. We believe that each person within the building is an expert in something and we strive to learn from one another. We have adopted a peer-to-peer observation model where teachers are able to observe one another and adopt strategies that can be taken back to the classroom. When moving to a distance learning and hybrid model, we supported one another through increased meeting times to share strategies and technical tips to enable each staff member to feel more prepared for the new approach. As we have moved back into the traditional model, we have been able to bring the technology into the classroom in different ways.

As we are now back into a more traditional model, we continue to support with a full time instructional coach, full time reading interventionist, and a full time math interventionist. These instructional support staff members conduct ongoing, embedded professional learning opportunities for staff, support in the classroom, and provide teachers with ongoing modeling, co-planning, and co-teaching opportunities. We strive to develop a culture where feedback is seen as a gift. Staff members are encouraged to provide feedback to one another and accept feedback as a form of professional development that enables teachers to create a more quality learning experience for students.

We subscribe to a collaborative leadership model and leadership through inclusiveness. Our decision-making model involves all stakeholders and seeks to engage the voice and expertise of all teachers, thereby creating teacher leaders. One goal that we established in our most recent School Success Plan sought to increase teachers involved in distributed leadership opportunities throughout the school from eight to sixteen. At the most recent review, we had extended those opportunities to 36 teachers. This demonstrates a commitment to develop leadership capacity in staff.

Professional Learning Communities are a cornerstone of the culture at North Dover Elementary. In PLCs, teachers engage in collaborative conversations around lesson design and implementation, student formative and summative assessment data, and research based instructional practices. Engaging in these learning communities helps to develop teacher efficacy, increase student achievement, and create consistency across the grade levels. An additional benefit to the learning communities is the increased proficiency in data analysis in cycles of inquiry and the student problem solving model.

To create a culture of care at North, we allowed teachers to engage in professional learning in a variety of formats (in person, through Zoom, and asynchronous). We look for ways to increase teacher connectedness to the school community through a host of activities. For example, on 2/22/22, teachers were given a piece to a puzzle and needed to find their partner. This was met with great excitement and many laughs rejuvenating school relationships. Leadership in the school believes in family and supports teachers in ensuring they achieve work/life balance.

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

The school principal believes that all students and staff are individuals who deserve to have the best working environment possible. Every student can and will learn if given the opportunity that best meets his or her needs. Every learner is seen as an individual first and a student second. We first ensure that students have food, sleep, clothing, love, and that other social emotional needs are met. We then seek to prepare lessons



that engage their minds and spirits. The school leader ensures that policies, programs, relationships, and resources are focused on students by supporting teachers. Teachers need to be supported to understand the need for policies and how to follow them. Time to plan and engage in the programs can be built into schedules, allowing for teachers to be supported in that aspect. Placing resources appropriately and ensuring equitable distribution is imperative and a priority for the school leader. Finally, the school leader role models ways to develop relationships with staff and students. By role modeling the desired behaviors, the school leader seeks to lead by example.

All stakeholders are a part of the planning process for our School Success Plan. This plan is driven by our needs assessment and goals are developed as a result of the outcomes of the root cause analysis. Aligned activities are developed by the team including the necessary professional development needed to achieve each action item, allocation of resources, and how it will be measured.

The district level leaders seek to develop a culture of care and collaboration by engaging in ongoing conversation with staff to get input on overall decisions that are being made to ensure they are what staff and stakeholders need. It is the intent of the leadership to build this culture through the guiding principles of Leadership Through Inclusiveness, Unity Through Love, and Excellence Through Equity. They exhibit this through supporting the school with learning walk-throughs, listening and learning sessions, and creating a district wide professional learning plan that is aligned to goals that span the district. They also plan and implement professional learning opportunities and allocation of resources to support teachers in professional growth.

As a result of the pandemic, much of professional development has been centered around social-emotional needs and trauma that our students and teachers have experienced as a result of the pandemic. This has led to prioritizing student and teacher care to enable both to be in the right mind set to make learning/teaching their focus. This creates for a shift for leaders, as we seek to provide a culture of care.

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

One step that has been taken to ensure equity, cultural awareness, and respect in the classroom and school has been an equity audit that encompassed our physical environment, policies, and curriculum. The audit presented some opportunities to ensure there was more representation in our displays, the books that are available, the curriculum, and the policies that we follow. The district is currently working with John Hopkins University to look at discipline and attendance data to identify where disparities are evident. This will help inform our work moving forward and will provide us the ability to plan for change. We continue to provide professional development around relationship building and cultural awareness to provide a safe, loving, and effective learning environment for all students.

Given the social emotional staff supporting our school, we try to stay abreast to any situations that may impact our students. For example, during the summer of 2020, Dover experienced a series of protests with some violence. One of the main protests took place at the police barracks across the street from a motel that houses many of our displaced students. With that information, we quickly began the work of ensuring our students were safe, that they were able to have a safe place to process their feelings and discuss what they saw. While our school does not directly engage in the politics that surround many of the current events, we seek to ensure students are provided an atmosphere that is consistent and safe allowing them to express their thoughts and ideas about the world around them.

One large equity issue that came to light at the height of the pandemic was equitable access to technology. We found that many students did not have access to a tablet or laptop at home. We quickly deployed technology to every student enrolled in our school. We did this in multiple ways. We had pick up times set up at various points in the day, we hand delivered technology, and we provided flexible scheduling for families to help with the technology, as needed. Next we realized many of the students were unable to access the internet to engage in the learning platforms that were available. Through work with the cable company and our student services department, we began to deploy hot spots. This enabled students to access all Zooms and all applications being used.

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

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One instrumental piece to the success at North Dover is the commitment to excellence in teaching. Teachers practice fidelity to the curriculum, as it is research based and provides a strong foundation from which to work. This is one part of the reason that the partnership between North and the pre-service teacher program is so powerful. The preservice teachers are being trained in best practices that are proven to produce strong student outcomes. Because this strong commitment to following research based practices is so evident, the teachers at North Dover are often sought out for feedback surrounding the curriculum and the associated teaching practices. This has been crucial during a time where the district is implementing a reading curriculum pilot and responding to the needs presented due to Covid-19.

In order for the teachers at North to stay abreast of the most effective research based practices, they often engage in professional learning opportunities aligned with best practices for teaching and learning. This commitment to continuous improvement and passion for new learning, is what sets the staff at North Dover apart from other schools in the district. This drive for excellence in education is evidenced as the teachers at North Dover put their learning to practice in the classroom. Examples of this include applying the Science of Reading practices to foundational skills instruction, implementation of blended learning practices across the curriculum, and the use of high yield instructional strategies. Additionally, the staff at North recognize the importance of collaboration around teaching and learning in order to provide calibration and consistency of implementation across the building. This is reflected in the use of staff instructional rounds where teachers visit each other's classrooms with the express purpose of looking at practices in action, providing feedback to each other, and reflecting on their own practices with a growth mindset. This model has been a very strong aspect of teacher professional learning this year, and has served as a model across the district. It is important to note that North Dover has also partnered with other buildings in our district to have teachers from across the district visit classrooms at North and to have the North staff visit classrooms in their schools. This has allowed for even deeper collaboration, discussion, and reflection on best practices in teaching and learning.