

# GRANT MIDDLE SCHOOL

## Beacon School Designation

### **SECTION 1: ACADEMIC VISION STATEMENT**

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Grant Beacon School believes that ALL students can and will achieve at high academic and social levels.

**VISION STATEMENT:** Grant Middle School's vision empowers us to provide an educational environment in which -

#### **STUDENTS:**

- Are challenged to be critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, active classroom participants, and independent learners.
- Demonstrate responsible behavior and respectful actions.
- Make good and appropriate ethical decisions.
- Appreciate and respect differences.
- Enjoy learning.

#### **TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS:**

- Provide a well-rounded and inquiry based balanced curriculum that focuses on higher level thinking and high expectations.
- Provide active and engaging lessons.
- Provide appropriate interventions that ensure that all students succeed at high levels.
- Create a supportive and respectful classroom and school environment.
- Provide a safe school environment.

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM:** The Denver Plan is **the educational program** at Grant Middle School. Student achievement is our focus; explicit curricular implementation of the DPS curriculum, a strong instructional program, and the use of multiple assessments to guide our instruction are at the heart of our plan. Students will be taught by highly skilled teachers who value professional development. Our administrators will serve as instructional leaders and will provide quality learning opportunities through professional development including time for staff collaboration to enhance focused instruction. We will provide a safe, orderly, and enriching environment for student learning. All students will be engaged in a rigorous course of study that encourages inquiry and is aligned with standards, demands higher level thinking, sets high expectations, emphasizes problem solving, stresses critical thinking, and requires character development. Upon completion of the Grant Beacon School Plan, students will demonstrate proficiency at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade benchmark of the Colorado standards in all core subject areas.

The following characteristics will be part of the Grant Middle School Plan to ensure that all students achieve at high levels (taken from the 90/90/90 research of effective schools):

- A focus on academic achievement
- Clear curriculum choices
- Frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement
- An emphasis on nonfiction writing
- Intense professional development with an emphasis on nonfiction writing
- Focused interventions

## **SECTION II: EDUCATIONAL PLAN**

A. Grant Beacon School's goals and objectives are directly aligned with the Denver Plan; these goals and objectives include: high expectations for all students, professional development and support for teachers, use of data to assess student progress, and continual improvement on benchmark assessments. With time we are confident that the Grant Beacon School Plan will exceed Denver Plan expectations.

### **ANNUAL MEASUREABLE GOALS:**

- Goal #1: Students will learn from highly-skilled faculty in every classroom. Grant Beacon School will hire highly qualified staff committed to the Grant Beacon School Design.
- Measure: The number of staff members thoroughly and effectively implementing the district curriculum  
The number of staff members engaged in effective professional development to inform & guide instruction with real time data and assessments  
The number of staff members trained and/or receiving training in ELL (English Language Learning)  
The number of staff members sponsoring or coaching middle school athletics
- Goal # 2: Highly-trained principal and assistant principal will serve as instructional leaders of the Grant Beacon School faculty
- Measure: The principal and assistant principal will participate in district professional development opportunities  
The principal and assistant principal will provide coherent, relevant, and differentiated professional development opportunities for staff  
The principal and assistant principal will establish and monitor data teams that will participate in action research to inform instruction
- Goal #3: Grant Beacon School will collaborate with the school community to support a safe, orderly, and enriching environment in every classroom.
- Measure: High quality instruction focused on high expectations, student engagement, as measured by student achievement  
Implementation of a Responsible Thinking Center for redirecting student behavior  
Implementation of effective behavioral interventions  
Reduction of out of school suspensions

### **ANNUAL OBJECTIVES:**

All students who complete a rigorous middle school course of study at Grant Beacon School will meet and/or exceed state performance standards in four core subject areas – literacy, math, science, and social studies – and be prepared to succeed in high school and college.

- Objective #1: Increase the percentage of 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade students reported to be at or above the proficient level for CSAP reading, writing, math, and science. Measure to be determined for social studies.
- Measure: Improvement from baseline data 2005-2006

	<u>Baseline</u> 2005-2006	<u>Target</u> 2006-2007	<u>Actual</u> 2006-2007	<u>Target</u> 2007- 2008	<u>Actual</u> 2007-2008
Reading	36%	46%			
Writing	31%	41%			
Math	19%	29%			
Science	17%	27%			

Objective #2: Decrease the percentage of 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade students reported at the unsatisfactory level for CSAP reading, writing, math, and science.  
Measure: Improvement from baseline data 2005-2006

	<u>Baseline</u> 2005-2006	<u>Target</u> 2006-2007	<u>Actual</u> 2006-2007	<u>Target</u> 2007-2008	<u>Actual</u> 2007-2008
Reading	28%	23%			
Writing	16%	12%			
Math	47%	30%			
Science	48%	40%			

### **Benchmarks:**

Yearly improvements on District Benchmark Assessment

Continual improvement in reading using the Scholastic Reading Inventory assessment

Continual improvement in writing using nonfiction writing prompts in all core content areas assessed using the school-wide rubric

Using school-wide data teams (action research) to measure student proficiency and guide instructional practice

A yearly increase in CSAP scores

**B.** Grant Beacon School will provide a rigorous course of study in all core subject areas and offer a variety of enrichment opportunities preparing middle school students for high school and college. All benchmarks are covered by the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade with emphasis on “power standards” in core subject areas. Students will compile a body of evidence demonstrating growth towards proficiency in all areas at each grade level. Eighth grade students will present a portfolio of their best work produced during the middle school years. Upon completion of the Grant Beacon School Program, the students will demonstrate proficiency at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade benchmark of the Colorado standards in all core subject areas. Student proficiency will be documented on a standards based report card. In addition, student proficiency will be demonstrated through a formal presentation of a middle school portfolio that provides evidence of growth and progress.

**C.** Grant Beacon School’s education plan is based on the curriculum, instruction, and assessment established by the Denver Plan and approved by the district. All students will be engaged in a rigorous course of study that is aligned with standards, encourages inquiry, demands higher level thinking, sets high expectations, emphasizes problem solving, stresses critical thinking and requires character development. The following components, in accordance with the Denver Plan, are part of our instruction:

- a focus on academic achievement
- clear curriculum choices
- effective professional development
- frequent and varied assessments
- multiple opportunities for student improvement
- an emphasis on nonfiction writing
- collaborative scoring of student work
- focused interventions
- differentiation
- Principles of Learning
- recognized Best Practices
- Sheltered English
- college-preparatory strategies
- standards based grading
- portfolios

**Core Content Curriculum (see appendix):** English Language Arts, English Language Acquisition, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Elective Curriculum

**D. All** students including those with special needs, ELL students, and students performing at or above grade level will receive differentiated instruction as appropriate in every academic classroom. Through the best practices in our inquiry based curricula, students will be challenged at appropriate levels. These best practices include, but are not limited to: Sheltered English strategies, cooperative learning groups, open-ended questioning, accountable student talk, multi-model presentations, student presentations, and Cornell Note taking.

Additionally, beyond the regular classroom setting, **all** students will have the opportunity to participate in GT/enrichment activities. Once a week during regular school hours, for 8 weeks each semester, students will select and participate in a district sponsored GT course or other enrichment activity. All special needs students will be included as much as possible and when appropriate.

Students who are performing below grade level will be encouraged to take part in intervention programs. These programs are intended to be of various lengths depending on the needs of the student. Students will participate in the program as long as they are making progress toward proficiency.

Students will also have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of after school enrichment activities. Previous successful programs have included drama, music, stock market, young authors, chess, and other student driven offerings.

We are committed to meeting the needs of all of our students.

**E.** Grant Beacon School will foster a school culture/climate that is safe, welcoming and consistent where all students will succeed and one which parents understand, appreciate, and support. All students will be encouraged to reach new depths of learning. Grant Beacon School's culture centers on the Griffin character education Touchstone created by all Beacon stakeholders. The Touchstone emphasizes academic perseverance, personal responsibility, and respect for school and community.

Culture/climate plans include monthly recognition assemblies to celebrate success in academics, character, school activities and athletics. A Griffin Award will be given to students who exhibit the traits in the Griffin Touchstone. We will foster a culture in which making positive choices and succeeding are expected and rewarded.

We will continue to work on shared agreements with the staff to facilitate positive school culture. Adults will assist each other to modeling positive culture/climate. The Griffin Award will be given to staff members who also exhibit the traits in the Griffin Touchstone. The ultimate goal is that any one entering our building will recognize what being a Griffin entails.

The climate/culture of our Beacon School will recognize parent and community members for their contributions and support of the school plan. By valuing these contributions publicly parents and community members deepen their commitment to the Grant Beacon School vision.

**F. Timeline:**

***Year One:***

- 1-Implement Grant Beacon School Plan
- 2-Set academic goals (see section II-A, goals and objectives)

***Year Two:***

- 1-Evaluate year one academic goals
- 2-Celebrate successes
- 3-Comprehensive analysis of Grant Beacon Plan
- 4-Modify Grant Beacon Plan as necessary based on the comprehensive analysis
- 5- Set new academic goals for year two

***Year Three – Five:***

- 1-Evaluate previous year's academic goals
- 2-Celebrate successes
- 3-Modify plan as needed
- 4- Set new academic goals

**G.** The following calendar and daily schedule support our GBS plan that all students can and will achieve at high academic and social levels.

Calendar and Daily Schedule:

- a. Daily Schedule - 7:25 a.m. – 2:40 p.m.
  - 120 minute Language Arts – Students will have the same teacher for reading and writing
  - 60 minute class period for Math, Science, Social Studies
  - 60 minute elective period (9 week rotation at each grade level)
  - 30 minute student lunch
- b. Grant staff will offer all students an 8 week GT/Enrichment Class that will meet once a week for an hour during the regular school day. Classes will be offered first and second semester; these course offerings will be taught by volunteer staff members.
- c. After-school interventions, enrichment classes, and athletics will be offered on Tuesday and Thursday from 2:40 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.; teacher participation is voluntary.
- d. Twice monthly late start for students to accommodate Professional Development. Students will begin school at 9:25 a.m. (Professional Development for all staff will occur from 7:25 a.m. – 9:25 a.m.)
  - Professional Development Focus: data team meetings, department planning – power standard identification, collaborative scoring, performance assessments/rubrics, best practices/effective teaching
- e. Additional Professional Development will take place once a month at faculty meetings.
- f. Departmental meetings will be held weekly, preferably during school hours.

### **SECTION III: LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING**

**A.** Grant Beacon School leadership team: Principal – Greta Martinez, Assistant Principal – Amy Bringedahl, Humanities Facilitator & Language Arts Teacher – Fred Hesse, Social Studies Teacher – Carla Frenzel, Science & ELA Teacher – Elsa Pla, Math Teacher – Mike Fink, Elective Teachers – Chad Welty & Kathy Mansueto. Individuals from all core and elective areas are represented on the leadership team. All individuals voluntarily worked on the Beacon Proposal Committee and developed the comprehensive Grant Beacon School plan. From individuals serving on district curriculum committees, to award-winning teachers, instructional leaders, community liaisons, and cutting-edge school administrators, our team has the capacity to effectively lead the Grant Beacon School to meet the high academic challenges we set for our students.

**B.** The development, implementation, and evaluation of the Education Plan (Section II), will require the leadership team to meet on a regular basis beginning in January 2007 to continue to finalize the Grant Beacon Plan that focuses on high student achievement. Some of the areas needing further scrutiny include identifying “power standards” in all core subject areas, establishing consistent expectations for all classes, implementing curriculum, employing standards based reporting (report card), frequent assessing of student progress and providing multiple opportunities for student academic improvement. Additional areas to be addressed include effective interventions, nonfiction writing, during and after school enrichment, focused professional development (collaborative planning, examining student work, collectively determining “proficiency”, assessing and improving instructional practices) and maintaining data teams.

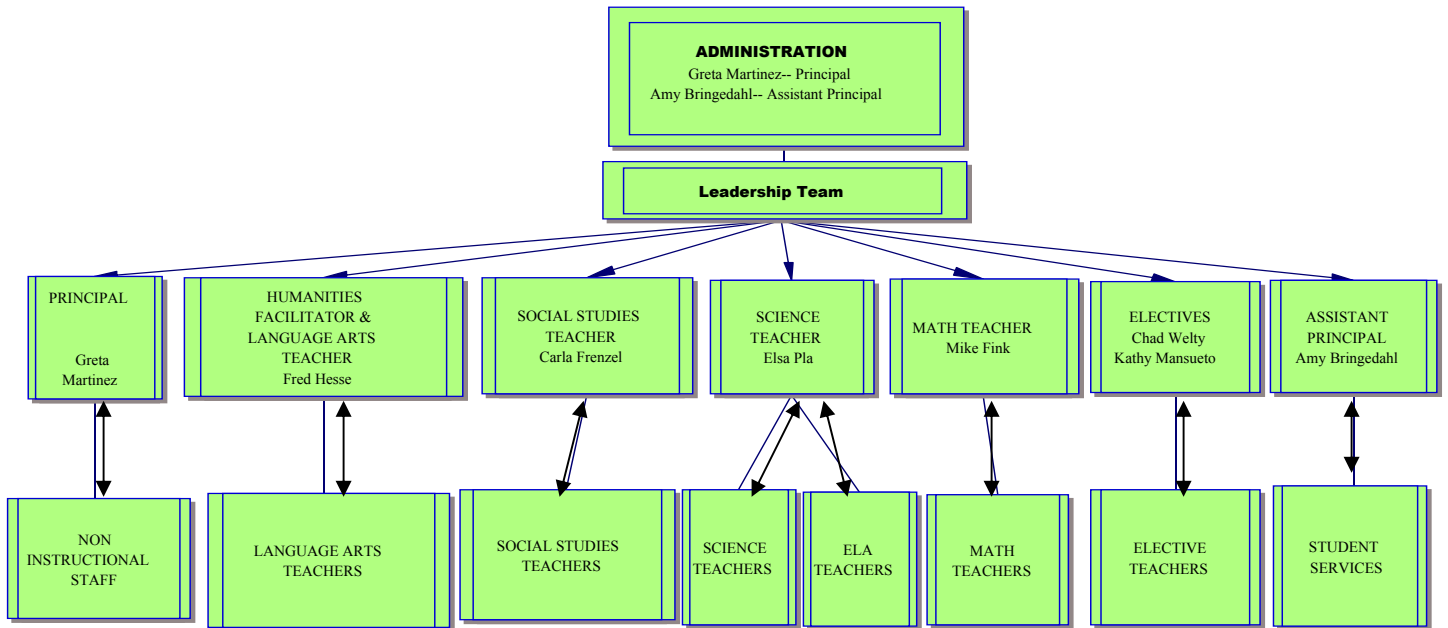
Each leadership team member will facilitate a content area data team. Data teams will evaluate on an on-going basis the progress of assessing “proficiency” and identifying demonstrated student work that meets and/or exceeds the “power standards”, and create effective instructional practices to improve student achievement.

All leadership team members are highly skilled and effective teachers with both students and peers. All team members are dedicated and committed to contributing to the Grant Beacon School effort and in helping to transform us into a *great neighborhood* school.

**C.** The leadership team will help facilitate the school start-up process with a clear and guiding vision of the Beacon School Plan. The team will recommend summer readings and organize a one-day voluntary retreat as part of beginning the 2007-2008 school year for all staff members. Each leader will facilitate the Beacon School Plan for school-wide implementation and consistency. It is the intent that the data teams participate in accountable talk.

**D. Faculty Composition:** Principal, Assistant Principal, Student Advisor/Administrative Assistant, Social Worker, Counseling Para-professional, Literacy Coach, ½ Math Coach, Elective Teachers to be determined (Drama Teacher, Art Teacher, Computer Teacher, PE Teacher) , Teachers in Math, Social Studies, Science and Language Arts, Student Service Teachers and Personnel, Support Staff, and ELA Teachers). The faculty composition represents a highly qualified staff in all areas capable of effectively implementing the Grant Beacon Plan which is directly aligned to the Denver Plan. Teaching staff allocations and placement are dependent upon student population and district allocations (current enrollment – 5 sections of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 3 sections of 6<sup>th</sup> grade).

## E. GRANT MIDDLE SCHOOL'S ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## F. (See teacher job description and leadership team resumes in the appendix)

The fair and consistent process of ensuring that staff members make a concerted choice to work at Grant Beacon School began with an introductory overview of attaining “Blue Ribbon” recognition. This overview started with a presentation during a September CSC meeting ending with a unanimous endorsement to pursue this recognition. CSC recommended an immediate communiqué to inform and solicit feedback from the staff so that all staff could make a concerted and informed choice to work at Grant Middle School. After a lengthy faculty meeting, a call to action was issued via invitation to voluntarily form a “Blue Ribbon” development committee. It was soon after that the district changed the status from “Blue Ribbon” to Beacon School. The principal and a teacher representative attended an informational meeting at Manuel High School to learn more about the Beacon School process. This meeting solidified our decision to commit.

The Beacon school committee was well represented from the start. Volunteers from the teaching staff included the math and humanities facilitators/teachers, science, social studies, electives, and ELA teachers. Three business and community members/parents were also part of the committee. Leading the Beacon School vision were Principal Martinez and Assistant Principal Bringedahl.

The committee met weekly to organize the Grant Beacon School plan. Following thorough discussion at these weekly meetings, committee members shared information and ideas, as well as solicited additional input from the staff with the process continuing at the next committee meeting. The executive summary was finalized and submitted to the district. Weekly committee work continued on the RFP. Committee members continued to seek input and share information with the staff regarding the Grant Beacon School proposal.

A concerted effort to keep staff informed and to seek input was an intentional and integral responsibility of the committee throughout the entire developmental process. We maintain that this ensured fair and consistent flow of information and invitation to understand and commit.

On January 8, 2007, the Grant Beacon School (GBS) leadership team presented our complete Beacon School Plan to our entire staff. Staff members were introduced to each part of the plan for clear understanding of what it would mean to them personally and professionally should they choose to remain at GBS. Staff members will have a thorough understanding of the expectations for GBS.

In addition, the leadership team members will be available to meet one-on-one to discuss and respond to individual questions, issue clarifications, and to further ensure that each individual teacher will be able to choose wisely whether they believe this is a commitment worth pursuing.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff members have a copy of the Beacon School Plan and that all questions pertaining to the plan will be answered in order to assist them in making a concerted choice to work at Grant Beacon School.

**G.** The leadership team will *collaborate* with the faculty using content area data teams, faculty meetings, and professional development sessions to set academic goals, assess progress in meeting goals by analyzing and interpreting student assessment data. Data will guide professional development. All academic goals, curriculum development and implementation, and progress in meeting data-driven goals will be at the heart of our Beacon mission. Through SRI tests, district benchmark assessments, CSAP analysis, informal and formal data gathering tools, the staff will have access and interpretive power to guide decisions. Our data teams are committed to these ends.

## **SECTION IV: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Professional Development will be an integral part of our plan. At Grant Beacon School continuing education is a constant part of being a professional educator. Our professional development plan provides quality time for staff to facilitate “best practices” so that all students achieve at high academic levels. Using data to guide our professional development, we will structure professional development time for planning collaboratively, examining student work (collectively determining “proficiency”), and assessing and improving our instructional practices. Our primary focus will be on improving student achievement.

The Grant Beacon School Professional Development Plan includes the following essential elements:

- Voluntary summer readings
- One-day voluntary retreat to begin implementing our Beacon School Plan
- One area of our professional development plan will occur twice monthly from 7:25 a.m. until 9:25 a.m. (change to the current bus schedule)
- **School hours and bus schedule will be adjusted to accommodate our professional development time. We are extending our daily student contact time by fifteen minutes to allow for our teacher professional development. Grant Beacon School will have a regular start time and a late start time for students. The end times for school will remain constant.**
- Start time for students on a regular school day will be 7:25 a.m.
- End time for students on a regular school day will be 2:40 p.m.
- Start time for students on a professional development day will be 9:25 a.m.
- End time for students on a professional development day will be 2:40 p.m.

A. At Grant Beacon School faculty members will be encouraged to develop their professional craft through professional development and collaboration with colleagues. Our goal is that all teachers become:

- Proficient in student assessment data analysis
- Proficient in assessing student work using agreed upon rubrics and other assessment tools
- Cognizant of “power standards” in content specific areas
- Competent in using a standards based report card
- Adept at utilizing “best” teaching practices
- Practitioners of “Sheltered English” strategies.
- Practitioners of cooperative group learning strategies
- Implementers of standards/inquiry based curriculum
- Implementers of effective classroom management techniques
- Effective communicators
- Active participants in Professional Learning Communities; Data Teams, Collaborative Scoring, Team Planning, Content Area Planning (or Collaborative Planning)
- More knowledgeable in understanding complexity of the middle school child
- Proficient in differentiated instruction

B. The leadership team at GBS will build instructional capacity using existing resources through Professional Learning Communities, data teams, collaborative scoring sessions, team planning, content area planning, faculty and departmental meetings.

## **SECTION V: ENROLLMENT**

To be a *great neighborhood* middle school is one of our primary goals. We want to remain a traditional middle school with grades six, seven and eight. Our feeder elementary schools will have enrollment priority; next, “choice” students within DPS boundaries will have second enrollment priority, and “out of district” students will have third enrollment priority. We want to attain enrollment capacity for our building. Our vision is to have a waiting list for potential students wanting to enroll in Grant Beacon School.

**A.** The minimum number of students at GBS will be 300 students and the maximum number will be 450 (which is school capacity) in grades six through eight beginning in the 2007-2008 school year. Implementation of the GBS plan starts with all students and teachers August 2007.

**B.** GBS will successfully market our program to attract and recruit students throughout the community by:

- Frequently visiting our feeder schools
- Providing shadowing opportunities
- Recruiting at district school fairs
- Distributing school brochures throughout the neighborhood
- Outreaching to parents at feeder schools
- Soliciting write-ups in Washington Park Profile (local newspaper)
- Organizing a possible “Pearl Street Fair”

**C.** Student and parent recruitment activities:

- Eighth grade students will participate in our recruitment presentations at our feeder school
- Parent/community focus groups

**D.** In keeping with our neighborhood school vision, GBS will not have a unique admissions policy.

## **SECTION VI: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**A.** Grant Beacon School's numerous existing community connections will continue to support our mission and success. Some of our major connections include:

- University of Denver – facility use, student tutors, waived fees for the World Affairs Challenge, use of Holocaust trunks
- University of Denver law school and undergraduate school connections
- Several law firms and numerous media connections
- Connections through decades long winning competition writings
- Major business and professional community bordering the Pearl Street mall – providing advertising, auction items, speakers during school time and after school enrichment.
- The #1 Washington Park/Platte Park area broker/realtor – strong endorsement to new home buyers of Grant Middle School, provides valuable information about community wants and needs for a quality middle school
- South High School – focused conversation about eighth graders transitioning to high school, shadowing opportunities, student speakers

The leadership team will continue to use existing community connections and to seek out other potential community resources to benefit our Grant Beacon School mission and vision.

**B.** Our leadership team's strategy to incorporate innovative external community engagement includes traditional and creative methods. Some of our strategies include:

- Elementary school outreach
- Spaghetti dinner/talent show
- Parent engagement nights
- Open house
- Web site
- Professional communication brochures
- Back to School parent night (with child care) with a supervised school dance
- Personal phone calls inviting parents to attend conferences

Focused conversations about our new mission and vision with our elementary feeder school parents remain our most effective strategy. The focus groups have been informational and positively received. Parents are excited about the new directions for Grant; they want a quality neighborhood middle school for their children – GBS. The following characteristics were identified in the focus groups:

- Safe and orderly school
- Quality teachers
- Focus on student achievement
- Variety of offerings during and after school
- After school supervision

All traditional and creative activities will support the ongoing operations of the GBS.

**C.** GBS will engage parents to support the school's vision and work with the school's leadership to reach our goals by agreeing to and signing a student/teacher/parent GBS compact. This compact will detail the essential characteristics of the GBS plan. Improving communication through newsletters, our school web site, providing access to student information via the parent portal will inform parents and encourage engagement.

## **SECTION VII: SUSTAINABILITY**

Taking into account fiscal durability and our present facility (Grant Middle School) and our present use of resources, the GBS proposed plan can endure. Our changes are primarily visionary, pedagogical and researched based. Our mission aligns with the Denver Plan. We will work within the parameters of the district staffing and resource allocations. Our Beacon school design is based on a fundamental and unwavering belief that all students can achieve at high levels. We are committed to improving student achievement by thoroughly implementing the DPS curriculum and having highly qualified/skilled teachers who value and appreciate collaboration. Our plan is based on the establish principles of the 90/90/90 research for effective schools. Our staff will use the “best” practices document to assess and improve instruction. We will efficiently and effectively use professional development time to perfect our craft to increase student achievement. Always, our focus is academic and social achievement for our students.

We are not asking for additional staff or supplemental resources. We are committed to our Grant Beacon School vision, mission, and design. We believe this plan can and will succeed.

Decades from now we expect the light from our Beacon school work to illuminate not only the Washington Park/Platte Park community, but to inspire other schools to journey with us in this noble cause for public education.

***Grant Middle School  
Beacon School Designation***

**Appendix:**

Teacher Job Description

Core Content Curricular Outlines:

- Mathematics
- Language Arts
- Social Studies
- English Language Acquisition
- Science

## **Teacher Job Description**

### **Grant Middle School - Beacon Teacher**

Grant Beacon School Teachers will teach specific subject matter to a diverse student population, using the DPS curriculum, with a focus on differentiation and inquiry based teaching. The teacher will help all students develop competence and confidence through a balance of acquiring basic skills and deepening conceptual understandings. We seek teachers willing to:

- Implement a standards/inquiry based curriculum
- Employ effective classroom management techniques
- Communicate effectively with the Beacon community
- Use Cooperative Learning Strategies
- Be trained in Sheltered English Strategies
- Demonstrate evidence of effective teaching
- Participate in Professional Learning Communities; Data Teams, Collaborative Scoring, Team Planning, Content Area Planning
- Collaborate with department and grade level teams
- Deepen understanding of the middle school child
- Consider participating in various school interventions or other student activities
- Implement differentiated instruction
- Demonstrate student learning through the use of rubrics and other methods of assessment
- Model positive behaviors and being a team player

Teachers will participate in professional development opportunities that support a standards driven, inquiry based curriculum. The Beacon teacher must be a strong supporter of middle school students and adhere to the highest professional standards.

**GBS**

**Core Content Curricular**  
**Outlines**

## **Mathematics Curriculum**

**Mathematics** is taught using the Connected Mathematics Program. Students often work with partners and in groups: teachers act as facilitators developing students' skills and knowledge around solving mathematics problems.

**Opening Activity:** Each day class begins with students filling in their table of contents, getting out the appropriate materials based on the table of contents entry, and getting fully prepared to begin the day's lesson.

**Launch:** The teacher introduces or reviews the concept under study for the upcoming lesson. The teacher models decoding the math tasks being studied, and directs students to the problems to be solved. Over time, the students gain more and more independence in decoding the task to be solved.

**Exploration:** During this work time, students collaborate to solve the problems using the skills and concepts under study. The teacher moves around the room, facilitating discussions to support the problem solving process. The teacher regularly asks students to explain their thinking, and asks questions to help redirect students thinking if and when necessary.

**Summary:** Students report out to the class the findings and ideas discovered during work time. They describe multiple and varying strategies to solve problems, with emphasis on the fact that there are often many ways to find a correct answer. Students may also describe problems they had with the process, and how they solved those problems.

**Math Notebooks:** Students will maintain a 3-ring notebook that is used exclusively for math class. The notebook will contain the following sections: class work, homework, vocabulary, and quizzes and tests. Class work and homework will be kept in their respective sections in chronological order for the duration of each unit. Quizzes and tests will be kept in chronological order for the entire year. Students will add to the vocabulary section as new vocabulary is introduced.

**Grading and Assessment:** Grading will be standards based. Standards grades will be given to students for each assessment objective covered in a given unit. The assessment objective grades will be combined to give a proficiency grade for each mathematics strand covered in the unit. Students will be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency for all assessment objectives. Behavior, participation, and effort are not a part of the proficiency grade, and will be reported out separately.

### **Differentiation:**

**Outside of Class Interventions:** Students who are not working at a proficient level will be assigned to intervention groups. These groups will be small groups that will meet with their regular classroom teacher for intensive work on current content as well as prior concepts that need extra attention.

**In Class Differentiation:** Through best practices of CMP lessons students will work on the same concepts at varying levels. Homework will be differentiated based on student need.

**Outside of Class Extensions:** Students will have opportunities to participate in extra curricular activities such as Mathletics, Mathcounts, chess club, and others.

## **Language Arts Curriculum**

**English Language Arts** is taught in two hour reading/writing workshop blocks (based on data support) to insure maximum student success. In addition, every student below grade level must take a 45 minute reading skills block to lift them up to grade level. Our philosophy centers on literacy success. Academic success in all areas is directly related to reading and writing success. Genre studies are supplemented with formal writing instruction and assessments as well as reading comprehension instruction and assessment.

**Writer's notebooks:** All students write in notebooks. Some classes have two specific notebooks: one which always stays in the classroom and one which travels with the student back and forth. Additionally, students use various computer areas (labs and Alpha-Smart in classroom-work stations) to save work for projects, to generate ideas for competitions and to deepen writings started in notebooks

**Program:** All language arts teachers follow the scope and sequence of the district literacy reading/writing workshops, formally studio reading and writing. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to extend opportunities to compete in reading and writing competitions and to use data supported successful strategies such as Junior Great Books and other G/T extensions.

**Million Word Readers/ Counting words:** Students know reading is magical. So students keep records of every page of reading they do. Whether it is reading at home for reading/writing log assignments, reading in class or reading at a doctor's appointment student's record the number of pages read in a million word journal. Words are tabulated throughout the year.

**Reading Letters/ Writing Logs:** Students follow the Reading /Writing Workshop guidelines for reading letters by writing letters about their home reading book. Students cover home reading writing projects covering every genre.

**Reading Conferences:** At the heart of instruction is data, and at the heart of data are students. Each teacher knows and shares with each individual student their strengths and weaknesses and what must be worked on. Formal reading/writing conferences are a regular part of student life. Assessments are numerous and quarterly through the year. Informal conferences are documented as teachers deem necessary. Formal assessment conferences take on different shape through the year.

**Reading Comprehension:** Emphasis is placed on constant and expected literacy growth. Our approach stresses that without literacy, without knowing how to read and write well a student will struggle in all academic areas. More time is devoted to insuring this than in any other area.

**Competition Writing:** Students are expected to enter various writing contests. This is where the student shouts to the world "read my writing" and the world responds with monetary awards and travel opportunities because of essays and poetry. Often these competitions are extensions of units of study and sometimes the contest ramify slightly, but the experience is the same perfect writing produces winners.

**Shared Inquiry-**discussions are an expected part of classroom routine. Students understand the whys of the curriculum and the metacognitives of accountable talk. In the reading/writing workshop the parallels between the shared inquiry practiced in the Connected Math program are astounding yet purposeful. Students reason with each other to reach daily deep meaning with higher order thinking skills an expected outcome of every shared inquiry. Teachers trained in such techniques train other teachers to use the time tested methods.

## **Social Studies Curriculum**

**Social Studies** is taught using the Denver Public Schools inquiry based social studies curriculum. The goal in social studies is to help our students become responsible global citizens. Through the creation of a socialized learning community with fixed rituals and routines, students are encouraged to explore the world around them. This type of investigative and experienced-based learning instills a desire for students to become lifelong learners.

**Opening Activity:** Students open each class period by engaging in a warm-up question directly related to current events or classroom topics. Students use classroom resources and critical thinking to reflect on and answer these questions. The teacher may take time to clarify or connect to the previous or upcoming content under study. This opening activity is to take less than ten minutes.

**Content Studies:** Content is standards based and designed to provoke inquiry among students. Study topics are multicultural and offer authentic situations making content relevant to learners. Topics of study are designed to incorporate multiple sources of information including text, maps, auditory and visual supports as well as field study. These media come from a wide range of sources and include primary and secondary sources, commentaries, technology, and student presentations. Individual classes are built around a big idea that serves to frame the discussion.

**Unit Activities:** Each social studies class is designed to include hands-on activities to encourage critical thinking and problem solving skills. Activities are designed to build on previous knowledge and connect ideas to individual experiences. Unit activities are highly varied, encouraging the use of multiple disciplines. During the course of a lesson, students are expected to read and do research, write and verbally present findings, and to engage in classroom discussion. Talking is a normal, routine, required component of the classroom. Students are trained and recognized for developing accountability to the learning community, and to rigorous thinking in the classroom.

**Assessment:** Standards based report cards will be used to help students see and understand their growth throughout the year. Pre and post assessments will also be given to quantitatively measure progress in individual skill sets. A student portfolio will be generated during the course of the student's middle school career, which will develop a body of evidence demonstrating student proficiency in power standards implemented by the social studies department.

## **English Language Acquisition**

**ELA-S** students receive instruction and support in both English and Spanish in all core subject areas, with extensive emphasis on English acquisition in the English language arts class. Students read, write, speak, and listen in both languages in science, social studies, and math. All ELA-S teachers are viewed as a team, mutually responsible for English language acquisition. The goal is to exit learners from this program so they will succeed in English speaking classes.

All ELA-E students are taught in mainstream classes. Trained teachers provide essential support and structures to continue their English language acquisition in the rigorous curriculum. Students read, write, speak, and listen in English.

## **Science Curriculum:**

**Science** is taught using the Denver Public Schools inquiry-based science curriculum. A socialized learning community is created by implementing fixed rituals and routines around a curriculum that balances inquiry (discovery learning through student-directed investigations) with the systematic learning of science concepts. The day-to-day main goals in Science are for students to learn to think and act like scientists. The long term goals are for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to be prepared to score proficient on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Science CSAP and make a successful transition into High School.

**Opening Activity:** Each investigation begins with an open-ended Key Question that places the activity in a meaningful context and allows students to draw on their background knowledge. Students write their responses in their journals and then share/discuss their answers with their team. Teams then share/discuss their revised answers with the rest of the class. The teacher encourages the thinking process and directs/connects the discussion to the upcoming investigation.

**Investigations:** Students carry out supervised hands-on investigations in teams of three or four. These investigations are student-directed discovery learning activities which incorporate the scientific method. Each student in a team is assigned one of the following tasks: materials manager, tracker, skills monitor, and messenger. Charts and graphs are studied and created in a variety of formats and contexts and for a variety of purposes within the investigations. Students take structured notes as they work, and at the end they present their results to the rest of the class. Self- and peer-evaluations are an important component of the class, but notes, lab worksheets, journals, and projects are ultimately graded by the teacher.

**Content Studies:** All DPS Science Standards are covered by the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, with emphasis on Standard 1 (understanding and applying the processes of scientific investigation). As part of each unit of study, students read and discuss textbook reading selections that connect the results of their investigations to their corresponding science content. Textbook readings are content-rich and align with the DPS Science Standards. Students may take notes on the readings, carry out class discussions, complete vocabulary development exercises, answer review/reflect questions on content and inquiry, and complete embedded assessments. Facilitators work with science teachers to develop instructional strategies and assessment methods. Assessments are administered periodically and the resulting data is used to inform/plan instruction and interventions. Students keep a portfolio of class work/assessments that reflect monthly and yearly progress. Differentiation is a component of daily lesson plans, as are Sheltered English strategies and college-preparatory strategies such as Cornell Notes. Additional auditory and visual resources include videos, transparencies, posters, and demonstrations. Students are encouraged to supplement and enrich their classroom science experience through visits to the library, internet searches, trips to museums, etc. After-school tutoring is provided for students who need improvement.

**Reading and Writing in Science:** Language Arts teachers bear the primary responsibility for the students' development of reading and writing skills. Science teachers expect students to apply those skills to the acquisition of content knowledge and in the demonstration of their understanding of science concepts. Reading of science texts is taught to students in a variety of ways: shared read-alouds, small-group reading, and independent reading. Students have a wide range of writing opportunities in Science. Some are brief, simple notes or informal paragraphs about their thoughts, observations, theories, or explanations. Others are formal short or extended constructed responses. Students are taught how to write laboratory reports that include all steps

of the scientific method. Special emphasis is placed on developing hypotheses, writing detailed observations, drawing conclusions, and identifying/gathering evidence to defend those conclusions.

**Projects in Science:** Students carry out multiple science investigations throughout the year. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade each module culminates in a team project. Students also have the opportunity to create independent science projects at home and/or in after-school science clubs.

**Talking** is a normal, routine, and required component of every classroom. Students are taught that appropriate classroom talk makes them accountable to the learning community and helps them acquire knowledge and develop rigorous thinking skills.

**Grading** is standards based. Standards grades are given to students for each unit assessment. Assessment grades are combined to give students a proficiency grade in each standard for each grading period. Students are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in each of the standards being studied throughout the year. Behavior, participation, and effort are not a part of the proficiency grade and are reported separately.