U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 313 North Garfield Street
          (If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Weiner   State AR   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 72479-9304

County Poinsett

Telephone (870) 684-2252   Fax (870) 684-2684

Web site/URL http://www.weinerelementary.org   E-mail phogue@hbgsd.org

	Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/Weiner-Elementary-An-Arkansas-School-of-Innovation-	
Twitter Handle	1428569770689426/?fref=ts	Google+
YouTube/URL	Blog	Other Social Media Link

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

                                        Date
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Danny Sample   E-mail dsample@hbgsd.org
          (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Harrisburg School District   Tel. (870) 578-2416
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 Mr. Todd Bartholomew
          (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, write N/A in the space.

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.

3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.

6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.

7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.

8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

                                         4 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

   [ ] Urban or large central city
   [ ] Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
   [ ] Suburban
   [ ] Small city or town in a rural area
   [X] Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	12	12	24
1	7	12	19
2	7	8	15
3	2	9	11
4	12	11	23
5	8	10	18
6	5	10	15
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	53	72	125

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school: 0 % Asian
                                           3 % Black or African American
                                           8 % Hispanic or Latino
                                           0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                          87 % White
                                           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 2014 – 2015 school year: 36%

    This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred *to* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	27
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	40
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	112
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.357
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	36

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
                                                        5 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 82 %
        Total number students who qualify: 102

8. Students receiving special education services: 18 %
                                                        22 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. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

    1 Autism   0 Orthopedic Impairment
    0 Deafness   3 Other Health Impaired
    0 Deaf-Blindness   5 Specific Learning Disability
    0 Emotional Disturbance   13 Speech or Language Impairment
    0 Hearing Impairment   0 Traumatic Brain Injury
    4 Mental Retardation   0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
    0 Multiple Disabilities   0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: <u>3</u>

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	8
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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   <u>16:1</u>

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	98%	94%	94%	95%	94%
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 2015.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
    Yes <u> </u>   No <u>X</u>

    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.

Weiner Elementary tears down barriers and builds possibilities, enabling all students to reach their full potential as lifelong learners who feel PART of our world.

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

Although there are two elementary schools in our district, attendance zones within the district determine the school a student attends. Harrisburg School District and Weiner Elementary participate in the Arkansas School Choice program which allows students to attend a school outside of their resident district. Intents must be filed with the resident district by May 1 and forwarded to the receiving district for their approval or denial. State law limits the percentage of students that may transfer into or out of a district. Weiner Elementary does have approximately ten students that are enrolled through school choice. Students are not "chosen" - Arkansas School Choice is based on a first come, first served basis within each district.

PART III – SUMMARY

Weiner Elementary is a very rural school with a long history of academic excellence and community support. In 2011, we were consolidated into the Harrisburg School District. Our area is considered part of the Jonesboro Metropolitan Area which includes both Craighead and Poinsett counties. The differences between the two counties is best realized in United States Census Bureau data: the median household income in Craighead County is $41,054, while the median household income in Poinsett County is $31,743. Additionally, 23.7% of citizens in Craighead County have a Bachelors degree or higher, while only 8.9% of citizens in Poinsett County have a Bachelors degree or higher. The number of unemployed parents in our school is high and access to adequate, affordable housing is limited; consequently, we have a high percentage of highly mobile students. Our students have added dimensions of challenge that were not there five years ago. For these reasons, school, as it had been for us, had to change.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

As an Arkansas School of Innovation, the goal of our staff is to provide all students with a technology and culture rich curriculum in all subject areas that will make college and career ready students - a curriculum that exceeds the rigors of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The CCSS drive the Reading and English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. In primary grades, Reading is taught using both sight words and phonics. Teachers use the basal reading program, as well as age appropriate literature to teach the standards. To incorporate nonfiction into the Reading/ELA program, Social Studies is often integrated. Writing is an important component of the curriculum and students are introduced to rubric scoring in primary grades. In grades 3 - 6, most skills in Reading are taught using class novels or other relevant reading passages and historical documents. Often these novels and passages are part of the Social Studies curriculum. Each unit begins with an overview of skills to be taught throughout the reading followed by a Project/Problem Based Learning (PBL) activity related to the text. Again, writing is a major component of the Reading/ELA program in upper grades and although taught by different teachers, a team-teaching approach is used to create a cross-curricular learning environment. The staff believes that students become better readers through the act of reading. Consequently, Accelerated Reader is part of the curriculum in grades 1 - 6 with quarterly point goals based on his/her Lexile level, not grade level.

Through flexible grouping in Reading, students who are performing below grade level are often grouped with students with similar strengths and/or weaknesses. We have found students are more confident when reading with students sharing similar skill levels. Students who are below grade level are also tutored individually or in a small group setting on the specific skills with which they struggle. Similarly, students working above grade level benefit from flexible grouping.

Math instruction is driven by the CCSS. Foundation Math skills are taught using a variety of methods. Students are still required to memorize addition/subtraction and multiplication facts. Skills are taught using resources including computer based instruction like iXL and Engage New York, as well as traditional Math textbooks or programs. All grades have access to hands-on materials for kinesthetic learners. PBL is used to connect the foundation math skills to real world situations. As in reading, students performing below expectation are tutored individually or in small groups. Peer tutoring is often used, benefiting both the struggling student and the student working at an advanced level.

Although Arkansas is in the final year of its Science curriculum framework, we opted to also teach the Next Generation Science Standards. Science skills are taught primarily through Project Based Learning and Labs. The school maintains a garden used as a teaching tool and outdoor classroom. Teachers use online resources, guest speakers, virtual field trips and other resources to provide students with not only Science skills but also an appreciation for Science related careers and areas of study. Science is the area where few students perform below grade level. Subject matter and skills are differentiated for understanding, thereby reaching each student where he/she is - whether advanced or struggling.

The Social Studies/History curriculum is aligned to the Arkansas Social Studies Frameworks and includes a study of Arkansas History at each grade. Social Studies and History are taught almost exclusively as part of the Reading/ELA program. Teachers work together to coordinate Reading materials with Social Studies skills. For example, a class may read Number the Stars in Reading while studying the Holocaust and World War II in History. Although students may be tutored in Social Studies/History, the curriculum is easily adapted to meet the needs of both those working below or above grade level. Students acquire additional Social Studies/History skills through the school's culture studies including a "Place of the Week" and related Geography in our school assembly.

The core curriculum at Weiner Elementary is designed to meet the individual needs of students and internalize excitement for learning. We strive to increase achievement through relevant learning processes

that incorporate real world expectations, insuring command of the skills necessary for ongoing success in junior high, high school, post-secondary and the job market.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The staff of Weiner Elementary believes that the way schools have looked in the past no longer meets the needs of students that we are preparing to live in a world that will be more technological than we can even imagine. It is the belief of our staff that to achieve academic excellence, greater fairness, and higher literacy, students need to be culturally literate. Our goal is to provide our very rural students with the foundations of knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in that world. We want our students to feel a part of the world instead of apart from it.

As an Arkansas School of Innovation, Weiner Elementary was granted a waiver to incorporate the arts, both music and visual, into the curriculum. In Arkansas, traditionally students are "taught" art once each week. The work accomplished during that class is isolated and stands apart from the core curriculum. Through arts infusion in the projects based classroom, students experience a variety of artistic expression whether it is visual arts, music, or drama in an on-going, meaningful way. Arts experiences become powerful real-life experiences that bring meaning to core curriculum studies.

Classroom teachers who are responsible for integrating the arts and core skills learn arts skills and understanding through interactions with various arts specialists including visiting artists, professional development opportunities and from a licensed music teacher and a licensed art teacher that are on staff. Although integrated, all students do attend a music class for 30 minutes each week for instruction in music theory. An accountability system ensures that all students have at least one visual art and one musical art experience each week.

Students participate in physical education for two 30 minutes periods each week. These are taught using the Arkansas Physical Education Frameworks as a guide. Health and Nutrition are taught primarily through the Science curriculum. Teachers document the teaching of those skills in lesson plans. The most relevant health and nutrition education comes through participation in the school's garden. It is our experience that students are more willing to try new nutritious foods if they have helped grow that food in our garden. Our school participates in the "farm to school" program for fresh fruits and vegetables and has visited the farm where some of this produce is grown.

Weiner Elementary teaches Spanish to ALL students in a 40 minute Spanish class five days a week taught by a native Spanish speaker. In addition to a more refined and natural use of the language, students taught by a native speaker have a better understanding of and appreciation for the culture. Students experience the culture through the personal perspective of the native speaking teacher. Also, Spanish I for high school credit is offered as an elective to fifth and sixth grade students. Currently, 52% of eligible students are enrolled in this course. Next school year, students in grade 5 may take Spanish I and students who completed Spanish I may take Spanish II, also for high school credit.

Technology is a part of the daily lives of our students. Students in Kindergarten through sixth grade take Keyboarding in three 40 minute classes each week. As a "one-to-one" school, students in grades K - 2 are assigned an iPad; grades 3 & 4, a Chrome Book; and grades 5 & 6, a MacBook Air. Technology is used by students and teachers throughout the curriculum. Students in grades 3 - 6 keep a digital portfolio through Google Sites and teachers in those grades interact with students using Google Classroom.

Our staff concurs that our most successful non-core activity is our morning "assembly" and the resources that accompany it. Each morning, our school population assembles together to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing "The National Anthem". This is followed by lessons about an "Artist of the Week", a "Musician of the Week", and a "Place of the Week". Along with the week-long studies, there is a "Spanish word of the day" and a daily "Face of Creativity". These culture lessons are reinforced by a display in our school lobby and by incorporation in the classroom. Our school website includes additional information that students can access.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Across the curriculum, teachers use a variety of instructional methods to teach the state mandated standards. While the staff believes that the use of Project Based Learning (PBL) is an effective way to prepare students for their future, there is a strong belief that foundation skills must first be acquired by students in all Core areas. Consequently, the school uses differentiated flexible groupings to increase student confidence based on individual student strengths and/or interests.

When teaching foundation skills, teachers use a tiered approach when making assignments. For example, in Math, assignments may have three columns. The middle column would be problems at grade level, the left column would be review/building problems for those who need additional help, and the right column would contain more complex problems for those working above grade level.

Acquired foundation skills are made meaningful through PBL activities utilizing flexible grouping. These groups are determined via various methods including pre-tests, interest inventories and teacher recommendations. Students may be grouped by academic strengths and/or weaknesses or by interest. Teachers may teach two different novels in Reading letting students join the group of the book that interest them. Again, tiered assignments are used. At other times, students may be assigned by the teachers to a group based on strengths/weaknesses of the group like reading level. Students may be part of different groups throughout the day.

Online resources reinforce concepts in all subjects. A teacher favorite is IXL Learning's online practice. Teachers assign students a skill or set of skills and IXL leads students to grade level questions. If review is needed, students will be directed to review questions. If mastery is achieved, students are directed to more complex questions. Teachers use analytical reports to evaluate students' strengths and where there may be a weakness. Teachers may also catch an area of the curriculum that needs to be adjusted.

Students needing remediation are tutored individually or in small groups at least three times weekly. This may be traditional instruction, hands-on activities or computer-based programs. A student showing Dyslexia markers works with a trained tutor using a standardized, systematic intervention system (we use the Barton System). Students working above grade level may have the opportunity to be a tutor to younger students.

By using different instructional methods, we are able to meet students where they are and uniquely support them as they move where they need to be to achieve success.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Assessment data is vital in identifying the needs of each student and the needs of our curriculum as a whole. At Weiner Elementary, a variety of assessments are used to measure student mastery, student growth and student aptitude. Along with a state mandated annual assessment, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Developmental Reading Assessment 2 (DRA2), STAR Math, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) are used to assess student achievement.

Prior to 13-14, the Arkansas Benchmark Exam was mandated. Last school year the PARCC was administered and this year we will administer ACT Aspire. Test scores from 13-14 have been used to identify weaknesses in the curriculum. Because it is difficult to compare scores between these different tests, this year we have placed our focus on the results of interim assessments.

DIBELS is administered to all students in grades K - 6. Students showing weakness in any area are provided remediation and progress monitored every three weeks. Students exit remediation when no weakness is shown. DIBELS also identifies students who show Dyslexia markers. Those students enter the Response to Intervention (RTI) program. Parents are notified when and why students are placed in remediation. A parent meeting is held when a student enters RTI.

The DRA2 is administered by teachers in grades K-2 to evaluate changes in students' oral reading and comprehension performance. Teachers then provide individualized scaffolded support and parents are

provided strategies to support students at home. Although computer-based, STAR Math is utilized in much the same way as the DRA2 and is used to identify needed remediation. The scaffolded support may be provided, at least in part, by the STAR program.

MAP tests are used to show individual growth in core subjects. The detailed reports show what each student knows and is ready to learn. The MAP is administered beginning, middle and end of year and parents are provided with detailed reports and an explanation of their meaning. Lexile reading scores are identified for each student as are strand analysis. These reports are used to ensure that teachers are meeting each student where they are academically.

In order to maintain high levels of achievement, the data generated by each assessment is used to identify the needs of individuals and enable us to provide the unique support necessary to make that student successful. The core curriculum is evaluated using data from these assessments and adjustments are made as needed. Assessments provide the information necessary to achieve success.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The culture and climate of Weiner Elementary School (WES) value every student and seek to help each reach his or her potential. Believing that a student's well-being is linked to their ability to learn, the school strives to be a pleasant, safe place where people care. Each child is visible at WES, and teachers seek to learn students' backgrounds as well as their names. A clothes closet meets individual needs. All students attend weekly gifted-and-talented program seminar promoting creativity, character, and social skills. Student successes are celebrated with newspaper coverage, websites, and the Facebook page. Exemplary work is displayed in halls and on the student's online digital portfolio. Technology is readily available in our one-to-one school and its use is embraced for all.

Realizing isolation limits the experiences of many rural students, global outreach is an integral component of WES's school climate. "The World Is Our Classroom" is a motto hanging in the school's lobby. Students learn daily about places, people, artists, and musicians from around the world in a morning assembly and reinforced on the school's website. Flags from nations, culture displays, and maps decorate the hallways. Classes Skype and blog with students and experts throughout the world and participate in worldwide online events such as Hour of Code and Global Read Aloud. Every student attends Spanish class daily that is taught by a native speaker. WES believes in the power of field trips to broaden students' worlds by attending performances, museums, and cultural sites. Students have the opportunity to learn from visiting artists, speakers, and performers, such as a symphony string quartet. Feedback from student reviews, assessments and surveys document student cultural growth.

WES provides a supportive environment for the staff. Meeting the needs of teachers, whether with supplies, scheduling, personal or classroom support, is a priority. Teachers are encouraged to attend conferences, network, pursue higher education, and share ideas. The faculty exhibits a willingness to try new methods, grow in technology, and accept change. The staff enjoys a camaraderie built through shared experiences and a cultivated attitude of teamwork. The positive staff attitude influences students' attitudes.

In a 2015 survey, stakeholders were asked for one word to describe our school. The most frequently used word was "family". The school climate of Weiner Elementary exemplifies a slogan featured on its website: "Weiner Elementary - a great place to be today's kid!"

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parental and community engagement in the school are significant factors in the achievements of Weiner Elementary's students. The school encourages parents to actively participate in their children's education through typical methods such as twice-yearly Parent/Teacher conferences, progress reports, open houses, and report cards. A native Spanish speaking teacher helps dispel language barriers. Teachers communicate with parents through phone calls, emails, teacher webpages, in-person meetings, and group texting. School provided planner notebooks allow parents to review daily assignments.

On a 2015 survey, 100% of the stakeholders surveryed agreed that "opportunities were provided for parent/community awareness and involvement." Awareness comes through a Facebook page and school website that showcase school activities and provide information about events and current curricular studies. Student accomplishments are celebrated on the Facebook page, the website, in newspapers, and through presentations by students at local civic organizations. The Facebook page reached 4,324 people during a one-week period, and many days the school website has over 1,000 hits. Sharing student achievements not only increases community interest in the educational program but builds students' confidence and self-esteem.

Weiner Elementary encourages community participation and assistance, which creates a connection to and pride in the school. Parents and community members serve on various committees within the school and assist with events. School plays, student presentations, community open houses, and other programs are

heavily promoted and well attended. Volunteers provided labor and equipment to make the playground handicap accessible; a Senior Citizens organization landscaped the school's cafeteria; Alumni speak to students in person or virtually about their professions or travels; a nearby college encourages the arts by providing free tickets to events or student participation in events; and a community volunteer serves as a trained Dyslexia tutor. Community members and parents created a Weiner Children's Endowment to support the school's needs. The organization's efforts made it possible for each student in the school to have one-to-one access to a computer or tablet. This technology is utilized daily as part of the curriculum, better preparing our students for the world of tomorrow.

The work, time, and money given by community and family members demonstrate to the students the importance that adults place on their education, which in turn influences students to value their education. Along with a history of high achievement levels on standardized tests, ast year the school had a 98 percent daily attendance rate, providing evidence that students do value education.

3. Professional Development:

The Weiner Elementary School (WES) administration and faculty believe that teacher training is possibly the most valuable resource for successfully educating its students. It is a resource that is not used up or worn out, but continues to grow and improve with time. Only pertinent professional development is of value, however, so teachers provide important input regarding what is needed. Although part of a teachers annual professional development is guided by their Professional Growth Plan, a portion of their hours are mandated by law or necessity.

If a need or weakness is recognized by the administration or faculty, professional development is sought to address the problem. One of the performance targets for WES's School of Innovation is an increase in the use of problem based learning (PBL). After evaluation, it was determined that additional professional development would strengthen the teachers' implementation of PBL. Research convinced the staff that the Buck Institute for Education (BIE) had the expertise the faculty sought, and a grant was applied for and received. The BIE inservice gave the teachers needed confidence and motivation to implement more PBL.

The school annually provides inservice pertaining to achievement testing and its administration. Results from periodic target testing are examined throughout the year, and any needed professional development is added. WES's goals extend beyond student achievement test scores, thus inservice related to a whole child approach, twenty-first century skills, and the school's innovation plans are also considered important. Teachers attend conferences and workshops to gain new ideas and expertise which is shared with the rest of the faculty. The digital learning facilitator shares technology tips with the faculty through presentations, email, and websites. Input during faculty meetings assists with monitoring and adjusting the education program. An across-grades grouping of students was restructured after an examination of strengths and weaknesses in a teachers' meeting. WES inservice opportunities are not restricted to the school campus. Opportunities and plans for teacher learning experiences have included teacher field trips to nearby historical or cultural sites, such as the Memphis Civil Rights Museum. These trips help strengthen relationships between teachers as well as educating and informing.

Inservice sessions at WES are designed to be not only educational and useful but pleasant and enjoyable. Teachers' time and convenience are given consideration when scheduling locations, dates, and times. Professional development sessions at Weiner Elementary accomplish multiple purposes of educating and motivating teachers, building teamwork, and improving student performance.

4. School Leadership:

Weiner Elementary School's (WES) leadership philosophy guides the educational program towards its mission of all students reaching their full potential as thinkers, lifelong learners, and productive contributors within our global, ever-changing society. The leadership believes in the importance of strengthening the creativity, communication skills, cultural knowledge, and general well-being of each student in addition to increasing his or her mastery of skills related to Common Core State Standards

(CCSS). An important aspect of the leadership philosophy ingrained within staff is the well-being and importance of every child.

The principal is the instructional leader and acts as liaison to the district administrators. She serves as a springboard for ideas and lends her expertise in finding solutions to problems. Although all staff is considered part of the leadership team, the team is led by a guidance team consisting of the lead teacher, the digital learning facilitator, and the principal. The team helps brainstorm and problem-solve, always seeking ways to improve the effectiveness of the school in educating and preparing the students.

Two years ago, the guidance team approached teachers and staff about becoming an Arkansas School of Innovation (SOI) in order to provide a technology and culture rich curriculum to better prepare students for the world of today. With 100 percent approval of the staff, the plan was submitted and approved by the Arkansas Department of Education.

WES's small staff size is conducive to a unified team approach in leading the school towards accomplishing its mission and goals. Teachers are valued and supported. The faculty are encouraged to give input at meetings, via email, and through direct contact with the guidance team. That input helps guide the curriculum and day-to-day activities of the school. The teaching staff is paired with partner teachers to plan and carry-out instruction and provide motivation and support. Mentor teachers are assigned to assist and advise novice teachers.

Parents and community members also have a voice in the school's SOI plan and serve on advisory committees for the school's innovation plan and for the school's School Improvement Plan. The community is supportive of the school's goals and provides support both financially and through working with students to ensure success.

All stakeholders, both inside and outside the school, form a network of professional support with the common goal of guiding the educational program, and our students, to success.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The heading on our school website states: "Weiner Elementary School --a great place to be today's kid!" We believe the one practice most vital to our success is relationships. Academic achievement and student self-esteem are dependent upon meaningful relationships. We believe achievement cannot be realized without student self-esteem, and self-esteem cannot be realized without achievement. Neither of those are optimally possible without human connection.

Our school's small size creates a dynamic where teachers know all students. Children are visible. A survey last year asked students, "What one word best describes your school?" The overwhelming response was "Family." Teachers who share of themselves, even their failures, show kids it is okay to make mistakes. This empowers students to take risks --so important to achievement and self-esteem. Teachers utilize safety nets as needed, demonstrating their belief that each child can succeed.

Having friends is crucial to school success; therefore, activities are in place that help children make and be a good friend. Our counseling class received recognition for an anti-bullying program that focuses on the role of bystanders in ending bullying. The Seminar Class involves students in discussions such as "What to do when your friend hurts your feelings or you hurt your friend's feelings." Sessions are held in developing positive social skills that transfers to positive relationships.

The parent-community-teacher relationship is one where all benefit. A senior citizen center on campus has helped improve our campus as well as mentor students. Our parents and community take pride in the "Weiner Children's Endowment" and support initiatives related to our innovation plan. Parents volunteer in various activities and are given the parameters of a need and are allowed to use their creativity in the realization of the task.

Relationships are probably most important for students who test limits and are most at risk. These are kids who refuse to learn from those they do not like. These are kids with whom we work the hardest to develop a positive, trusting relationship. Sometimes this teacher/student relationship is the only stable relationship in that child's life.

Morning assembly shouts "relationship." It makes us one body, one family, learning together, singing together, and sharing the wonder and possibilities of the world unfolding before us all.

There are many ways to measure "success." We believe the most important and powerful of all is human connection --relationships. Academic and social learning is simply not what it could be without it.