

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Jennifer Barnabee

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

Official School Name Countryside Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 205 West County Line Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Barrington State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60010-4055

County Cook County

Telephone (847) 381-1162 Fax (847) 756-2830

Web site/URL http://www.barrington220.org/countryside E-mail jbarnabee@barrington220.org

Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/CountrysideSchool/ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_  
Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_

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\*Dr. Brian Harris E-mail bharris@barrington220.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Barrington CUSD 220 Tel. (847) 381-6300

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. Brian Battle  
(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

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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. 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

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

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 8 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 11 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
  - 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
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	21	19	40
<b>1</b>	30	18	48
<b>2</b>	39	56	95
<b>3</b>	54	44	98
<b>4</b>	30	36	66
<b>5</b>	38	33	71
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	212	206	418

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 15 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 75 % 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: 15%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	57
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	63
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	418
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.151
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Polish, Russian, Oriya, Taiwanese, Formosan, Min Nan

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10%  
Total number students who qualify: 42

8. Students receiving special education services: 18%  
75 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.

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>3</u> Autism                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness              | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness        | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>38</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment    | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Mental Retardation    | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>19</u> Developmentally Delayed              |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	23
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals	20
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	96%	96%	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 2015.

<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 X

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.

By fostering a climate that encourages the joy of continuous learning and personal growth, we preserve the right of students to learn and enjoy childhood.

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

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Countryside Elementary School is one of eight elementary schools located in Barrington, Illinois, a suburb west of Chicago. The original Countryside School was a K-8 building built in 1942 in horse-farm-country west of town, consolidating seven one-room schools. Another building was constructed in 1950. That building was razed in 2000 to make room for the construction of a new building on the same site. The current Countryside Elementary School opened its doors in August 2002 with full American Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility and staff to meet the needs of all learners. The diversity of our student's physical, social-emotional, and academic needs has created a culture of empathy and acceptance at Countryside that is truly exceptional. Three classes of students with significant challenges, as well as fully included special education students, are integrated into the daily life of our school. Like in the days of one-room schoolhouses, Countryside Elementary School retains a sense of family and is a home for our students and their loved ones. Our school serves over 400, kindergarten through fifth grade, students in the communities of Barrington, Barrington Hills, Fox River Grove, and Lake Barrington.

In our efforts to uphold the vision of Barrington 220, "Inspiring all learners to achieve excellence," the staff, students, and families of Countryside Elementary School work together to grow students' interests, academic and social-emotional skills, and global perspectives. We empower students to become productive and responsible members of society. With the unique diversity found within our student population, the various cultures represented by our students and their families, the strength of our special education programs, and the housing of our Chinese Immersion program, all Countryside stakeholders learn and grow together in our empathy for, tolerance of, and celebration of each others' individual differences.

Countryside Elementary School is a true community center. From morning programs before school, to activities in the evenings and weekends, the building and its outside spaces bring together staff, students, families, neighbors, and friends. One example is this year's Hoops Dream fundraising initiative that brought the school and park district together to build an outside basketball court. Everyone, from our youngest students to our Park District badminton senior citizens, came together to support the project.

Throughout each school year staff members, parents, and community volunteers work together on numerous academic extension and service learning opportunities to grow our students' minds, bodies, and spirits. During the year our school community supports philanthropy through coat, mitten, blanket, and hat drives, food pantry collection, support for a Kenyan village, recognition of military and community heroes, singing with seniors, and a 5K run for selected non-profits. Countryside students actively participate in Countryside Cares Club, Scouts, Student Council, Green Club, visits to a home for elderly, Chess Club, band, orchestra, basketball, cross-country, the district-wide speech tournament, school spelling bee, and after-school mini-courses. Countryside students actively lead by reading morning announcements, reciting the "Power of One" oath, sharing weekly cross grade level buddy experiences, leading younger students to their buses, and promoting school safety on our Safety Patrol. As we work to grow our students' minds, bodies, and spirits, our community nurtures the development of the whole child.

The Countryside learning community fosters a partnership between home and school. Communication with families about the most effective practices in curriculum and instruction, health, and social-emotional learning is ongoing through PTO meetings, Parent Universities, Family Fitness nights, Cozy Up and Read evenings, parent-teacher conferences, teacher blogs and websites, newsletters, and visits to the classroom. Every staff member is an integral part of our school improvement team working to grow in three areas: instruction, assessment, and social-emotional learning.

Learning is viewed by all as life-long. Staff members continually grow themselves and each other, serving as role models for our students and their families. Whether through district-sponsored workshops, professional learning experiences, book study groups, higher education courses, or action research, staff members actively pursue opportunities to improve and refine our craft. While Countryside Elementary School enjoys success in all academic domains, we identified math problem solving as an area of focus this school year and have devoted monthly staff meetings to analyzing assessment data, assigning a

developmental progression of skills at every grade-level, and integrating higher-order, critical thinking skills throughout lessons.

Countryside Elementary School embodies the qualities of excellence worthy of National Blue Ribbon recognition. From the staff committed to serving the unique needs of our student population, to the students and families who partner with us each day, the people of Countryside Elementary School devote mind, body, and soul to learning and growing together. Our celebration of each others' differences and our community's emphasis on compassion for others, make the staff, students, and families of Countryside Elementary School remarkable, and truly one of a kind.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

At Countryside School, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) outline the core content taught at each grade level. With the Common Core as our guide, teachers determine which instructional practices will provide the most favorable scaffolds for learners. Teachers are also in the process of unpacking both the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and The C3 (College, Career, and Civic Life) Framework. While we teach from the existing state standards in both science and social studies, teachers have started to implement practices outlined in each new set of standards. Countryside School believes in integration and differentiation of instruction across the curriculum to ensure we are meeting the needs of all learners and leading them to achieve excellence.

Our literacy instruction is built upon a balanced framework. On a typical day, students engage in reading and writing workshops, small group instruction, and both shared and independent reading and writing. Teachers provide mini lessons using mentor texts that introduce skills and strategies based on student need. Our teachers use the gradual release of responsibility to scaffold student learning. As identified by formative assessments, student needs are differentiated for during the practice and independent portions of each lesson when teachers meet with small groups or individuals.

Teachers have access to a wide variety of researched based instructional resources from which to implement the CCSS. As well, we rely on our instructional professional libraries of mentor authors and the leveled classroom libraries we have created that provide students with the opportunity to choose books based on favorite authors, topics, or genres. Countryside is also fortunate to have a leveled literacy library that includes texts across all genres and levels from A-Z. Teachers use this library to find appropriate texts to use in small group instruction.

To drive instruction in math, teachers follow the CCSS for Mathematics along with the Mathematical Practice Standards. The lessons we have adapted from our math program require students to build a mathematical understanding through the Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract methodology. In order to deliver the most effective differentiated instruction, teachers identify prerequisite skills in each unit and pre-assess math concepts to flexibly group students based on skill and concept understanding, rather than based on level. This process of pre-assessing and flexibly grouping students allows teachers to build depth into lessons, focusing on enrichment with students who need more challenge, and focusing on building a solid foundation with students who need more time to master concepts.

Our math block includes time for whole class and small group instruction. Math centers reinforce concepts previously taught and provide students with extra practice and challenge. Each unit of instruction moves students through a progression of mathematical problem solving strategies and critical thinking skills. Students are provided opportunities to decipher novel mathematical situations, determine efficient strategies to solve problems, and provide detailed explanations for the thinking involved throughout the process of finding a solution.

Science and social studies are inquiry based and teachers make the most of their instructional time by integrating topics within our literacy units of study. Within science, unifying concepts explored throughout the grade levels include: change over time, patterns and relationships, constancy, and interactions. Students work daily to observe elements of topics explored, create claims, and provide evidence based on observations. Teachers facilitate group collaboration and students work to compare, organize, predict, and infer. On a daily basis, students write findings and record observations in journals. Our social studies curriculum explores the topics of geography, citizenship, history, and economics. Students participate in questioning concepts, researching periods of time, evaluating resources, and forming claims based on findings. By the time students reach fifth grade they work with volunteers from the Chamber of Commerce on the development of a product, through which they explore the concepts of advertising, selling, paying back investors, sharing with a charity, and spending.

Within the four core curriculum areas, formative assessment, co-teaching, and flexible grouping are essential to the integration of curriculum and the differentiation for individual student needs at Countryside. We see all students as our students. Therefore, resource teachers, the instructional coach, and classroom teachers make decisions together based on formative assessment data. Using the Common Core as our guide, we teach together and address whole group, small group, and individual student needs as a team.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Countryside Elementary School nurtures the unique talents, interests, and needs of all learners through a variety of programs. In the Chinese Immersion program, for example, students grow as global citizens in addition to learning another language. In addition to learning experiences with age-appropriate peers, our primary and intermediate cross-categorical programs offer students who have physical and cognitive challenges, gradients of occupational, speech, and physical therapeutic services. Also available to all students in grades 1-5 are weekly classes in art, music, health, physical education, and digital literacy. The Countryside team strives to develop the whole child in mind, body, and spirit.

Countryside's Chinese Immersion students started in kindergarten, during the 2012-2013 school year, and are currently in second and third grades. Through the 50-50 model students spend half their day with an English-speaking teacher and the other half with a Chinese teacher learning to read, write, and speak Mandarin. All content areas follow the Common Core State Standards. Students will continue the program through middle and high school, growing in appreciation for Chinese culture, traditions, language proficiency, and earning the Seal of Biliteracy.

Students in the cross-categorical special education programs in grades K-5 receive small group instruction and specialized support by teachers and therapists in a collaborative model. Research based materials and strategies are used to support students' needs, meet their educational goals, and include them as appropriate throughout the school environment. Curriculum is aligned to state standards and customized to each learner. Our special education program ensures all students have equal access to appropriately challenging tasks.

Barrington 220 offers an optional Kindergarten Enrichment Program. The program at Countryside is offered in the afternoon after the standard morning half-day program. Enrichment is non-curricular based. Children participate in inquiry-based thematic units and play-based learning activities. Students enrolled in our enrichment program also participate in weekly physical education, library, art, and music.

Our extensive fine arts, physical education, and digital literacy programs focus on developing the whole child through a broad, differentiated scope. Every student has weekly opportunities to develop, create, invent, display, perform, and reflect. They engage with authentic audiences including parents, Countryside and district peers, and community members.

Art educators at Countryside provide students with skills needed to communicate ideas throughout their lives. A rotating gallery of student artwork in hallways proudly showcases and celebrates our students' artistic talents. Through aesthetics, art history, art creation and real world connections we prime students to recognize and understand the presence of art around them, opening their eyes to the creative spirit shared by people from all places, cultures, and times.

In music class, all students sing, dance, play instruments, use dramatic play, compose, improvise, and perform. Students explore American folk, pop, multicultural, and original music. While all grade levels enjoy the use of xylophones, drums, and assorted percussion to create music, students in grades 3-5 have excelled in playing the ukulele and fourth graders become proficient on the recorder. Each year students in grades 1-5 perform for the community.

At Countryside we are proud of our quality health and physical education program. We know that when students maintain adequate levels of physical fitness and make healthy choices, the conditions and opportunities for learning also increase. For these reasons, health and physical education play an integral

role in our comprehensive educational program. From sports units to units on balance, flexibility, and aerobics, students learn to value and apply physical activity and its benefits for a lifetime.

Technology and media instruction at Countryside develops kindergarten through fifth grade students' positive digital citizenship and trans-literacy skills. From accessing primary documents, to annotating photos and text showing evidence of thinking, students are empowered by the use of technology and have increased their knowledge and independence toward becoming lifelong learners. The use of technology for formative assessment has allowed us to effectively understand, measure, and pinpoint student growth. Dialoguing with parents via online tools has given them a glance into the classroom. Digital literacy instruction is developing students into lifelong learners, collaborators, and creators of information.

Countryside's non-core subjects add to the continual growth and development of the whole child, mind, body, and spirit. They lead each child to discover and achieve. They highlight each child's unique potential in our rapidly changing world.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Countryside uses a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). This comprehensive, school-wide framework uses data based problem solving to address the needs of all learners. At six-week intervals grade levels meet with the special services team to analyze progress-monitoring data. Teams problem solve together to make decisions about next steps in instruction. This systematic approach is used to meet the diverse needs of students and achieve instructional goals.

Differentiation is a fundamental component of each content area. Teachers use the Common Core State Standards as our curriculum foundation. Based on level of support and enrichment needed, flexible grouping may occur within the classroom, throughout the grade-level, and across grade levels to ensure students have equal access to appropriately challenging tasks.

For students performing two or more grade-levels above peers, we offer a gifted resource program in reading and math. Based on multiple data points, including performance tasks from within the classroom, achievement and cognitive abilities test results, students in grades 3-5 who need both acceleration and enrichment are placed into our resource program. If a student is placed for math, the program is full replacement using curriculum 1-2 grade levels above peers. Reading enrichment is provided in grade 3, and full replacement in grades 4 and 5. Dependent upon individual need, students in grades K-2 may receive enrichment or advanced grade level instruction by the resource teacher or an advanced grade level teacher.

Summative and formative assessment data also help identify students below grade level benchmarks. These students receive intensive, targeted small group or individual instruction from specialized interventionists. Students with individual education plans (IEPs) work with learning diagnosticians on goals developed by the special services team and parents. Those not specifically identified to receive special education services, but still below grade level, receive intervention instruction from a resource teacher. Interventions for all students are provided in addition to instruction provided by classroom teachers.

Instruction follows a balanced structure, giving students access to curriculum at a pace and rigor appropriate for their needs. Whole group mini-lessons are followed by small group instruction and independent practice. Special service educators, our instructional coach, and the gifted resource teacher use a combination of push-in, pullout, flexible grouping, and co-teaching strategies to meet needs in all tiers. Formative and summative assessment data, analyzed during the collaborative MTSS process, guides teachers to establish optimal learning experiences for all students at Countryside Elementary School.

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

Our goal is to reach all tiers of learners at Countryside Elementary School. Teachers use a combination of summative and formative assessment data to guide decisions about instruction. We follow the research of John Hattie on assessment and understand the fundamental role we play in balancing data with instructional strategies used to engage students in learning each day.

Teachers use a balanced model to assess students. Curriculum-based measurements, ready-made and those developed by teachers, inform instruction on a daily and unit-by-unit basis in all content areas (literacy, math, science, and social studies). Feedback from these formative assessments comes in many forms and is provided through many paths. Teachers use a variety of methods to provide feedback to students and their families, including: checklists, rubrics, grades, orally through individual conferences, and class celebrations. As well, teachers provide many avenues, by which students receive feedback, including: teacher to student, peer-based, and self-assessment reflections. The district also administers summative based assessments seasonally and teachers use this data to measure students' growth over time (i.e. spring to winter, spring to spring, etc.). We also look for trends in curriculum, and this is how we identified our need to improve our students' math problem solving skills K-5. All results are shared with students and families through our electronic portal, hard copy, and during conferences.

In literacy and math, we progress-monitor K-2 students using AIMS-Web, R-CBM and M-CAP. We place K-5 students for small group instruction and interventions according to their guided reading levels, as determined by the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment and the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Flexible math groups and interventions, K-5, are determined by MAP and curriculum-based formative assessment data. We use Assessing Math Concepts (AMC) to measure students' number sense, reasoning, and ability to problem solve. To monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English, we use Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) for English Language Learners (ELLs). Specialists collaborate with classroom teachers, coordinating instruction that builds students' academic vocabulary and language acquisition. The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), used in conjunction with MAP, identifies high-potential and gifted learners in grades 3-5.

Common Core State Standards guide us in “what” to teach. Assessment data leads us in “how” we teach. In our pursuit of increasing achievement for all students at Countryside, our data shows us the meaning of the balance between what students need to learn and how effective instruction gets us there.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Countryside has established a safe and positive school culture built on core behavioral expectations, a commitment to teaching pro-social skills, and a multi-tiered approach to intervention with students that encourages academic growth and social-emotional learning (SEL). These principles of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) have been developed, implemented, and refined over the past five years. Staff, students, and families have contributed and committed to the hard work of maintaining our positive school culture.

Countryside teachers have collaboratively designed a matrix tied to the behavioral areas of respect, responsibility, safety, and readiness to learn. The matrix has specified and operationalized our expectations across school settings. To promote the behavioral areas, our Countryside Student Ambassador Program provides opportunities for students in grades 4 and 5 to serve as leaders and role models for younger peers. Selected students fulfill roles of Bus Buddies and Safety Patrol. Next steps in training include video instruction and modeling by Countryside students presented building-wide at the start of the school year and strategically throughout the year to promote positive behaviors.

Staff has collected data with respect to pro-social behaviors in the hallways, lunchroom, and recess, with major problem behaviors documented and improvements in behavior examined. A small percentage of students in need of more intensive intervention in social skills receive lessons from the school social worker or psychologist. Staff recognize expected behaviors, and hold regular celebrations promoting our positive school culture. Examples of planned events have included extra recess, school spirit parties, staff-student basketball games, Friday Fun Time, and movies with popcorn.

Staff also celebrates each other regularly. We recognize accomplishments at weekly staff meetings, and provide professional support to each other daily during grade level planning sessions. Social-emotionally we stay connected by spending time together. It is not unusual for staff to be found in the lounge playing board games before school, or for someone to send out an invitation for a potluck lunch.

While Countryside's PBS framework sets the stage for students' social-emotional learning, the heart of their skill development lies in our teachers' commitment to implementing the classroom-based Second Step (SEL) curriculum, looking for opportunities that grow empathy for others, and building student leadership. Research clearly demonstrates the link between SEL and academic performance. Countryside is dedicated to nurturing the academic and social-emotional well-being of all learners in our community.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Countryside School takes great pride in our sense of community, locally and globally. We embrace the philosophy that we are one family and build collaborative relationships that center on student growth and development. To accommodate the work lives of our traveling parents and to share our work of the day with as many stakeholders as possible, we communicate daily through Facebook, Twitter, newsletters, blogs, webpages, email, and Class Dojo.

In celebration of our Countryside family, we host numerous social and academic events. Each August, Countryside opens its doors to new families inviting them to walk through the building and meet staff and classmates. Soon after the year begins, the Countryside community comes together for the annual Ice Cream Social. Other gatherings that bring the community together include: Family Movie Night, PTO Spring Bling Dance and Auction Fundraiser, Grandparents' Day, and Family Fitness Night.

Learning opportunities for families begin with Back to School Night in September, when the principal shares specifics about district initiatives, academic expectations, and school goals, and teachers inform parents about grade level curriculum and instructional strategies. Parent Universities engage families in the learning process and provide information about effective tools that can be used at home to support learning. A STEM program brings local high school students to Countryside to mentor students in grades three

through five, and during a fifth-grade global social sciences study – an entrepreneur-incubator team-teaching experience with volunteers from the Chamber of Commerce – our fifth graders experience the development of a product, advertising, selling through E-Trader, paying back investors, and sharing with a charity. Student-led conferences, the Art Fair, winter and spring concerts, the Speech Contest, Spelling Bee, and Cozy Up and Read are all examples of celebrations of learning that occur throughout the year to highlight the academic accomplishments of students.

Student success and school improvement at Countryside depend on the combined efforts of all members of our family. From visiting Alden, a residence for the elderly, to partnering with the local park district to build a community basketball court, students have learned about compassion, empathy, and social responsibility. They have learned about philanthropy through their participation in the Countryside Cares Club, Green Club, and Student Council, which have sponsored programs like Scare Out Hunger and the Button and Zipper Coat Drive, as well as fundraising for Kipsongal Village in Kenya Africa, UNICEF, and the Ronald McDonald House. Countryside's contributions reach within and far beyond our own community.

### 3. Professional Development:

As role models for students, the adults in the Countryside community value learning in a life-long manner. Professional development is ongoing, job-embedded, and opportunities span the building, district, and beyond. Like with our students, growing in our profession and refining our craft is differentiated and individualized.

Teachers, support staff, administrators, and even parents, all members of the instructional team are provided professional learning opportunities. The district offers mentoring and staff training in all content areas through institute days, curriculum meetings, and summer workshops, often bringing in leading experts to share research-based instructional strategies. The focus of these training sessions takes on depth at the building level when teams and individuals access the instructional coach to hone in on methods that improve student achievement. Collaborative professional learning at Countryside takes many forms including lesson studies, book clubs, unit planning, and reflection. Individually, staff explore areas of professional interest through social media venues like Twitter and blogs, take higher education courses, and present at state, national, and global conferences. Our parent population also has the opportunity to grow in understanding district and building initiatives through Parent Universities, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) book studies, Open House curriculum events, and classroom learning celebrations.

The development of our three goal areas for our school improvement plan (Social-Emotional Learning, Instruction, and Assessment) highlights an interesting example of Countryside's professional development framework. After developing our goals, and after grade-levels analyzed data, staff determined that students at all grade levels lacked math problem-solving skills. Through grade-level team discussions several themes surfaced: reading strategies, number sense, and multi-step problems. Teams of teachers attended conferences, researched effective instructional practices, and took risks with the instructional coach to try new strategies. Knowledge gained was shared at staff meetings. Eventually, a progression of skills in both literacy and math was developed. All grade levels agreed to the use of a particular tool that aligned standards, conceptual language, and skills. This building focus provided a unique level of professional development that directly impacted the capacity of teachers and the principal to improve student achievement.

Research shows that ongoing, job-embedded professional development has the strongest impact on improving instruction that leads to improved student achievement. To accomplish this goal Countryside teams and individuals regularly collaborate with each other, the instructional coach, and the principal to analyze student work and make decisions about instruction. Time is provided for staff to engage in professional inquiry. Learning is a lifelong core value at Countryside Elementary School.

#### 4. School Leadership:

There is no “I”. There is no “you”. There is only “we” at Countryside Elementary School. From the development of our school improvement goals to the analysis of data to make decisions about instruction, the staff, students, and parents build capacity from within and collaborate in teams focused on student achievement and social-emotional health.

Teams consist of district, building, and classroom level members. The principal is a leader at all levels, ensuring that the district vision meshes with building and classroom initiatives. At the district level leaders on the literacy, science, and math steering teams represent Countryside at monthly meetings and share important research, knowledge, and curriculum strategies with staff and parents. Within the building we have instructional, social-emotional, and safety committees and clubs led by staff, parents, and students who share special expertise, training, and interests. Our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) team, for example, consists of the principal, school psychologist, special services teachers, instructional coach, and classroom teachers. This team meets monthly to analyze data, and problem-solve academic, social-emotional, and behavioral concerns. Decisions are made together with parents and plans are made for meeting the needs of students.

We have many examples of our shared leadership philosophy and structure at work within our school. Living by our social-emotional learning (SEL) belief that, “All learners need compassion for self and others,” our SEL team sponsors Countryside Cares, Student Council, and Green Club. Students in the Countryside Cares Club engage in local and global causes that grow students as leaders who educate fellow peers. The Green Club partnered with a grassroots organization and a local food bank to launch the district’s first food recovery program. Finally, as one student leader shared in his speech to new parents of the Countryside community, “Student Council is an organization promoting service to others. We find ways to improve our school, Barrington, and globally. We count on everyone’s participation to make great things happen.”

Besides the SEL team, Countryside has the Assessment and Instruction teams. These three teams comprise the basis for our school improvement plan. Membership on each team includes the principal and representation from all grade levels and specialty areas. Teams meet monthly, sharing data and making decisions that drive instruction. Decisions made by these teams are shared at weekly staff meetings and monthly at Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings. It is through the “we” philosophy that the principal, committees, and PTO lead students to nurture healthy social-emotional relationships and achieve academic success.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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The instructional coaching model at Countryside Elementary School encapsulates the instructional journey staff, parents, and students have taken together to improve student achievement. At the start of the instructional coaching initiative seven years ago, coaches shared schools and focused on literacy. When the curriculum cycle moved into math, the focus shifted and now each building within the district has its own coach who has received intensive training in research-based instructional strategies in all content areas.

Unique to Countryside, the instructional coach grew into the role after having taught in the building for many years. Familiarity with the staff offered a valuable comfort level. Trust between the coach and colleagues resulted in the willingness to take risks and offered a departure from traditional, silo-oriented roles. Today, after growing together through the process, doors and minds remain open to the challenges present in examining instruction under the microscope.

While there is no typical day, the demands of the instructional coach are many. Countryside's coach meets with teams of teachers and individuals, daily. Through collaborative efforts, like grade level team meetings, data is analyzed. Summative assessments, like the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), which occur seasonally, provide teams with overall grade-level areas of focus and individual student growth benchmark measurements. Formative assessments from curriculum-based measures provide teachers with a lens through which to examine the effects of daily instruction. Together, the coach and teachers make instructional decisions.

Of import here is the sensitive nature of the model and that of the coaching relationship. Countryside's teachers have taken a hard look at trends, especially in math, at particular grade levels. The data holds teachers accountable, leaving them vulnerable and open to scrutiny. Yet, over the years, the teachers have persevered and engaged in deep reflection with their coach. Together the entire teaching staff has embraced the understanding that all students are "our" students, not just the ones from our class during a particular year. Countryside believes that we grow our students together, each year building upon the next. With this philosophy in mind, and through teamwork with the coach, grade levels have uncovered holes in curriculum and patterns of instructional strategies needing refinement.

The instructional coaching model at Countryside has shaped how the staff takes responsibility for the learning of all students. Data is valued and guides instruction. The coaching relationship has been at the heart of success at Countryside. A deep sense of urgency has resulted in changed mindsets, more focused and effective instruction, and ultimately improved student achievement.