

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Jennifer Szuhaj

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

Official School Name West Clay Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3495 West 126th Street

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

City Carmel State IN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 46032-9557

County Hamilton

Telephone (317) 773-6500 Fax (317) 733-6501

Web site/URL http://www1.ccs.k12.in.us E-mail jszuhaj@ccs.k12.in.us

Twitter Handle Facebook Page
https://twitter.com/WestClayPTO http://facebook.com/wcepto 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*Dr. Nicholas Wahl E-mail nwahl@ccs.k12.in.us

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Carmel Clay Schools Tel. (317) 844-9961

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 Mrs. Layla Spanenburg

(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 (per district designation):
- 11 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 15 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
PreK	0	0	0
K	55	48	103
1	68	55	123
2	57	56	113
3	58	73	131
4	65	65	130
5	69	65	134
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	372	362	734

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 22 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 67 % White
 - 7 % 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: 7%

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	35
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> 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)]	48
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	723
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.066
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Hindi, Portuguese, Mandarin (Sichuanese), Luganda, Korean, Marathi, Bengali, Arabic, Japanese, Punjabi, Telugu, Creole (Patois), Haitian Creole, Urdu, Taiwanese, Tamil

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3 %
Total number students who qualify: 23
8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
59 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
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	2
Classroom teachers	29
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals	17
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 25:1

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	97%	98%	98%	98%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 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 No

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

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

West Clay Elementary will leverage human, physical, and fiscal resources so all students realize their potential in an ever-changing world.

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

West Clay Elementary is the eleventh elementary school in the Carmel Clay School system and opened in August 2006. As Carmel's newest elementary school, we share a 166 acre site with Creekside Middle School and College Wood Elementary School. Our suburban school is located approximately 20 miles north of Indiana's State Capital, Indianapolis, in Hamilton County, among thriving businesses and family oriented neighborhoods. In a 2013 survey by 24/7 Wall Street, Carmel was ranked 12th in "America's Best Cities to Live" and in 2014, Money Magazine ranked Carmel third in "The Best Places to Live in America". The Carmel Clay School district's vision, Experience Excellence...Explore Opportunities...Realize Potential, is forefront in the minds of all of our stakeholders at West Clay Elementary. Our school, along with all fifteen of our district's schools, has earned district accreditation from the rigorous AdvancEd organization. This shows the commitment of West Clay Elementary striving for continuous improvement.

A principal and an assistant principal make up West Clay's administrative team. We have approximately 70 different staff members that serve our students and families. Forty-two percent of our certified staff has earned an advanced degree. We have an on-site instructional coach/interventionist. One part of her job is to provide professional development and specialized training to staff as a springboard to student success. Our support staff includes instructional assistants, custodians, technicians, secretaries, and cafeteria workers. Each of these individuals use their own expertise and skills to make West Clay a great place for students to learn each and every day.

West Clay Elementary houses full day kindergarten through grade five students and provides services for special needs, as well as gifted students. The building contains 29 general education classrooms, four high achieving classrooms, two stationary computer labs and three mobile labs, and a large group instruction area, as well as areas designed for art, music, and physical education. West Clay also has a large, open access media center that serves as a hub for reading and research. We provide special education resource programs which include a Functional Academics classroom and a speech and language resource room. Classroom support is provided for hearing and visually impaired students. We offer several enrichment and before/after school activities which include Orff Ensemble, Choir, Spell Bowl, Math Bowl, Math Pentathlon, Pups Running, the WOLF news studio, the Green Team, and the West Clay Wellness Wolves. A nature lab is also part of our campus and is utilized for planned learning activities. We have enhanced our bullying program and PBIS program to help all students create an outstanding school culture. A committee of teachers has been trained on evidenced based practices that have been implemented school wide for the benefit of all students. Our advanced math program includes all grade levels and every student has access to a computer/technology class.

West Clay recognizes the importance of the family/school relationship and is committed to quality communication. We also pride ourselves on returning the support of our community by giving back. Philanthropic efforts led by our PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) and our student government contribute both financial and physical support to organizations such as Riley Children's Hospital, the American Heart Association, the American Diabetes Association, the Humane Society, Gleaner's Food Bank and other schools throughout central Indiana. Over the last ten years, the concerted efforts of the students and staff of West Clay have helped raise over \$60,000 and countless supplies have been donated to organizations throughout the area.

By ensuring we are providing the best possible differentiated instruction, along with best practices to meet the needs of all students, West Clay has continued to see high achievement results based upon standardized testing while being named a Four Star School each year since its inception. We are thrilled to be considered for the distinction of being named a National Blue Ribbon School.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Reading/English Language Arts:

West Clay Elementary provides literacy instruction through a balanced literacy framework, uniquely defined at each level and grounded in evidence-based instructional practices. The interdependent components of the balanced literacy framework provide a rich, developmentally appropriate context for student engagement and learning at all levels in the broad areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and media literacy. Through immersion in a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction texts, students learn to comprehend, analyze, and evaluate text. Teachers differentiate balanced literacy instruction, which includes whole group reading, guided groups, word work, student-teacher conferencing, peer cooperative learning, phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills, and guided writing workshop. The K-5 literacy curriculum is aligned with the Indiana Academic Standards for English/Language Arts. It reflects the overarching goal of college and career readiness, defined as the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to succeed in post-secondary education and economically-viable career opportunities.

Struggling students are identified as reading below grade level benchmarks by using curriculum based measures, guided reading levels, teacher observation, and classroom performance. A wide variety of scientifically research-based reading interventions are utilized to address explicitly identified learning deficits. Problem-solving teams follow established protocols to determine intervention needs and the appropriate level of support for individual students. Students' responses to intervention supports are monitored closely and adjusted as needed to ensure progress towards learning goals.

All 11 Carmel Clay elementary schools offer services to provide a rigorous academic experience for high ability students. West Clay currently has four of these self contained multi-age classes. These classes provide the following opportunities to maximize individual potential: basic skills compacted to eliminate unnecessary repetition, accelerated pacing and advanced materials, hands-on investigations and research, choice/options of differentiated learning activities, and emphasis on creative/critical thinking skills.

Math:

The coherent design of the math curriculum teaches students to see connections across all strands of mathematics as they focus on learning important mathematical principles including numbers, expressions, equations, functions, quantity, modeling, shape, coordinates, probability, and statistics. A comprehensive instructional model prepares students for algebra, the gateway to all higher mathematics, by gradually refining students' proficiency with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percentages while simultaneously developing conceptual understanding, computational fluency, and problem-solving skills. Our math curriculum utilizes a spiral approach to teaching multiple methods and diverse problem-solving strategies that produce lifelong mathematical thinkers, delivered in a math workshop model. This differentiated workshop model provides teachers the opportunity to re-teach and enrich as needed. Our school offers Advanced Math in grades K-5 for high ability learners through accelerated and enriched math experiences, aligned with above grade level mathematics standards and expectations. Students develop positive attitudes towards their own ability to be successful in mathematics as they learn independently through explicit instruction and teacher modeling, work collaboratively to uncover mathematical principles, and use mental strategies and technology to solve increasingly sophisticated problems. Instruction at all levels emphasizes eight internationally recognized mathematical processes or proficiencies: persevering in problem solving, reasoning abstractly and quantitatively, constructing viable arguments and critiquing reasoning of others, modeling, using tools strategically, attending to precision, making use of structure, and looking for and expressing regularity in repeated reasoning.

Science:

Our science curriculum is a rigorous, hands-on program that fosters an inquiry approach to instruction. The curriculum prepares students to use scientific habits of mind to solve problems in their everyday lives as well as to tackle society's most complex issues. Through these high quality experiences and differentiated instruction, students acquire a rich knowledge of science and appreciate its relevance and significance to

their lives beyond the classroom.

Social Studies:

Our social studies instruction engages the learner by incorporating a variety of instructional strategies. Some of the research-based strategies we use include in-depth investigation of topics, inquiry based learning, collaborative learning, simulations & role-play, close reading analysis of primary and secondary sources, participation in community affairs, guest speakers and personal interviews, debate, and integration of technology. West Clay provides students with authentic, differentiated opportunities to connect social studies content to their own lives, to the larger community, and to the world. In doing so, instruction emphasizes depth over breadth, individual and collaborative inquiry, and the development of critical thinking skills.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Art:

West Clay students participate in art class once a week. During this time, students are exposed to hands-on learning experiences that address the Indiana art standards and allow opportunities to work in different mediums. Additionally, students have many opportunities to share artwork with the community. Examples include artwork displayed at the district office as well as at the Children's Smallest Art Gallery in downtown Carmel. Our school also hosts visiting artists who spend time working with students, sharing their craft. Our art teacher highlights various artists throughout the year, so students can learn from their specific style and form. Through descriptive feedback, students can refine and hone their art skills.

Physical Education/Health/Nutrition:

The goal of the physical education curriculum here at West Clay is to develop individuals who are proficient at movement and who can use physical activity to maintain and develop fitness, develop skills for sport and recreation, use movement in various ways, and to promote lifelong physical activity. In physical education, students are encouraged to set and meet their own fitness goals as part of their fitness program. Our physical education teacher works to engage students and their families through programs that encourage wellness both inside and outside of the classroom. Some of these programs that promote a healthy lifestyle include Jump Rope for Heart, Minds-in-Motion, Pups Running, and our Wellness Wolves Club. The physical education teacher provides periodic physical activity breaks throughout the day for students who need it.

Technology:

Technology education at West Clay is two-fold. Students participate in a weekly lab class with a computer teacher. They also work in their classrooms with our "Bring Your Own Device" initiative that allows students to work in tandem with their teacher's learning targets to promote 21st century skills. Through Google Classroom and other integrative technologies, our students have the opportunity to access information responsibly, gain exposure to various technology tools, and work collaboratively. In the classroom, this translates into students learning the processes and knowledge related to technology that will provide them the understanding and problem-solving skills to participate in society as an active, informed citizen. Our fifth grade students are trained to run Wolf Studios, a student run news cast that includes roles such as anchor, technician, producer, script writer. Our staff has access to an iPad in each classroom, several computer labs, and a mobile smart board. Additionally, our school is currently beta testing a learning management system to help teachers, students, and parents work collaboratively in a shared technology environment.

Music:

Music is a weekly class offered to all students. It is an interactive experience that allows students the opportunity to work with both vocal and instrumental expression. Students also study the historical relevance of different composers and work on pieces that are related to their time period. Beyond the weekly class, students have the ability to participate in other musical experiences. For example, kindergartners take part in a "Spring Sing" that they perform for the school and parents. Second grade students put on an "Around the World" show that showcases costumes, dances, and music from different countries. Our third grade students perform a tribute to our veterans every year as part of our Veterans' Day recognition

ceremony. Choir and Orff Ensemble are available to upper grades. Orff Ensemble is an instrumental group that will perform on xylophones and other instruments. Our fifth grade students spend months preparing a Broadway Junior musical for the school and community.

Media:

The library media program strives to create and support an environment in which all learners become effective users of ideas and information to achieve the standards set by the state of Indiana and Carmel Clay Schools. The goals of the library media program are to cultivate a love of reading, provide a broad range of quality resources to support the curriculum and to support recreational reading interests, teach students to become effective and ethical users of print and electronic information, and to encourage all students to become lifelong learners. Students come to a weekly class in the media center where the lessons are tied to classroom instruction. The media specialist collaborates monthly with all grade level teams to ensure the curriculum is integrated in all special area classes.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

West Clay Elementary provides each student with targeted instruction. Teachers implement strategies designed to meet students' individual learning needs. Tier 1 is our core intervention strategy. West Clay ensures that every student has access to rigorous, grade-level curriculum and highly effective initial teaching. Teachers use daily learning targets so students know what they are expected to accomplish in one lesson. Students are able to gauge their progress towards the learning target as they work. Teachers are continually monitoring students, providing descriptive feedback, and adjusting instruction to meet students' needs. The path between documenting evidence of students' performance and providing feedback drives how our staff is responsive to students. This recursive process provides information for teachers to implement scaffolded and differentiated instruction for all students in order to help them meet/exceed the learning outcome.

At Tier 2, our school uses ongoing formative assessments to identify students needing additional support, as well as to target specific learning needs. Most of our Tier 2 interventions are delivered through small-group instruction using strategies that directly target a skill deficit. Teachers use both core and research-based intervention programs to support learning objectives through reteaching and review. Some examples include Fountas and Pinnell's Leveled Literacy Instruction and Orton Gillingham's phonics and math programs. Instruction is scaffolded to support the gradual release of responsibility, giving time for students to progress at their "ready to learn" level.

When Tier 2 is insufficient to meet student need, students are provided Tier 3 interventions. Tier 3 is more explicit and focuses on remediation of skills. These interventions are more often taught in a one to one setting with an intervention specialist or special education teacher. Tier 3 interventions are provided for a longer duration of instructional time, and over a longer intervention period. Throughout all processes of determining intervention needs, West Clay utilizes a building based team, which consists of teachers and resource staff who come together to develop a plan of action to help academically and/or behaviorally identified struggling students. The focus is to provide the teacher with new strategies built on student strengths that will assist the student in the classroom.

In addition to addressing the needs of our struggling learners, we are also focused on our high-ability students who need additional rigor and challenge in their academic program. Their unique learning needs, ranging from specific academic strengths in language arts or mathematics to general intellectual giftedness, are addressed through multiple delivery systems. These include differentiated instruction within the general education classroom, subject specific advanced classes, and full time, self-contained programming for highly gifted students.

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

West Clay utilizes a formative assessment cycle that begins with clear learning targets supported by a performance of understanding (what kids are expected to do in a lesson) and criteria for success (how they know they have met their target). Teachers collect and document evidence, analyze their data, provide

descriptive feedback to students, and adjust instruction to maximize student potential. This type of formative assessment is embedded in daily instruction. In addition to daily checks for understanding, teachers all use summative assessments, such as end of unit tests, to gauge student progress.

Schools across our district utilize NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association). This on-line norm referenced diagnostic tool determines the skills in Math, Reading, and Language that students are ready to learn. This particular assessment is administered twice a year to allow us to monitor individual student growth and is a tool to help translate a wide range of student scores into instructional objectives that focus on individual student learning needs. ISTEP+ (Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus) is the standardized test mandated by the state for our students in grades three through five. ISTEP+ testing occurs in the spring and is given in two parts composed of written-response questions, as well as multiple-choice and technology enhanced questions. Students are tested in English, Math, Science (in 4th grade) and Social Studies (in 5th grade). Our third grade students participate in a state mandated test called IREAD-3 (Indiana Reading Evaluation And Determination) that measures foundational reading skills based on the Indiana Academic Standards. This is a summative assessment which evaluates students to ensure that they can read proficiently before moving on to grade four.

Parents, students, and the community are informed of academic achievement in many ways. Parents and students have access to an online gradebook at all times and receive feedback from teachers on a regular basis. Our district also has a community relations director who helps promote students' academic achievements (i.e. academic competitions, standardized test results, and state accountability scores). Additionally, a Carmel newspaper highlights academic accomplishments of our school.

Even though we do not currently have a significant achievement gap and are a high performing school, West Clay is focused on all students to ensure that every subgroup is held to a high level. Data is collected on a regular basis to determine best next-steps of instruction. West Clay Elementary uses clear standards (district and state) for what students should learn at each grade level. Our rigorous curriculum is aligned with those standards. Because some of our students require more time and more instruction to master content knowledge, we plan for this within our school day via high-quality, differentiated instruction that is grounded in best-practice strategies.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At West Clay Elementary, we ensure that we are meeting the needs of all students socially, emotionally, and academically by being responsive to their needs. We are able to meet their needs in a variety of ways. Our curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have opportunities to develop learning, thinking and life skills that lead to success at the next level. Teachers provide students with challenging learning experiences through the examination of formative and summative assessments, advanced math, balanced literacy, Tier 1, 2 and 3 instruction, daily monitoring of student understanding, and grade and standards based report cards. Teachers engage students in their learning with collaboration and self-reflection, as well as the development of critical thinking skills. A Building Based Team (BBT) and Evidence Based Practice (EBP) Team assist in personalizing instructional strategies and interventions to address individual learning needs of each student. These teams, along with other grade level and staff meeting opportunities, provide a collaborative learning community for teachers to improve instruction and student learning. Social programs including bullying awareness, leadership, social skills, study groups, behavior logs/plans and a positive behavior (PBIS) program are currently in place, as well as a mentor program with Carmel High School students matched up to our elementary students.

At West Clay, the administration is often complimented for the culture and environment in the school. Teachers report that they feel supported. Professional development, both at the district and school level, as well as on the spot embedded professional development with the on-site instructional coach, helps to support the teachers. The school has a variety of committees, and teachers choose which ones they will participate in based on their own interests. A social committee provides regular pot-lucks and events to keep morale up, and every grade level team is asked to provide an activity within the school year to promote fellowship. Within the PTO, a group called “Friday Bakers” brings in delicious home baked goods as a treat for the staff every Friday. A special medallion made by our lead teachers is passed around twice a week, highlighting the accomplishments of staff members. When a staff member receives this “award,” they are allowed to wear jeans to school. Then they pay it forward, complimenting one of their colleagues by passing on the medallion. Surprise visits with treats from the administration on days such as “National Hot Cocoa Day” help to keep the teachers feeling valued. Administration also provided each staff member a polo shirt with the school logo which encourages collegiality and school spirit.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

West Clay is fortunate to have a strong relationship with our community stakeholders. Our students are prepared and ready to learn. Our supportive parents value education, and play a very active role in the school. Communication is key in maintaining this relationship, and our staff is afforded many opportunities for open dialogue with parents and the community alike. We have a comprehensive website in which we are able to share knowledge and data with all stakeholders. The website provides building level information and access to individual data and performance results for students, their parents, and teachers through a password protected portal. Press releases focusing on student performance results, activities, and upcoming events are updated on the website regularly. The website is also a source for survey tools, policies, streaming video, and unified calendars.

Each West Clay staff member plays a critical role in communicating with stakeholders. Email and voicemail are supplied to all staff to aide in these efforts. Both tools are available to staff members from within and outside of the district. Teachers also have access to grading tools with capabilities to share daily progress with parents via email and the online portal. An automated system is used to notify stakeholders of district news. It is capable of reaching parents through e-mail, as well as home, work and cell numbers. The system notifies parents of changes in procedures, and also distributes newsletters, data and educational opportunities for students and families. Our stakeholders receive a weekly email called “The Spotlight,” in which administrators and their designees submit good things happening in our specific schools that we want to share with our community.

West Clay has a strong tradition of helping those in need. Food drives, coat drives, a giving tree, collections for disasters, partnerships with local businesses/restaurants, as well as our neighborhood nursing home, are just a few ways we help those who are less fortunate in our community. We have a student government that chooses local charities to be the beneficiary of the proceeds from their efforts. We are fortunate to have a student population and school community that are philanthropically minded. We also have a strong relationship with the Carmel police and fire departments, as well as our local sports and scouting organizations, who use our facility for practices, tournaments and meetings. Our Parent Teacher Organization is another link between the school and the community. They provide support to our school in many ways, such as funding and volunteerism. We are very lucky to have a supportive and dedicated PTO at West Clay.

3. Professional Development:

Through summer retreats and bi-monthly meetings, administrators participate in book studies and other professional development on specific issues related to student learning goals. West Clay has an instructional coach/interventionist that is given professional development weekly, and sometimes more often, with the intent that she will bring it back to our teaching staff. Whether it be in large groups or individually, she has been a wealth of information for our teachers. We also have five lead teachers who meet quarterly to increase their content expertise and leadership skills using these same processes during regular meetings with their peers and district leaders. These teachers also are a part of our school improvement committee, where student data is analyzed and school goals are developed. Strategies to meet these goals are then established. A data team composed of various grade level teachers, attend multiple meetings each year as part of a three year training plan on how to interpret our recently adopted diagnostic tool, NWEA. This assessment helps teachers use data to drive instruction. Professional development has been arranged based on needs that have come from these trainings and is differentiated by grade level depending on where the teachers fall in the learning cycle.

Bi-monthly staff meetings and teacher release time focus on professional development and are usually led by administrators and/or our instructional coach. Weekly grade level team meetings and collaborations happen on a regular basis. Before or after school “stand up” meetings are periodically offered to teachers based on need. Optional book studies are also offered based on interest. All meetings support school learning goals that are aligned to our Indiana Academic Standards. Discussions are often a continuation of topics studied in greater depth during grade level collaborations, and are based on the needs of our staff and students. Examples this year include the growth mindset, perseverance, and grit; maker space, technology, and innovation; cross grade level discussions regarding our writing curriculum; and socio-emotional learning. All staff members collaborate regularly as teams, with the administration, with the media specialist, and/or the instructional coach, to continue their professional learning, deepen their knowledge of best practices, and advance their leadership skills in curriculum and instruction.

4. School Leadership:

Collaborative and shared leadership is the underlying philosophy of the administrative team at West Clay, which consists of a principal and an assistant principal. In addition to the administration, we have several teacher leaders in our building who serve in leadership roles such as the technology coordinator; math, science, social studies and literacy lead teachers; various school committee chairs; and the instructional coach. There is also a group of teachers who serve on the school improvement committee. Along with analyzing student data, writing school goals, and coming up with strategies to meet these goals, this committee determines the scope and sequence of all areas of professional development for the school based on data collected. The administration and these school leaders meet each month in various capacities to help disseminate information to the staff, promoting life-long learning. These meetings allow all the leaders of the school to work together to monitor the progress of our students, while also working together to grow as professionals in the school community. While the role of each of these school leaders is different, their purpose every day is the same--helping all students realize their potential in an ever-changing world.

Not only do we all share the same overall vision of collaborative and shared leadership, we also cherish and

encourage two beliefs. We believe in a growth mindset and that failure actually is an option. We believe that no matter how good you are, you can always get better. We often say, "You don't have to be sick to get better." That growth mindset and constantly striving to improve through reflection and staff development, drives us in everything we do. We also embrace the philosophy that "fair isn't equal" and this attitude applies to staff, students and parents alike. We make it very clear to our students and parents that what we do for them may not look the same for all, as we want to give everyone what they need. This may be evident in the amount of time teachers meet with reading and skills groups or even the amount of homework assigned. The teachers teach this to their classes starting on the first day of school. Teachers use the learning continuum provided to us in our diagnostic testing, as well as conversations, anecdotal notes, conferencing and other means to determine these needs. The administration embraces this thinking as well, and staff members are treated that way too. Every opinion is respected and valued. There is a positive rapport and mutual respect among the staff, as well as an open door policy with the administration. All decisions are always made based on the question, "What is best for kids?"

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Having an instructional coach/interventionist at each building has been the unifying factor that has made the most significant impact on our school's practice. West Clay's instructional coach works in collaboration with staff to develop appropriate programs and practices, enabling all students to attain their full potential. This specialist focuses on student learning by enhancing teachers' ability to provide instruction that builds student understanding and skills, is academically rigorous, addresses the curriculum standards and frameworks, enhances students' sense of engagement in and ownership of learning, and supports the integration of technology. She also assumes various roles and responsibilities within the school setting to support staff in ensuring that all students' academic, social, and emotional needs are being met.

One of the instructional coach/interventionist's primary roles is to collaborate with staff members to diagnose student learning needs in order to plan appropriate instruction for students. This involves analyzing data to determine students' academic level, interests, and aptitudes. She meets with each grade level team to review testing data and other formative/summative information. This is done in order to assist staff with developing educational experiences and instructional strategies for students to ensure they are appropriate for each particular subgroup, (i.e. general education, high ability, intervention, special education, remediation, and ENL). Additionally, the instructional coach/interventionist observes staff members delivering instruction and provides descriptive feedback in order for the teacher to continuously improve their practice. When needed, the coach models effective, differentiated instruction and provides ongoing, job-embedded professional learning opportunities with a focus on effective tier 1 and 2 instruction.

In addition to academics, the specialist aids the social-emotional learning for our building by helping all stakeholders to embrace a growth mindset. Students, teachers, and parents know they are supported in persevering through challenging learning tasks. They understand that failure is an option in order to grow. The learning environment created supports risk taking. For students that may feel overwhelmed, she has created a space in her room for students to come in for a break. The continual sharing of research-based social emotional strategies provided by the instructional coach, strengthen teacher-student relationships. She coordinates professional development on various aspects of social-emotional learning (i.e. student anxiety, tools for students with sensory needs, and a model for collaborative problem-solving). The implementation of our instructional coach/intervention has certainly made a direct impact on our students.