

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 [X] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Jane Jurvis

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

Official School Name Lessenger Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 30150 Campbell Road

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

City Madison Heights State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 48071-4462

County Oakland County

Telephone (248) 589-0556 Fax (248) 589-8853

Web site/URL http://www.lessenger.lamphereschools.org E-mail jurvisj@lamphereschools.org

Twitter Handle https://twitter.com/Roadrunnersrule Facebook Page _____ 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. Dale Steen E-mail steend@lamphereschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name The Lamphere Schools Tel. (248) 589-1990

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. Robert Borngesser
(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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	23	30	23
K	24	27	51
1	32	26	58
2	24	37	61
3	32	33	65
4	24	32	56
5	20	23	43
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	179	208	387

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 79 % White
 - 6 % 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: 5%

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	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	344
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.052
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 9%
31 Total number ELL

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

Bengali, Chaldean, Chinese-Mandarin, Greek, Khmer, Macedonian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 36%
Total number students who qualify: 119

8. Students receiving special education services: 9%
30 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 19
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	13
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals	8
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 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	96%	96%	95%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

"Every child, every day" means that we strive to recognize, reach, challenge, support and connect academically and emotionally with every student at our school.

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

We participate in limited schools of choice, meaning that eligible students within our county boundaries may apply to attend Lessenger. We accept all students where we have identified openings (up to contractual student/teacher ratios) in grade levels kindergarten through 5th grades unless they have been suspended or expelled from another school.

PART III – SUMMARY

Our mission statement, “Every child, every day!” is our way of life at Lessenger. We hope this provides you a window into our world. Lessenger Elementary is part of The Lamphere Schools in Madison Heights, Michigan, a unique city made up of 29,000 residents and 1,300 businesses. Our school was built in 1957, named for Waldo E. Lessenger, a professor at a local university. Our kindergarten through fifth grade enrollment is 329 students, nearly doubling in size over the last fifteen years. Lessenger Elementary is highly revered and sought after by families in southern Oakland County. Parents tell us they are willing to bring their children from far outside their neighborhood districts because of the outstanding scores/teachers/stories they have heard about our school! Many staff members also choose to bring their own children to Lessenger. Our student population consists of 55 percent female, 45 percent male. Thirty-six percent of our students are economically disadvantaged. Thirteen different languages are spoken and about 9 percent of our school is comprised of English Language Learners. Another 9 percent of our students receive special education services.

To ensure our students receive the best education possible, our teachers continually research and implement the highest-yielding instructional practices. We have staff members who have been selected to write, pilot, and review English Language Arts and Mathematics units for the county, who are members of the Learning Achievement Coalition-Oakland, The Galileo Teacher Leadership Institute, Aspiring Principals Leadership Academy, and on formative assessment committees. Our students have consistently scored above district, county, and state averages on state tests. Our state assessment scores for the 2014-2015 school year were the highest in our district and above the county and state averages in all tested grade levels and in all assessed areas.

Academically, we challenge all students to develop fully. We use Common Core State Standards, along with aligned and researched curricular units designed at the county level. In all content areas, strategies are used to strengthen and deepen students’ critical thinking and understanding, promote problem-solving, include writing across all curricular areas, to infuse technology, and build 21st Century competency skills. Our key strategies come from a multitude of resources, including Betty Garner’s questioning techniques, Ron Ritchart’s cultural forces and routines, Marzano’s effective instructional strategies, and formative assessment practices across all grades. We teach students to set learning goals and to track their own progress using a variety of assessments. Students are taught in both large and small groups and at their instructional levels to provide opportunities to maximize growth. Our reading specialist and math coach assist students and teachers to reach rigorous grade-level expectations. Additionally, we welcome parent volunteers who support students working toward their reading goals.

High expectations for social/emotional growth are nurtured at Lessenger. Classrooms hold meetings when social skill lessons are taught and practiced. We’ve studied the texts *A Leader in Me* and *Mindset* to specifically develop leadership and growth mindsets among the adults and children. Our school social worker and psychologist provide support to students, and teachers volunteer to mentor students outside of their assigned classes. We believe in a restorative justice system, where the focus is on thinking and learning. We value the opportunity to teach students life skills and empathy, while building self-concept and recognizing effort and growth. Physical education classes, recess, and purposeful play are used to further practice these social skills in a meaningful, relevant way.

We balance and extend academic and social/emotional efforts while challenging and encouraging students physically beyond our school day. Our students volunteer to participate in our staff/parent organized Walking Club and in our Girls/Boys On the Run Club, where students arrive early or stay late after school to exercise. All classrooms utilize brain-based learning techniques infusing music and movement in our lessons.

Culture study is offered at Lessenger, where a Chinese Dual-Immersion preschool and World Culture program for all students, K-5 exists. These classes are designed to celebrate eastern and western cultures. Students are taught to consider different perspectives, while finding similarities among them. We host an annual program where a multitude of holidays and traditions are recognized and honored.

Our supportive parent group plans family events when students, staff, and families spend time together honoring Lessenger traditions and extending learning. Through fundraising and volunteerism, our parents support student learning with countless opportunities: special field trips for all grade levels, additional literacy resources, science fairs, and technology for our classrooms.

Our student council initiates fundraisers and drives to serve our local and global communities. They facilitate activity-focused themes, such as Kindness Week, where lifelong values are celebrated, taught, and recognized.

Lessenger Elementary is a unique and highly-regarded school. Our legacy is the result of our students' accomplishments and the partnership that exists among our parents, students and staff.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Lessenger has used the Common Core State Standards to drive mathematics and English Language Arts instruction since the 2010-2011 school year.

WRITING: Lessenger teachers have implemented the Workshop model for six years in grades K-5. Instruction is heavily focused on three types of writing: informational, opinion/argument, and narrative. We strongly believe in providing solid mentor texts for writers, student checklists to guide their writing journey, student-friendly writing rubrics that show a span of grade levels, and daily conferring with students to enhance writing skills. Students and teachers examine authentic writing pieces to assess them and offer reflective feedback. Beginning in kindergarten, students develop literacy skills through speaking and listening strategies, and teachers use learning progressions to monitor each child’s growth throughout their elementary academic career. Writers complete on-demand writing pieces throughout the year to track growth and to guide instruction. Incorporating technology into writing instruction is vital. Many classrooms use Chromebooks to research, draft, revise their work and the work of others, and to publish final pieces. Our staff collaboratively scores student writing throughout the year, allowing us to calibrate our expectations and to assist each other instructionally to meet our students’ individual writing needs.

READING: Reader’s Workshop has been a staple of Lessenger’s reading development for seven years. In Workshop, all grade levels incorporate whole-group, small-group, partnership, and independent reading into instruction. We have built a strong foundation of teaching students to talk and write about their reading. During lessons, we are able to target a specific reading strategy which then allows students to hone that skill/strategy in their independent reading. We meet students in small groups to provide ample opportunity for students to practice reading with their teacher. Teachers select read-alouds to allow for the students to develop a sense of the book’s overall craft and to help to build a sense of community through a shared reading experience.

MATH: Lessenger’s mathematical instruction is heavily rooted in the eight Standards for Mathematical Practice. We create a balance in our instruction by focusing on in-depth problem solving strategies, developing number sense at each level, building computational fluency, and using precise mathematical vocabulary. Providing opportunities for hands-on practice with manipulatives allows students to build their thinking before going to a written form. Fractional concepts have been a major target, therefore, students use a “fraction-of-the-day” booklet for reinforcement. Furthermore, we have emphasized writing in math to ensure students communicate their thinking clearly. Lastly, measurement an area of mathematical need across the state, so our third-grade teachers created measurement workshops to span the course of the year. During one workshop, students create “sand babies” to model customary and metric mass/weight. These “babies” are exact weight replications of each student’s birth weight, and once completed, they provided discussion points for all grade levels mathematically.

SCIENCE: Science instruction at Lessenger is aligned with the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations and the Next Generation Science Standards. We provide hands-on learning opportunities and student-driven lessons for children to develop their science content knowledge and academic vocabulary, as well as their scientific writing. Note-taking and the scientific method are explored and taught. Our science fair is a celebrated tradition at Lessenger, and students are always eager to participate.

SOCIAL STUDIES: Our curriculum is aligned with the Michigan Content Expectations, as well as the C3 Framework developed by the National Council for the Social Studies. We believe students should be informed, active, and cooperative members of society. Students are not only taught about community, state, national, and global issues, but teachers also include decision-making skills, creating relationships with others, understanding interpersonal interactions, and civic involvement in their lessons. In our upper grades, writing and informational reading in this content area has been a large focus. Our first graders create Traveling Journals as a part of their curriculum which focuses on “Families and Me.” Students send journals to family members across the globe and receive feedback from them about the geography, history, climate,

and culture of the area. This exposure allows our students to begin to think globally. In all grade levels, students and teachers use Time For Kids to explore current events, and provide rich conversations centered around global concerns.

PRESCHOOL: Our preschool focuses on language, literacy, mathematics, creativity, science, technology, and social studies, using similar programs K-5 teachers utilize: Handwriting Without Tears, read-alouds and math manipulatives. We promote independence, cooperation, persistence, creativity and problem-solving. Academic standards are aligned to the state's and assessed for progress. Assessment information is shared with staff and parents. A parent informational meeting is held preceding kindergarten, as is a "step-up day" for students to visit kindergarten. Of the 37 students who attended our preschool and are now third graders, 90 percent have maintained grade-level reading benchmarks. Those not meeting benchmark have interventions in place.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All Lessenger students have visual art class one-two times per week, depending upon the grade level. The curriculum, taught by our certified art teacher with a graphic design degree, focuses on developing essential art skills. These skills include primary/secondary colors, shading, 3-dimensional designs, patterns, types of lines, and making pieces in different mediums. On top of those artistic elements, students also develop of their own creativity and uniqueness. Art is a time for students to express themselves outside of the core content areas. Our student art show allows for families to come and see their child's artwork on display throughout our hallways. The school buzzes with excitement as students explain their artistic pieces with pride. Additionally, due to grants secured by our teachers for the 2014-2015 school year, we commissioned a visiting artist who specializes in clay to help every student create a clay tile murals for our "National Wildlife Association" outdoor courtyard area.

Our performing arts include both instrumental and vocal music. All students have an allotted vocal music time once a week, and fifth-graders have the option of joining our elementary band. During music, students are building language, sensory understanding, and new pathways in their brains. This is achieved through singing, reading music, listening to music, playing instruments, and learning speaking parts for performances. This class encourages students to express themselves and build confidence. Our yearly holiday concert is a staple of the music class, and this experience is a highlight of the year. There is whole group singing, duets and solo performances, speaking parts, dancing, and above all, a celebration of cultures across the world. The high school auditorium is filled beyond capacity with family members and friends enjoying the festive performance. Furthermore, our band students have two concerts, and parents are impressed each year at the growth from the first to the second concert.

Physical education is a beloved class for Lessenger students. Each student in our school learns teamwork, cooperation, following directions, leadership, physical health, and gross motor skills during the weekly one-two class periods. Several games involve strategizing and precise rules, therefore students are educating their minds and bodies. Our physical education teacher checks in with our lunchroom monitors to ensure that games learned in physical education classes are replicated appropriately at lunch recess time as well. Healthy and active students are more likely to be academically successful, therefore this is an essential part of their day. Jump Rope for Heart gets kids moving for a good cause, and our Michigan-themed field day incorporates fourteen challenging, active, and team-building stations for students to enjoy.

A special feature of Lessenger has been our Chinese Language and World Culture Program. Beginning in preschool, students are learning the language, written symbols, and elements of the Chinese culture. Preschool families have the option of a half-day dual-immersion program, while all students receive World Culture instruction twice a week. Our teacher focuses on cultural comparisons to increase global awareness. During class, students are listening, speaking, and reading. Students learn to have conversations with each other in Chinese and participate in Chinese customs. Students are involved in planning and performing our Cultural Fair, which highlights their in-class learning.

Lastly, all students have technology literacy one or two times per week. Our media specialist strives to

develop keyboarding skills and technology competency, while incorporating a love and interest in all media. Students are consistently growing their understanding of 21st-Century skills by collaborating, creating presentations, brochures, documents, and research projects. Lessenger also stresses the importance of being technologically appropriate and responsible. Our fourth- and fifth-graders are learning how to use and manage their own Google drive, which emphasizes the use of Google Docs and Mail.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Lessenger has used Common Core State Standards for ELA and Math since 2010. We adopted Betty Garner's questioning strategies approximately eight years ago, and the majority of staff has been involved in Ron Ritchart's Cultures of Thinking training. Additionally, we have spent three years deepening our learning around his 8 identified cultural forces and setting personal goals for our own instructional growth. Each grade level incorporates thinking routines across all areas of the curriculum. During professional learning we've studied Webb's Depth of Knowledge Chart while collaboratively planning our instruction around levels three and four of the chart to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills. We've studied the differences between difficult and complex questions and how we leverage them in our classrooms. We have visited each other's classrooms observing ways improve our own instructional skills, such as providing rich teacher to student and student to student feedback. Last year, we participated in a book study on Carol Dweck's book, Mindset, and teachers adjusted instructional delivery to support the growth mindset with our students.

We utilize reader's, writer's, and math workshop models to immerse all students in quality grade level instruction while allowing for individualized instruction at each student's level during independent portions of our day. The workshop models meet the needs of all levels and many different types of learners through mini-lessons, conferring, independent practice, and small strategy and guided learning groups. Each classroom has its own leveled classroom library which is used extensively by all students to provide both in-school and at-home reading resources. Each teacher at Lessenger is also knowledgeable in our specific grade level standards and also in the grade level below and above. We strive to push our accelerated learners to a deeper level of understanding. If students are particularly high-achieving in a certain area, they are instructed at the next grade level as appropriate.

To ensure that each student's needs are being met academically, classrooms consistently mix students to create heterogeneous or homogeneous groupings. Within each classroom, teachers assess students continuously and provide feedback to assist or adjust academic goals. Additionally, we provide small-group reading interventions outside of the classroom utilizing resources and instructional methods from the following programs: Leveled Literacy Intervention, Road to Reading, Orton Gillingham/Phonics First, and Primary Concepts Phonics. Lessenger also utilizes parent volunteers for individual tutoring sessions with students during the school day.

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

All students' literacy skills are carefully monitored and measured throughout the school year. Sight Word assessments and the Michigan Literacy Progress Profile (MLPP) are used by our K-1 staff to assess a child's early literacy skills. All students are formally tested using the Fountas and Pinnell assessment tools at least three times per year. These scores help us identify and level all readers so that we develop specific and appropriately scaffolded lessons to ensure all students continued growth. Students are aware of their instructional reading level and create goals with their teachers to support their growth. Our reading specialist services 15% of our school population, working with the lowest readers in the building providing small group interventions.

Students' writing is assessed in two formal manners: on-demand writing prompts and an ELA performance assessment. Each grade level uses the on-demand writing prompts to monitor growth from the start of the year to the end of the year on a specific type of writing (information, opinion, or narrative). The performance assessment incorporates reading, note-taking, and writing.

Students take a computer-adaptive NWEA test three times a year in reading and math. Students, teachers, and parents track progress, set goals for future assessments, and plan instruction based on the student's needs. As a staff, we monitor and study our students' academic strengths and weaknesses, continuously checking to ensure ALL of our students are showing growth in reading and mathematics. Upon examining our most recent NWEA-MAP data, we were pleased to note that our students are outperforming the national averages at nearly all grade levels (K-5) in both mathematics and reading. Our economically disadvantaged students are also either performing at the national average or just slightly below in all grade levels (K-5) in both mathematics and reading. We are proud of our students' achievement and work ethic, and continue to share these results at our professional learning meetings and with parents.

Our most frequent form of assessment is the teacher's daily formative assessments, such as exit tickets, turn-and-talk, thumbs-up-thumbs-down, and observational checklists. These directly guide day-to-day instruction of the whole or small group. This, along with structured classroom assessments are heavily used to monitor student progress in mathematics.

Lessenger maintains high levels of academic achievement due to extensive and on-going data collection, reflection, and goal setting. This allows for instruction to adapt and evolve based on class and student needs. We schedule quarterly data team meetings where we discuss specific instructional strategies that are working with struggling students. We create plans to continue this work. Additionally, we have a solid practice of individual and peer reflection built into staff meetings, lunchroom conversations, and collaborative planning time. We value student reflections, as it is essential for students to see their progress. Once adequate reflection has taken place, appropriate goals are set.

When you walk into our classrooms, students are tracking their personal data in a leadership notebook, or classroom goals are posted on walls. Families are kept informed of Lessenger's students' continued academic progress through parent teacher conferences, social media and scheduled parent meetings.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

We believe in a balanced approach to school climate, which includes three factors. First, we strive to create a positive climate and focus on prevention by building relationships with our students and developing clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations. Secondly, when consequences are necessary or disruptive student behaviors occur, logical consequences and/or restorative practices keep students in school learning. Finally, we ensure equity where students are treated fairly while recognizing their differences and individual needs. We consistently reevaluate our school's climate, making changes where necessary.

Our school culture engages and motivates students. We continually use techniques from Ron Ritchart's Cultures of Thinking incorporating thinking routines to guide students to use multiple intelligences to explain their thinking. Using the philosophy of Mindset, teachers remind students to take risks to learn from our mistakes, and that's how we grow. Examples from The 7 Habits of Happy Kids are also used to teach students to begin with the end in mind taking small steps to reach big goals. We have incorporated parts of "The Leader in Me" program helping students set goals and reflect on them both in their daily academics and in such programs as Walking Club, the Summer Math and Reading Challenges, and our school-wide monthly reading at-home requirement. We give students ownership of their learning by using student checklists and rubrics.

To support student social and emotional growth within our school culture, teachers have implemented components of Love and Logic and Conscious Discipline skills in their classrooms with the use of "safe places" and daily greeting routines. Teachers use morning meetings to have important conversations with students, gradually releasing responsibility to make meetings student-led. Usage of these skills has a profound impact on our students and we provide opportunity for these students to be highlighted in the "Principal's 200 Club" which encourages positive behavior and responsibility.

Our school culture creates an environment where parents, students and also staff feel valued, connected, and supported. Our administrator encourages us to be lifelong learners ourselves, helps us nurture our best leadership qualities, and encourages us to move out of our comfort zone. Our staff supports one another's personal lives, honoring one another's life milestones, and taking care of one another in times of personal difficulties. We all constantly remind ourselves that this place needs to be a place we not only have to be, but WANT to be!

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Lessenger is known throughout our county as a "school family". There are numerous activities where our school emphasizes the importance of collaboration between students, teachers, parents, and community. To start off each year, we hold an ice cream social for families. Within the first few days of school, Lessenger hosts our annual Curriculum Night where parents participate as learners, familiarizing themselves with school-wide initiatives and spending time in their child's classroom(s) for the year's overview. We host an annual school board meeting where students present points of pride to our board. The audience is packed with parents supporting our school. Two scheduled conferences are held a year allowing for individualized attention for each learner. Additionally, we hold informational curriculum meetings to engage our parents as learners, teaching them about the current expectations of their children. At the end of the year we host a family picnic, attended by families and staff members, as well as future and former Roadrunners. It is a time to celebrate the countless achievements over the year.

Our Lessenger parent group is extremely supportive of classroom initiatives. Along with a grant, they provided us with 30 Chromebook laptops and a charging cart. This enables us to easily incorporate technology into our classrooms. Additionally, each classroom is guaranteed an allotted amount of money to use toward field trips that support our grade-level curricula. They organize our Box Tops for Education and

Campbell Soup Labels collections, in order to return supplies to classrooms for student use.

Last year, Wayne State University awarded a competitive Confucius Classroom grant to Lessenger Elementary for our outstanding Chinese Language and World Culture program. Our students were recognized by members of the faculty and honored at a celebration held with our families, Superintendent and other community dignitaries.

Our most notable recent community effort is developing and building our courtyard “Learning Tree” area. Our retired art teacher collaborated with every classroom to incorporate nature-inspired artwork in our courtyard. This sparked an idea of students creating a plan for an outdoor learning space built in the tree in that location. It has become a school-wide effort to raise enough money to purchase the required building materials and hire a licensed contractor to build our outdoor classroom. We reached our goal and this will be completed in the summer of 2016!

Parents, grandparents, and community members are in our building daily supporting classrooms, planning activities, or working on family nights for all to enjoy. Whether it’s holiday party in the classrooms, before-school Walking Club, Running Clubs or our annual spelling bee, families play an integral role in the positive culture present at Lessenger.

3. Professional Development:

Lessenger’s professional development meetings are a strong suit because we don’t follow the norm. Once you walk into a meeting, you are greeted with homemade desserts and bubbling crock pots because we understand that challenging work can be more enjoyable with treats. This warm and welcoming environment creates a level of comfort where barriers are broken down, honest opinions are shared, trust is honored, and dedicated collaboration takes place. We work hard, but we love our work! Lessenger teachers have a large hand in selecting, planning, often leading authentic professional learning in our school and across the district. Professional learning aligns with either our school improvement plan or our school climate goals. Time is given at each meeting to reflect upon our learning to determine how we will use what we have learned in our classrooms.

There are two types of professional development within our building: district-required professional learning and collaborative learning. Regardless of the format, our building approach is specifically aligned with school improvement goals, yet flexible enough to allow for plans to change due to the needs of staff and students. For example, it was a noticeable trend that our student writers were performing below grade-level expectations on state assessments. Our staff made the decision to target writing specifically and align our instruction kindergarten to fifth grade. Over the course of five years, we began with digging into the common core standards to gain a deep understanding, and then we progressed to calibrating our scoring, developing student-friendly rubrics, visiting classrooms to observe writing instruction, creating pre and post assessments to monitor student growth and plan for instruction. Our school is now performing above the district and state averages for ELA on standardized tests.

Another long-term professional development focal point has been making thinking visible in our classrooms. This started four years ago with several teachers attending Ron Ritchhart’s Cultures of Thinking conferences, and this leadership team instantly knew that our staff would be inspired because we always want to “dig deeper” into student understanding. We also incorporate visible thinking into every staff meeting and professional development. Lessenger staff firmly believes that in order to fully grasp an altered instructional approach, we must be willing to live and breathe these changes consistently and with fidelity. Therefore, not only are we learning about creating a positive classroom culture and incorporating thinking routines into various content areas, we are also self-evaluating our understanding of Ritchart’s identified Eight Cultural Forces (expectations, language, time, modeling, opportunities, routines, interactions, environment). These efforts are evident in the deep thinking constructed and shared by students.

4. School Leadership:

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” (John Quincy Adams) This quote illustrates what we teach our students to encourage leadership among them, but it also illustrates our philosophy as a staff.

Our administrator strives to build capacity among staff, so that everyone is comfortable leading at our school in a variety of ways. We have teacher leaders serving in academic, socioemotional, and extracurricular programs that directly affect student progress. For example, one program that our school utilizes teacher leadership is supporting student writing achievement. Several staff members were selected to work at the county level to create Oakland County Writing units (MAISA Writing Team). After development, they delivered the information and resources to staff during professional learning time, helping us effectively use student checklists and rubrics along with common assessments in the classroom to support student writing success. These lead teachers continue to serve as mentors and coaches on staff, co-teaching writing lessons with colleagues to ensure lessons are taught with fidelity. This commitment can be linked to our higher state test and performance assessment scores.

We also have staff who participate in the Galileo Leadership Consortium. Here, staff members are able to conduct action research, bring the newest instructional pedagogues and strategies to staff and implement them into the classroom. These leaders mentor others interested in entering the consortium.

Our math leaders have worked at the county level to ensure that we have the most up-to-date resources to assist our students to achieve their highest potential. They have been selected to present at county-wide conferences and as with our other leaders, they have done a phenomenal job relaying the information and resources to staff. Student achievement in math is illustrated in our math scores on district and state assessments.

We encourage students to take leadership roles as well. We have Student Council, Friendship Club, Safety Patrol, and opportunities for students to be models with cross-grade level reading buddies, and a vibrant recycling program.

The goal of our school’s leadership philosophy is to ensure that policies, programs, relationships, and resources focus on student achievement. To ensure excellence, we have a policy in place that all staff members are evaluated and observed annually using the Charlotte Danielson Framework model. Each part of Danielson’s rubric is aligned with student achievement. A majority of staff has received highly effective status.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

During our professional learning meeting, our administrator asked us to consider what one practice our school uses that makes us successful. Without hesitation, unanimously we agreed developing and sustaining positive relationships with our students is what makes our school successful. Building relationships with all students is a necessity. One teacher said, “We cannot afford not to do it.” It makes a significant difference in the way students learn and how we all work together.

As a staff, we really know our students. Discussing their lives outside of school demonstrates we personally care about them. As a staff, we attend their events, watching students shine in dance, sports, etc. We sign on as mentors after our students have left our classrooms. We greet our current students at our doors with smiles. We hold onto the belief that “even if a child can’t read text, they can read us.” (Rita Pierson) We believe that when students know you care, they become invested and engaged in the learning process. Belief builds belief.

Another way we build relationships with students is to individualize instruction. The more we know about our students, the better we are able to build learning goals around them. For example, students have different word lists in word study groups to individualize instruction. With this, we must take the time to pre-assess our students and get to know their level to begin instruction.

The way we speak to students affects our relationship with them, impacting motivation for learning. Many of our staff members have been trained in Conscious Discipline. We are careful not to use sarcasm. We reflect on student’s actions describing what we see, and providing positive choices. We model a voice that gives our students power, while maintaining respect. We believe that children must see us model respect not only to help teach them, but to continue to build our own relationships with them.

We model building positive relationships by creating a school family atmosphere at Lessenger with adults. Every grade level works together in a team approach. Parents and students tell us that they admire how our staff love and cares not only about the children in our school, but parents and each other as well.

Finally, another way we build relationships with our students is embedded in our school mission statement, “Every child, every day!” We don’t give up on our students. We show them that making mistakes is how you learn. We believe that “The strength of our student relationships makes the difference in translating our passion for teaching into their passion for learning.” (Beth Morrow) We’re building our future together.