

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 Mrs. Robbie Holder

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

Official School Name L. Mendel Rivers Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3000 North Veterans Drive

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

City Altus State OK Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 73521-1259

County Jackson

Telephone (580) 481-2183 Fax (580) 481-2129

Web site/URL http://www.altusps.com E-mail rholder@altusps.com

Twitter Handle _____ 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. Roger Hill E-mail rhill@altusps.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Altus Public Schools Tel. (580) 481-2100

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. Stephen Barnett
(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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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	31	28	31
K	42	27	69
1	29	22	51
2	19	31	50
3	25	25	50
4	19	21	40
5	0	0	0
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	165	154	319

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 10 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 78 % White
 - 5 % 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: 41%

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	67
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	67
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	134
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	326
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.411
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	41

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
2 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 33 %
Total number students who qualify: 97

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %
45 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>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</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>18</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 17
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	16
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

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%	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.

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.

We ensure quality educational experiences and establish a solid foundation on which students build citizenship and gain skills valuable to themselves and society.

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

The Altus Public School District located in Southwest Oklahoma, has a student population of 3500 students. L. Mendel Rivers is one of the five elementary schools that serves 325 of those students. L. Mendel Rivers Elementary School was named after South Carolina Representative L. Mendel Rivers who served on the House Armed Services Committee and was responsible for supporting the growth and appropriations for Altus Air Force Base. This school is located on Altus Air Force Base and has been educating students whose parents are a part of the United States Air Force since 1959. Rivers has a commitment to providing quality educational experiences for all military-connected children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition.

Rivers is the only school in Altus that does not receive Title I funding. The ethnicity population is 1% Asian, 3% Black, 78% Caucasian, 10% Hispanic, 3% Indian, and 5% Multiracial. Thirty-three percent of our students qualify for free and reduced meals. The student population of Rivers is ever-changing and dependent on the world military climate. Changes include families moving to a new base, parents deploying, and students who are arriving for only part of the year while their parents are training.

Rivers has high standards and expectations that go above the state mandated standards. Those state standards are certainly the benchmark we want to achieve, but the goals that we strive for are at a higher level. The teachers and parents recognize that the student's potential is not limited to a set standard, and each student should be encouraged to meet their personal highest potential. Our students come to us from all over the world. They have attended numerous types of schools: Department of Defense, foreign, magnet, charter, private, Montessori, and many are home schooled. Because the military child moves several times in their educational career, parents are very involved in the education their child will receive while attending a particular school. They want to be sure their child will be fully prepared when leaving for the next school in another part of the country or overseas.

Altus School District set a 20/20 goal in 2007 that 90% of the third grade students would be reading at or above grade level by the year 2020. Since that time Rivers developed strategies that helped achieve that goal. In 2013 100% of our third grade students were reading at or above grade level, and 97% of students in all other grades were also reading at or above grade level. The reading scores for the last three years in both third and fourth grades, have ranged from 91% to 100% of students performing advanced or proficient in reading on the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test (OCCT). This one goal has directly affected, in a positive way, every subject area at this school and has helped develop a framework for implementing change, achieving goals, and ensuring student success.

Rivers uses data to drive the curriculum decisions that are made. Our game plan for student success is very simple. We use research based assessments to find where students are performing, put a plan in place to address strengths and weaknesses, and teach until those areas of concern are mastered or enhanced. Multiple testing resources and benchmarks are used throughout the year to monitor student progress.

Rivers has a strong partnership with Altus Air Force Base and the Altus Community. Both provide training, protection, and involvement in the many activities of this school. The students at Rivers also give back by participating in community and base drives and providing support for military and veterans' activities. The Rivers PTO provides family activities, financial support, and many volunteers.

Over the last several years Rivers School has consistently been recognized as an outstanding Academic School. Our school received an A+ rating on the Oklahoma School Report Card for the third year in a row, and in 2015 Rivers was ranked as the 5th best school in the state of Oklahoma.

The success at Rivers is a direct result of the strong parent involvement, student work, and staff dedication. The strength of our school is the Rivers staff and the quality of teaching that takes place in the classrooms. Rivers teachers are prepared for the new students that enter their classrooms throughout the year. Their goal is the same for the student that comes in August or arrives in April. There are two areas that have to be addressed in working with military-connected students. First and foremost is how to help the student

transition to a new home, friends, and school, and then secondly, making sure that this child is academically where he or she needs to be. The Rivers teachers and staff have a commitment to support both the transition and academic success of each student.

Rivers takes pride in our mission as educators of military-connected students. We will always place the education of our students first, never accept defeat, never leave a student behind, guard the American dream of a better life, and will serve our country by being educators.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Our school targets its curriculum based on the Oklahoma Pass Objectives and using school wide goals that have been set. We use data driven testing to help us determine exactly where our students are, determine strengths and weaknesses and then set the necessary goals to make adjustments to help them succeed. Because we have children moving in and out frequently, this testing has been instrumental in determining the immediate needs of students. This process is a team collaboration between teacher, administrator, and teacher specialists, where we review, discuss, and create whole class and individualized instruction for students who may be at-risk or below-level criteria. When these students are identified, we conference with parents and make recommendations for strategies and activities they can reinforce at home. Parents know we have high expectations for their child and will work hard to ensure we attain the goals that are set.

Reading

We utilize Literacy First as the first glimpse of each student in regards to where they are and what skills they may be lacking or areas that teachers can focus instruction. Our research-based reading curriculum concentrates on phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Every grade level has a 90 minute reading block to allow for much tailored reading instruction. Beginning in kindergarten, the students are introduced to Johnny Can Spell and this is continued through the second grade. Instruction shifts in grades three and four to include more comprehension, vocabulary, sight words, and fluency skills. Teachers take advantage of several technology based reading programs to aid in the development of reading skills. One such program, Study Island, has proven to help our students be successful on the OCCT. The overall goal is to produce lifelong readers who are prepared to be active, successful participants in a global society.

Language

The language curriculum centers on helping students develop appropriate spoken and written language and increase vocabulary skills. Teachers drive instruction in writing by concentrating on the skills of organization, sentence and paragraph development, voice, word choice, and conventions of writing. This approach also includes building a strong concentration on phonics and phonetic elements of words in all grade levels. Kindergarten through fourth grade uses the Teach Me Writing program as an extension to work on the specific components of writing. This program incorporates the teaching of vivid verbs, emotion words, the five senses, and transition words. Daily writing activities incorporate these skills. The focus is for students to be able to compose quality narrative, expository, and persuasive forms of writing and also to develop a love of writing.

Math

The math curriculum is an incremental structure that distributes content throughout the year. This cohesive approach allows the teachers to provide the students with long-term mastery of the skills and objectives. We believe that the mastery of all math facts is the foundation of mathematical concepts. Students are engaged using manipulatives as a hands-on approach to reinforce the concepts, and every opportunity is taken to relate math concepts to real-world situations. Technology based math programs are utilized to remediate and enhance instruction. Math teachers aligned the math curriculum to prevent any gaps between grade levels. Students benefit from the strong math foundation which provides them with the tools they will need for their future.

Science/Social Studies

Teachers use a variety of tools to help meet the objectives for science and social studies. A basal series is used to teach science concepts in the upper grades and is enhanced through technology, hands-on experiments and projects. The lower grades incorporate a program called Friday Scientists, where parents come and complete a science experiment with the class. The school curriculum includes giving students personal experiences with online virtual tours, student reenactments of historical events and famous individuals, field trips, and living history presentations provided by the Oklahoma History Center. The use of non-fiction reading comprehension strategies in science and social studies has greatly increased the ability of students to interpret and understand concepts and apply them to real life experiences.

The Rivers Pre-k program provides a learning environment where social skills are the main focus along with a strong core foundation in literacy development. Students learn letter recognition, phonemic awareness, basic sight words, and phonological awareness skills through numerous hands-on learning activities during whole and small group instruction. Literacy, math, and thematic units are incorporated into daily instruction. Students learn through active play, which expands their vocabulary and communication skills allowing them to be creative and expressive. The learning foundation built in Pre-k creates lifelong learners and builds the fundamental reading and math skills necessary for being successful as they move to kindergarten.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Rivers Elementary is committed to providing sound curriculum instruction in vocal/general music by a trained music specialist. Our quality music program contributes greatly to our students' development of creative and problem-solving skills. It is important for each student to understand the significance of the arts in a cultural, aesthetic and historical sense. Students engage in activities that promote a knowledge base for reading and interpreting music and are exposed to different genres of music. Students have access to a piano lab where they are encouraged to imitate, compose, and interpret music. In addition to general music instruction students perform on stage at least once each year, allowing opportunities for students to display their skills and talents in playing instruments, acting, and/or singing. Fourth grade students participate in a preparation for band unit to gain the skills needed for intermediate school vocal/instrumental music. These skills require students to demonstrate a working knowledge of rhythm/note reading, application of musical symbols, fingering and other playing skills, and expressive qualities.

The physical education (PE) curriculum is child-centered. It focuses on providing students with the joy and satisfaction of being physically active and part of a group regardless of their personal strengths or limitations. Students participate in fitness and game activities and are encouraged to stay physically active outside of school. The cafeteria staff and PE teacher participated in the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) Program this year to increase the overall well being of our students and staff. Third and fourth grade students participate in the national Presidential Fitness Award Program. Every year there are at least five students who demonstrate their ability to achieve the criteria required for this prestigious award.

There are two computer labs at Rivers Elementary and three portable iPad carts. Each classroom has a SmartBoard, document camera, and desktop computers. The iPads are utilized for instruction, as a productivity tool, and for assessments. Students use Starfall, Lexia Core 5, ABC Mouse, Study Island, and several other programs and applications to enhance and remediate learning. Grades one through four have access to the on-line version of the magazine Time for Kids. The State of Oklahoma provides the on-line version of Encyclopedia Britannica for student use. Our school library has a wide variety of eBooks that students may checkout twenty-four hours a day. Our school district is moving to a 1:1 iPad initiative for the coming school year. Teachers are preparing for the opportunities this presents for advancing our students' education.

Our Enriched Studies Program includes the categories of visually talented and those identified as academically talented. The visually talented program provides students with instruction in drawing and sketching. The academically talented students work on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) based projects and participate in the First Lego League program. Students program a robot to complete certain tasks, research a given topic, create an innovative solution for a problem dealing with that topic, and present their information at competitions. This year they have also worked on a coding program

to increase critical thinking skills. Students are challenged to go above and beyond what they would normally do on a daily basis.

The special education program consists of a developmentally delayed (DD) classroom for three and four year old children whose disabilities range from speech to medically fragile. The special services provided for these students include speech, occupational, and physical therapies. The other program is a resource classroom where students are served by a special education teacher who addresses individual learning disability needs. Both programs are designed to reach students from diverse backgrounds with learning disabilities to make educational achievement. The language arts and math programs both use a variety of technology programs and resources to increase academic success. The instruction is delivered in small groups and one-on-one direct instruction. This program includes a sensory room that helps create a safe environment, facilitates therapeutic alliance, provides opportunities for engagement in prevention and deescalation strategies, and promotes self-care, resilience, and recovery.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Rivers is committed to the learning success of every child and believes all children can learn. Because of the diversity and unique learning experiences of our students, the staff is conscientious of all students' learning abilities and how each student can benefit from differentiated instruction. The priority is to determine where each child is academically and what interventions or enrichment activities are needed. Students are screened using STAR Reading, STAR Early Literacy, and STAR Math at least four times per year. Every student is also screened using the Literacy First Battery of Screening Instruments which includes the Phonological Awareness Skill Test (PAST), Phonics Assessment, and an Oral Reading Fluency Assessment. These assessments determine the student's areas of weaknesses and strengths in phonemic awareness, phonics, sight words, and fluency.

Data gathered from the STAR and Literacy First assessments guides teachers in forming flexible skills groups, planning instruction, determining interventions, and prioritizing student needs. All students receive grade level classroom instruction which is vertically aligned in all core areas and provided individualized instruction. Ongoing assessments are essential to determine the student's progress and success.

We use the Tier approach for instruction and remediation. In Tier 1, teachers provide whole group instruction, small group instruction, and one-on-one instruction using a variety of manipulatives, songs, graphic organizers, literacy strategies, hands-on activities, and activity centers. In Tier 2, students reading below grade level receive explicit instruction daily in a small group setting with a reading resource teacher. The flexible pull-out groups focus on students' specific weaknesses. Monitoring is done more frequently so that instruction can be modified. In Tier 3, students receive intense instruction using multi-sensory techniques and scaffolding in a special education room with constant monitoring of skills.

Students above level are challenged beyond the regular grade level curriculum through differentiated instruction in the Enriched Studies program. This program focuses on research and a robotics program.

Technology is an important tool in meeting the needs of students, enhancing instruction at all levels, and supplementing classroom instruction. All teachers utilize computer programs which are instructional, adaptive, diagnostic, and prescriptive. These programs provide students immediate corrective feedback, multiple levels of scaffolding, and explicit instruction which is further increased through direct instruction with the teacher.

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

Rivers Elementary uses a variety of both informal assessments and formal researched based assessments. Since we are a data driven school we are constantly assessing and evaluating results to improve instruction. We use a multi-criteria approach to determine strengths and weaknesses. Informal assessments include teacher observation, student work and projects, and teacher created assessments.

The formal assessment tools we use are the Renaissance STAR Reading, Math, and Early Literacy assessments, Study Island, and Literacy First. We look closely at the data from the many reports that are generated from these tests and use them to drive instruction and make adjustments in teaching and curriculum. The data from the OCCT tests identifies the gaps in instruction and curriculum. Using three years of data it was discovered that our math scores were not improving. The basic knowledge of math facts needed to be enhanced so various resources for teaching math facts were implemented at all levels. A comprehensive grade appropriate math facts test now comprises one-third of each nine weeks grade. Assessments have shown that the adjustments made to instruction and curriculum has increased math scores.

Teachers regularly attend grade-level meetings within our school and district. The principal and teachers meet in grade level meetings to discuss in great detail data results and any changes that are needed to enhance student learning. Teachers in the same grade level also share their planning time in order to make this a collaborative time of reflecting, evaluating, and assessing what is done on a daily basis.

After data is analyzed and assessed it is also shared between administrators, parents, and the students themselves. Our parents and students are vital stakeholders in the educational process and are kept informed of any data and results as it pertains to their student's progress. Teachers stay in contact with parents using Class Dojo, conferences, phone calls, progress reports, and report cards. Parents are welcome at Rivers at any time to discuss any concerns they have about their student's education.

Gathering data that is valuable and can be shared with the stakeholders in our school is of significant importance and is used to improve our school's performance and increase student achievement. The high expectations of our school are continually being analyzed to ensure that students are receiving a quality education, not only academically, but socially and emotionally.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Students at Rivers Elementary are engaged and motivated by the high behavioral and academic expectations our school has set not only for them, but for all of the school community. These expectations have created a positive and respectful school climate where our students feel safe, supported, and challenged to be successful. Failure is not an option for any member of our school community. Our teachers engage and motivate students using lessons that allow them to see the value and future application in what they are learning. They are given attainable goals and then encouraged to believe they can and will be successful. They are encouraged to take risks and learn from mistakes.

Students are motivated by being recognized for good deeds and demonstrating good citizenship qualities. The entire faculty at Rivers reinforce positive behavior by being role models and building meaningful relationships. We are all active members in the learning environment. One example includes a member of our custodial staff who uses his own time to help coach our First Lego League and Junior First Lego League robotics teams. He has spent numerous hours after school and on Saturdays mentoring and coaching the students.

The physical education and the music teachers both provide activities that encourage students to explore their gifts and talents. The library encourages reading through the Sequoyah Challenge where students in the third and fourth grades read all the Oklahoma Sequoyah Book Nominees for that year, take the Accelerated Reader tests for the books, and then participate in a bowling party. Our entire school shares the love of reading different genres with our students which in turn supports their academic, social, and emotional growth.

Having a school administrator who takes responsibility for moving our school forward and making it successful allows our teachers to focus on student achievement. Teachers are valued as stakeholders in the educational process and are allowed to use their individual teaching styles. Every member of this school community knows they are valued and appreciated because we are all supportive in and out of school. We are family and work as a team. The parents and Air Force community support our school and our mission to educate the students to be life-long learners, excellent readers, and productive citizens.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Rivers Elementary involves families and our community in a variety of activities. Parents, base personnel, businesses, and organizations provide a wide range of learning opportunities and incentives.

Parental involvement is very important for student success. Each grade level offers parents options to be part of their child's learning. Pre-K and kindergarten classes have opportunities for parents to participate in classroom activities and projects. Lower elementary has "Friday Scientist" where students and parents perform science experiments. Upper grades have family projects involving ecosystems and biographies. In addition, our PTO provides several fun activities for families, including bingo night, Family Groove Night and Family Reading Night with a Dr. Seuss theme.

Being located on Altus Air Force Base gives us access to many resources. Personnel from various departments provide volunteers or present programs. The fire department brings a demonstration trailer to teach fire safety and procedures. The dental health clinic teaches the students good brushing habits and provides them with dental kits. Security Forces present a drug awareness program and support Red Ribbon Week. Airmen volunteer in a variety of areas including reading, working at the book fair, and improving the playground. Donations of school supplies and items needed in the classroom are given to the school by several base organizations. Local businesses contribute prizes for reading and achievement incentives. Students also participated in the Oklahoma City Thunder organization's Reading Challenge, tracking minutes read by students. These provide extra reinforcement for reading and classroom achievement. Bar-S food processing plant sponsors a lunch at the end of the year to reward students for working hard.

Community organizations have supplied students and teachers with materials and recognition. The local Kiwanis club provides character education resources for our third grade classes. The Masonic Lodge of Altus presents an award to the outstanding boy and girl in fourth grade. Both groups recognize our Teacher of the Year.

Rivers School assists the Salvation Army by collecting nonperishable food and volunteering as bell ringers. Students create place mats used for the annual Chamber of Commerce Farm/City Banquet. Students also provide entertainment and cards of encouragement to nursing home residents. They give back to the military community by making Valentines for Vets, decorating cookie bags for our troops, and sending banners of encouragement to those deployed overseas.

3. Professional Development:

Rivers Elementary administration, faculty and staff utilize a wide variety of professional development (PD). This has a common goal of creating a higher quality learning environment for all students. Altus Public Schools builds in five days of PD into our schedule at the start of every school year, beginning with a motivational speaker. Training includes autism and English Language Learner (ELL), along with various curriculum and assessment trainings. These are very important as they help teachers facilitate learning in every student and differentiate our instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Rivers Elementary faculty and staff consistently go above and beyond what is required by our school system. Our district provided MacBook and iPad training, and our principal purchased a subscription to Simple K12 online iPad training for all Rivers teachers. In addition, our Library Media Specialists (LMS) and teachers from the district attended Camp TechTerra, a technology workshop. The LMS and library assistant also attended Encyclo-Media, which is sponsored by the Oklahoma Technology Association where enriched studies, library media, and technology sessions were attended. The principal and LMS also visited school sites in another district to view their best practices for using iPads in the classroom.

Rivers teachers have attended multiple Higher Ground STEM workshops. These teachers have incorporated the knowledge and methods they gained in the workshops in their classrooms.

Renaissance Learning and Literacy First are integral parts of assessing our students reading and math abilities. Teachers keep up-to-date on the training these programs offer because the data is used to guide our instruction. Teachers regularly attend grade-level meetings within our school and also within the district. Teachers share and learn best practices, along with learning the newest requirements from the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Rivers teachers and leaders participate in the Military Child Coalition workshops and use the many resources from that organization. Our students have needs that are unique, such as frequent moves, deployed parents, and being far from extended family members. These workshops help administrators, teachers, and staff support these students and their needs on a daily basis. When our students feel understood and accepted, they naturally perform better.

Staying current on the training and technology ensures that we have the resources needed to continue to provide a quality education for students and provide tools so students can continue to reach our high academic standard and expectations.

4. School Leadership:

The Altus Public Schools Administrative Team along with our Board of Education work together to establish the framework of our schools. The goals are established with the help of teachers, parents, and administrators working together to provide the best opportunities for all students. The standards are high and success is expected at all schools. The Superintendent allows us the freedom to attain goals using site leadership. Rivers uses site team meetings to look at data and make determinations about areas of concern and changes that need to be made each year. Site and district budgets are used to provide recommended

professional development and the purchase of needed materials. The administrative team is supportive in moving forward with new ideas in the classroom and providing, for all levels, the latest devices and software in the area of technology.

Rivers consistently experienced several years of success, but students were still not reaching their full potential. The principal provided teachers time out of the classroom to analyze curriculum, look at data, and research ways to achieve at the next highest level. The principal continued to demonstrate instructional leadership by her direct involvement of gathering information from data and valuing the input of teachers. This support and collaborative work has transformed a school from good and successful, to one of the very best schools in the state.

We celebrate and motivate as a school through assemblies by recognizing student and staff accomplishments. Students are rewarded for academic achievements, physical fitness challenges, and by demonstrating good deeds at our monthly assemblies. Our student leaders help with the morning announcements each day. Leaders in the classroom are responsible for the basic tasks that help with the operations of the class. Student leaders are helpful with new students as they transition to Rivers. Teachers are recognized for good attendance and innovative teaching practices.

Leadership at Rivers is a shared responsibility among each and every staff member. The support staff lead by example in the way they assist our teachers, students, parents, and administration. The Rivers staff values the involvement of our parents and we work together to create an environment that is positive and encouraging. These actions make Rivers a safe, successful, and welcoming school.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

L. Mendel Rivers has been successful for several years and our test scores indicated that we were a good school, but we wanted more. It was not until 2007, when we focused on goal setting and using our academic data that we began to see the overall success that our students have demonstrated in the last three years. The one practice that has made continued student progress possible was setting clear, concrete, and measurable goals. The district goal was for 90% of all third graders to be reading at or above grade level by the year 2020. Rivers implemented three diagnostic tests that measured different aspects of reading. The correct Lexile levels were determined for our students and small group instruction was implemented. A variety of intervention resources for all grade levels was used, and the work with students began. This reading goal became the center for every decision we made, every dollar we spent, and every resource we used at all grade levels. We conducted meetings with parents and included them in planning how we would collaborate to assist our students in attaining this objective. The goal was reached in 2013 with 100% of third grade students reading at or above level, measured by the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests. Each grade level made improvements in reading scores as measured by the STAR reading test with 97% of all students demonstrating on level reading.

The same goal setting strategy was put into action in 2012 as we began to target weak areas in mathematics. Using data from STAR Math, Saxon, and Study Island the teachers determined that the weakest area in math was basic math fact fluency. The 90% goal of math fluency was implemented three years ago. The results were that 100% of our third and fourth grade students scored proficient or advanced in math on the OCCT tests in 2015, with 50% of those scores in the advanced category.

We examined the data to measure our progress and one indicator of the positive results in setting these two goals was a decreased retention rate from 8% to 2% over a three year period. This is strong evidence that our targeted and measurable goal setting process has benefited our students.

Setting clear, measurable goals and establishing a solid, accurate system of implementation along with accountability has been the key to continued progress for all students at Rivers. We establish our standards, find where students are performing, teach to strengths and weaknesses using varied methods, and the students do the rest.