

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Dr. Kate Donnelly

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

Official School Name Walnut Grove Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 326 Stable Road

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

City Franklin State TN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 37069-4526

County Williamson

Telephone (615) 472-4870 Fax (615) 472-4881

Web site/URL http://www.wcs.edu/wges/ E-mail kathrynd@wcs.edu

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\*Dr. Mike Looney E-mail mike.looney@wcs.edu  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Williamson County Schools Tel. (615) 472-4000

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 24 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 8 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 9 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 41 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	51	37	88
1	70	44	114
2	51	49	100
3	64	64	128
4	69	57	126
5	56	60	116
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
<b>Total Students</b>	361	311	672

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 6 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 89 % White
  - 0 % 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: 6%

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	29
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	9
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	38
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	652
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.058
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Haitian, Creole, French, Spanish, Krio, Lingala, Chinese, Turkish, Russian, Kurdish, Korean.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 6 %  
Total number students who qualify: 43

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.

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>6</u> Autism                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness              | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness        | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>16</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment    | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</u> Mental Retardation    | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>12</u> Developmentally Delayed              |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	31
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	13
Paraprofessionals	30
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 21:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	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.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

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 are a community of learners preparing our children to become independent, responsible, high-achieving, and knowledgeable citizens.

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

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Happy Birthday, Walnut Grove! This year, Walnut Grove celebrated 25 years of excellence in education with a school birthday party. Students and staff wore class-shirts and birthday hats for the occasion. The high school marching band performed, our teachers danced in a surprise flash mob, everyone sang “Happy Birthday” to our mascot, Stanley the Grizzly, and inaugural faculty members were recognized. The most poignant part of the party was when our assistant principal read favorite memories from our staff. We are fortunate to have several inaugural faculty members still teaching and several members of the staff who were once students of this great school. Our birthday celebration provides a glimpse into the Walnut Grove community and the 25 years of excellence that make this school distinctive.

“We are Walnut Grove” is a common refrain at our school. We are a community of learners preparing our children to become independent, responsible, high-achieving, and knowledgeable citizens. When Walnut Grove was founded it was a small, neighborhood school. In the past decade, county growth has exploded. To keep up with growth, our county expanded our school zone. We serve families from farms, rural roads, established neighborhoods, affluent subdivisions, and apartments. As our school population has evolved, we have maintained our traditions, but reflectively changed programs to serve our changing student body academically, emotionally, socially, physically, and culturally.

Academically, our tradition of excellence is evidenced by our collective commitment to rigorous instruction. We are a faculty of learners who consistently collaborate to deliver research-based instruction to our student body. A team-based instructional approach is evidenced through weekly grade level planning, student-centered data team meetings, co-teaching with academic coaches, and collective subscription to professional development. Our commitment to academic rigor has allowed Walnut Grove to consistently perform in the top 5% of all Tennessee schools. Our high achievement has resulted in Walnut Grove earning Reward School status since the Tennessee Department of Education initiated the Reward School program in 2012.

At Walnut Grove, we believe that our academic foundation is complemented by traditions that shape the character of our students and community, thereby supporting their social and emotional well-being. Our school traditions center on the involvement of students, staff, and families. Traditions include, Buddy Readers where students from fourth and fifth grades partner with our youngest grades to practice fluency, develop an appreciation for reading, and create cross-grade relationships. Another example is our student-led television station, where each morning students produce “Good Morning-Walnut Grove.” A quiet tradition is the concerted effort to welcome and include all students. Our school counselor meets with and dotes on each new student, visiting them in their classroom. She also hosts lunch-bunches and friendship groups to ensure that all Walnut Grove students feel included and accepted from the moment they step on campus. Similarly, our PTA connects new families to our community, helping parents understand the vital role they play in our community school. As our population has grown and diversified, we have stayed committed to these traditions yet also made a calculated effort to expand our outreach. For example, during a large county rezoning two years ago, we opened our campus to new families one spring evening. New families were able to meet with teachers and take student-led campus tours. Thus, our new families were already acclimated to Walnut Grove in the fall.

Traditions that celebrate students and families occur daily before and after school. Over 550 students, or 80% of our student body, participate in a before or after school club. To cultivate a commitment to service learning and responsible leadership, we have a Student Ambassador Program, Make-A-Difference Club, and Green Team. To foster a lifetime of play and physical well-being, Walnut Grove annually hosts a Jump Rope Club, Track Club, two family “Fun Runs,” and Fifth Grade Olympics. To celebrate and develop an appreciation for the arts, every grade level produces and performs an annual play, our music teacher directs the Walnut Grove Chorus, and our art teacher develops student artists who participate in local and state art shows. To enrich the curriculum and celebrate culture, students are invited to participate in the Volunteer State Book Award contest, Destination Imagination, and Spanish enrichment classes.

Like our Birthday Celebration, we have large scale community events each year, including “Groovin’ at the Grove”, our fall family concert, and an annual Spring Carnival. Every year these events are collaboratively redesigned by our Building Leadership Team, fourth and fifth grade Student Ambassadors, and PTA. We believe that by revisiting and revising these traditions annually, we allow our current community to sculpt tradition and thereby, contribute to the legacy that is Walnut Grove. This reflective and reflexive approach allows all community members to say, “We are Walnut Grove” with pride.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

At Walnut Grove, the core curriculum is built and organized around subject specific standards outlined by the Tennessee Department of Education and the Williamson County Scope and Sequence. The Williamson County Scope and Sequence includes learning expectations that exceed state standards. Teachers discern and choose how to instruct, implement, and assess each standard during weekly, collaborative, grade level planning meetings. Instruction is inquiry based, highly integrated, infused with technology, and heavily focused on student writing throughout the curriculum.

Three academic coaches (reading, mathematics, differentiation) assist teachers in curriculum planning, implementation, and student intervention. Co-teaching and planning, professional development, culling of curricular resources, data-analysis, and student intervention are services routinely provided by academic coaches. This work scaffolds and supports the implementation of the core curriculum.

Differentiation is a hallmark of the core curriculum at Walnut Grove. Teachers continually analyze student data and in turn adjust their pedagogy and instructional techniques to ensure all students acquire the foundational skills from the core curriculum. Students who do not make adequate growth despite on-going classroom differentiation are supported during daily Response to Intervention. Alternatively, students who exceed classroom expectations are provided enrichment opportunities throughout the school day.

#### English/Language Arts

Explicit reading instruction comprises 90 minutes of the school day; however, we believe reading is taught during every aspect of the core. Whole group instruction is 30 minutes, followed by differentiated small group instruction and purposeful practice. Teachers craft their literacy block using a multitude of resources including but not limited to, a basal text (McGraw- Hill’s Wonders), leveled readers, non-fiction periodicals, novels, Reading A-Z, Comprehension Toolkit, 5 point writing program, readers and writers response journals, graphic organizers, the Developmental Spelling Assessment, and Florida Center for Reading Research materials. Literacy instruction methods that engage and support all students include: shared reading, close reading, guided practice, generating questions, and developing metacognitive strategies. Flexible small groups are developed based on student performance on specific measures including, but not limited to, STAR assessments, and the Developmental Reading Assessment. When not participating in whole or teacher directed small group instruction, our students are engaging in individualized purposeful practice to reinforce each standard. Our school-wide literacy curriculum is enriched through author visits, cross-grade Buddy Readers, participation in the Tennessee State Book Award Nominees, guest readers, and our annual Read-a-Thon.

#### Math

Math Instruction in our kindergarten through second grade classrooms is 60 minutes and grades third through fifth is 90 minutes. Across the math curriculum continuum, all teachers use the 5E’s-engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate in daily lesson plans. Students learn foundational math skills using unique concrete representations, through a plethora of manipulatives that reinforce conceptual understandings. To further enhance and deepen understanding our teachers use Creative Mathematics, Investigations, Touch Math, Sunshine Math, model drawings, math tasks, and number talks in daily instruction. During the math block students participate in differentiated small group instruction and purposeful practice centers. Through these differentiated centers, students build mathematical proficiency and fluency of essential skills. Math instruction is further brought to life with special visits from “The Five Fairy” and “Zero the Hero” (our math coach dressed as a superhero)! At Walnut Grove, school math nights highlight the home and school connection providing parents an opportunity to play math games with their children while learning strategies to support math learning at home.

#### Science/Social Studies

The science and social studies curriculum is acquired through hands-on opportunities and collaborative grouping which embodies active learning, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. In social studies,

simulations, primary source analysis, discussions, and guest speakers outline our key instructional practices. Annual grade level field trips to the state capitol, Civil War battlefields, Junior Achievement Biz Town, and U.S. Space & Rocket Center, bring local and national history to life and create appreciative young citizenry. Inquiry based science instruction is delivered via science kits which are delivered quarterly and have a number of science experiments thereby allowing students to learn the standards as active scientists.

Walnut Grove's core curriculum is balanced, integrated, relevant, and rigorous. Our teachers use research-based instructional methods to instill a love of learning and promote 21st Century thinking skills in all students.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Walnut Grove's Related Arts program comprises a weekly curriculum for kindergarten-fifth grade students in music, art, physical education, library science, guidance, and technology. Our Related Arts faculty is highly knowledgeable and a cornerstone of our school.

The art curriculum aligns to National Standards for Art education. Beginning in kindergarten our students work in various mediums including, clay, paint, oil pastel, yarn weaving, etc. Student instruction is based on core art skills which embed cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning goals. Lessons include famous artists and their works. In recent years, collaboration between our art teacher and math coach has led to the development of cross-curricular connections between the subjects. Student art work lines the hallways and one piece of artwork is featured each week on our school television station, WGES-TV. Students are encouraged to participate in both local and state art shows including the Frist Center for the Visual Arts. Finally, Walnut Grove consistently wins grants for notable artists to visit and share their expertise with students.

The Walnut Grove library is always open. Students check out books all day. Our collection is curated to reflect student interests as well as state academic standards. Library instruction is guided by National Literacy and Information Literacy standards. Our media specialist collaborates with classroom teachers. The products of this collaboration are inquiry-based projects that integrate research and informational literacy skills. The library has an annual book fair that culminates in a school-wide Read-a-Thon. During the Read-a-Thon, nationally known authors, such as Donald Davis, Jeri-Ann Agee, and Sigmund Brower, visit campus to discuss their writing craft. In addition, students are encouraged to read the annual Tennessee Volunteer State Book Award Nominees and are rewarded for their efforts.

Students engage in formal physical education instruction twice a week. From kindergarten through fifth grade students become proficient in a multitude of movements, fitness, and sports specific skills. Our campus provides students, parents, and the community with opportunities to learn, explore, and experience a variety of physical education programs and activities. Grant programs and clubs such as Nike Marathon Kids, Walk Across Williamson, NASP Archery, Jump Rope and Track Club improve our communities overall health and wellness. Additional activities such as monthly fitness challenges, and our annual "Fun Run" target Walnut Grove's commitment to wellness. Seventy-five percent of our school population participate in these endeavors.

Music education is a study of music theory, voice, and performance. Using the Orff-method based music program, we believe in music creation that embraces cultural diversity and integrates with all curricula. Annually, each grade level performs a musical program based on the core curriculum. In fourth grade, the music and physical education departments team up to perform an International Folk Dance project, whereby students dance, sing, and play instruments representing various countries across the globe. Our music program is featured annually in the Williamson County Fine Arts Festival. Additionally, Walnut Grove has a before-school chorus comprised of 75 third-fifth grade students. Walnut Grove invites special ensembles representing the Nashville Opera, and the Nashville Symphony to present educational performances to our students.

Technology instruction is embedded in every classroom. Students participate in weekly, whole-class technology lessons in our computer lab. Direct instruction provides students opportunities to develop

technology literacy. Students begin with simple keyboarding and move to more complex tasks such as creating PowerPoints using graphics, and computer program coding. Third through fifth grade students utilize Google Classroom to collaborate with peers and complete assignments. We participate in the National Digital Learning Day. On the 21st Century Technology Skills Assessment our second and fourth graders had the highest scores in the district.

Using the American School Counselor model, our school counselor teaches spiraled guidance lessons that support academic, social, and career development. In addition, our school counselor provides small group and individual counseling sessions to students on a myriad of personal and social issues, such as divorce, friendship, and grief. Finally, our counselor provides support to families in crisis and who are in economic need. Most importantly, our school counselor unites our campus during Red Ribbon Week to support a safe and bully-free school.

Walnut Grove students are encouraged to fulfill all of their talents through our diverse related arts curriculum.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Walnut Grove meets the needs of our diverse population of students through the use of various instructional approaches, methods, and interventions. Walnut Grove teachers excel in differentiating the curriculum in order to ensure academic excellence for all students. Based on continuous assessments, daily instruction is provided through flexible grouping during both core instruction and intervention. Our teachers create positive learning environments where all student needs are met through leveled questioning and personalized academic feedback within whole group, small group, and individualized instruction.

Our Response to Intervention (RtI) approach is a daily time where all students are instructed in their area of need as determined by our universal screener, STAR. Students whose data falls below the benchmark are placed in tiered groups according to their need. Students in these tiered groups receive research-based interventions targeting their deficit. At or above level students participate in differentiated classwork or “Walk to Learn.” Students are grouped with academic peers to ensure continuous growth in identified areas of need through either remediation, reinforcement of skills, or enrichment. These groups are flexible and continuously change based upon students’ need.

Walnut Grove teachers provide explicit, rigorous instruction through various research-based methods and interventions. Teachers, academic coaches, and support staff implement methods such as: problem based learning strategies, simulations, Socratic Discussions, and creative projects to develop the students’ critical and creative thinking skills. For example, given real world situations, students collaborate with peers, and apply their knowledge to determine solutions. While studying area and perimeter, students are tasked to design a garden using specific criteria. At the conclusion of the task, students observe and reflect on the varying outcomes. A mathematical discussion concludes this lesson as students look for similarities and differences between the solution strategies. Other problem based learning experiences included: scientific inquiry, differentiated math centers, number talks and tasks, and web quests.

Technology is used throughout the school day and is embedded into all instructional practices. All grades use iPads and computers to promote keyboarding, phonics, phonemic awareness, spelling, research, math, and fluency skills. Grades three through five utilize Google Classroom for math talks, writing and peer to peer responses. Other research based platforms used include iRead, System 44, and Moby Max.

Through continual differentiation, Walnut Grove keeps student growth and achievement in the forefront of all instructional practices.

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

Walnut Grove measures student achievement, monitors growth, and informs instruction utilizing data from multiple assessments including STAR, AIMSweb, Developmental Reading Assessment, Developmental Spelling Assessment, Phonological Awareness Test, and district formative and state-wide summative

assessments. After careful data analysis, teachers plan their instruction, interventions, and enrichment.

As a universal screener, STAR is administered at least three times a year in Reading and Math. Furthermore, STAR is used to bi-weekly progress monitor students receiving Tier 2 or 3 interventions, and/or at the teacher discretion. While the STAR screener provides essential data for RtI planning, our teachers also use the reports for small group instructional goals. In addition to STAR, teachers use data gleaned from DRA, DSA, AIMSweb, and other tools to gain further insight into their students' specific strengths and needs.

During our monthly data team meetings, school administrators, psychologist, reading and math coaches, differentiation coach, guidance counselor, ESL teacher, and classroom teachers meet to review and analyze progress. Students needing additional or intensive intervention, enrichment, and sub-group populations are targeted and recommendations are made for appropriate interventions (remediation or enrichment).

Parents of all students are informed of their child's progress through multiple means including parent conferences, e-mails, and the district's Web-based student information system. School-wide achievement is recognized through newsletters, open house announcements, school board meetings, and chamber of commerce presentations. In addition, parents of students in Tier 2 and 3 (less than 25th percentile and 10th percentile, respectively) receive monthly progress letters. An RtI team meets with parents if students are not making adequate progress in order to create a more comprehensive plan of action. Instructional coaches and school psychologist have the option to administer more specific assessment in the event that a student is not responding to intervention. Teachers are sensitive to the varying backgrounds of our students, with particular attention paid to closing achievement gaps of sub-group populations.

To ensure continued growth of high-achieving students an advanced academic support team meets when it is believed a child requires enrichment beyond what is available through normal classroom differentiation. State assessment and STAR results, along with parent and teacher observations, are analyzed to determine if a need exists. If so, advanced screening is administered.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

This year Walnut Grove celebrated 25 years of excellence in providing positive classroom cultures among teachers, students, administrators, and the Grizzly community. Each day includes implementation of positive recognition where students are immersed in a day supporting academic, social, and emotional growth.

When you step on to Walnut Grove’s campus you are welcomed by an administrator, teacher or staff member, followed by a greeting from your classroom teacher. Our morning announcements are telecast into the classrooms live by our fifth grade leaders. These announcements provide character thoughts for the day, daily birthdays, random acts of kindness, and artists of the week just to name a few. All students take turns leading the on-air Pledge of Allegiance to promote public speaking and patriotism.

Morning Meetings were implemented last fall and offer a stage to share greetings and various activities. These activities may include educational games or building personal relationships within the classroom. This fosters a safe, nurturing environment that sets a positive learning tone for the rest of the day.

Through our school-wide behavior expectations, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program, students strive to be respectful, responsible, and give their best effort in order to maintain a positive learning environment throughout the entirety of our school day. Students are often rewarded with Grizzly Gold which they are able to use for school-wide or classroom incentives such as reading to another classroom. Classrooms are recognized weekly by administrators for outstanding behavior choices that they’ve demonstrated throughout the week.

Our Be Nice Committee consists of fourth and fifth grade students elected by their homeroom teachers who exhibit excellent character. This body of student minds encompasses all PBIS Expectations, contributes new ideas, and portrays the excellence of a Walnut Grove student.

The school culture at WGES creates an environment where teachers feel validated, appreciated, and empowered by professional development opportunities and open lines of communication with our administrators. Our professional development directly correlates with the needs expressed by the faculty including vertical planning, learning through active participation and bringing in engaging, motivating, and knowledgeable presenters within our profession.

Walnut Grove is a positive place of learning, teaching, and working together. Expectations are set for both students and staff through positive support, acts of appreciation, and creating an environment where people belong and are loved. The culture created allows students to learn and grow to the best of their abilities.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Walnut Grove is a family of nearly 800. We believe strong families and a sense of community are essential to the academic success and well-being of every child. The Walnut Grove Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is the anchor of family engagement. More than 400 families, or 90% percent of our school population, actively supports the PTA. The main functions of the PTA are to communicate, support, and most importantly, cultivate the spirit of community that is Walnut Grove.

Cultivating the “Spirit of Walnut Grove” is a collaborative endeavor between the PTA leadership, families, teachers, and students. To maintain the sense of community, Walnut Grove utilizes open pathways of communication. Our PTA executive board and principal meet weekly to maintain clear and consistent communication between home and school. Together, the board and principal write a bi-weekly school newsletter, The Grizzly Gazette, to inform parents about academics, arts, athletics, the community, and upcoming events. Additionally, the PTA maintains its own website and Facebook page so that families can use social media networking to coordinate volunteer opportunities and often, share pictures of Walnut

Grove events.

Another strategy Walnut Grove uses to maintain the school, community connection is through collaborative decision making. Nearly all of our school events are co-planned and orchestrated by our stakeholders. To develop fundraising initiatives, the principal, PTA, and Building Leadership Team review student achievement and school climate data as well as teacher and community feedback. This feedback is used to determine our next fundraising goals. Notably, our three largest events, Groovin' at the Grove, the Spring Carnival, and Read-a-Thon involve the greatest amount of collaboration between stakeholders. These events solicit involvement from teachers, parents, and the community. This year our fundraising initiatives are contributing to school improvement in the following areas; additional technology, curriculum resources, playground improvements, and school safety.

Fostering lasting relationships with local community partners helps strengthen Walnut Grove as a whole. Community partners such as: Tree Wise provides saplings for Arbor Day, the Williamson County Master Gardener Association maintains our educational butterfly garden, and local fire and police departments visit our campus annually to teach safety and responsibility. The local 4-H chapter teaches public speaking units to our fourth and fifth grade students each year. Our United Way partnership provides tangible items and services in support of student needs. This on-going collaboration creates a positive community spirit, which increases engagement and support for student success.

### 3. Professional Development:

Walnut Grove teachers are highly dedicated to their instructional craft. This dedication is evidenced by a willingness to continue to learn and grow as professional leaders. Our professional development is aligned with the district's mission and is collaborative, job-embedded, teacher-led, and continually evolving.

Each year, using a logic model, the faculty reviews student achievement data as well as individual and collective teaching practices in order to identify professional learning needs. Once identified, these needs are crafted into a multi-faceted professional development plan. Recently, our professional development focus has been maximizing small group instructional time in reading and math. Our academic coaches worked with an outside consultant to plan and provide two days of professional development dedicated to small group instruction. To create professional learning coherence, this professional development was delivered using small group instruction. Teachers' participated in small groups as the coaches modeled exemplary lessons and conferred with teachers about instructional refinement. Additionally, a small group book study was launched using Debbie Diller's "Making the Most of Small Groups" as well as a Google Classroom collaborative course, Morning Meeting, facilitated by our principal. Our math coach created a BUILD professional learning day, where grade levels made differentiated math centers to implement during small group instruction.

As professional understanding evolves during the school year, the administration reviews several data points to ensure that instructional growth and ultimately, student achievement is occurring. We consider how specific professional development aligns to the instructional domains in the Tennessee Evaluation Model. For example, after implementing professional development on small group instruction, we have seen remarkable growth in the evaluation domains of grouping, academic feedback, and environment. Further, during data team and building leadership team meetings, we consistently review STAR benchmark data, relative to the logic model and supporting professional development plan. Grade level teams discuss overall student growth, areas of concern, and adjust our professional development plan accordingly.

In addition to school-based professional development, many of our teachers attend district, state, and national professional development workshops. All professional development completed outside of Walnut Grove must be pre-approved by the administration and show alignment to academic standards, support student achievement, and illustrate a connection to school improvement. In keeping with our collaborative spirit, teachers who attend conferences return and lead the staff in new instructional practices.

#### 4. School Leadership:

Walnut Grove employs a shared leadership philosophy. Principals, teachers, students, parents, and staff partner to create a shared vision and goal-driven approach to continuous school improvement.

When engaging with faculty and staff, the principals employ an open-door policy. Conversation about school and student achievement is constant. Each year principals ask teachers to reflectively analyze data and make grade level and individual pedagogy goals. This reflection takes the form of a Logic Model or Backwards-Design map. At data meetings, teachers use the Logic Model as a template in which to share their progress or concerns relative to current data. Teacher candor is valued and principals act upon teacher need. For example, based on feedback, principals may leverage academic coaching assistance, initiate tutoring funding, purchase instructional materials, and/or professional development. Principals believe this shared leadership process allows principals to foster continuous school improvement and student achievement.

The principals cultivate teacher leadership to make school-wide decisions. The Building Leadership Team is comprised of representatives from each grade, special education teacher, and a related arts teacher. The BLT meets regularly to make decisions regarding curriculum, capital purchases, scheduling, professional development, and community events. The varied composition of BLT ensures that all grade levels are adequately represented. Other leadership teams include the academic coaching team, Coordinated School Health Team, Bring Your Own Technology Team, mentoring team, science and social studies facilitators, and “Be Nice” leaders. The principals routinely meet with these leaders to listen, encourage their vision, and assist in the implementation of goal-driven improvements. We believe that a large cadre of leaders results in a multi-faceted approach to school improvement.

The principal meets weekly with the PTA and acts as liaison between home and school life. Each year the PTA drafts a vision and goals that are discussed and supported by the BLT. When planning community events, the PTA meets with and partners with the BLT and the staff. This shared approach results in a diverse leadership capacity which includes all members of the community.

Finally, the principal believes that students must have a “voice” in their school. The principal leads a weekly Student Ambassadors program. The ambassadors meet to learn leadership skills and make decisions to benefit their peers. Recently ambassadors have decided to purchase playground equipment, and formed committees to plan Spirit Week and the Spring Carnival.

We believe our shared leadership allows our students to excel and our community to thrive.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Walnut Grove has an incredibly sound core instructional model. However, our greatest strength is when our teachers pinpoint individual student need and intervene within our Response-to-Intervention model. RtI originates with a teacher reviewing student data and compiling a list of student strengths and areas of concern. Our teachers don't just look at students as data points. Walnut Grove teachers have a concrete understanding of their students' academic, emotional, and social well-being. This composite view creates a framework for collaboration with our student support staff which can include our school counselor, school psychologist, academic coaching team, speech language pathologist, and special education teachers. Together, these stakeholders discuss and develop an intervention plan that supports the student. These conversations and intervention plans originate at monthly data team meetings. However, it is not uncommon for these conversations to occur on a daily basis. Walnut Grove teachers constantly adjust instructional practices.

RtI occurs daily for thirty minutes. At every grade level, teachers collaborate to develop purposeful intervention time that supports all students. Many of our grade levels employ, "Walk to Learn" where all students visit a specific teacher to receive targeted intervention. Our teachers use this intervention time to team teach with academic coaches, special education teachers, and educational assistants.

The strength of our RtI model is evidenced by reviewing recent RtI and school achievement data. During the 2014-15 school year, 81% of students receiving tier two and/or three literacy intervention, and 75% of students receiving tier two and/or three math intervention, were exited from a formal intervention plan by the conclusion of the year. This data is compelling as it indicates that these students were able to remain within the core curriculum without needing special education services. Similar data trends exist in our closing of achievement gaps within targeted sub-groups. On the 2015 Tennessee Comprehensive Achievement Assessment (TCAP), Walnut Grove students belonging to Black/Hispanic/Native American, Economically Disadvantaged, and the Special Education sub-groups showed gains in school achievement. This achievement gain demonstrates our commitment to targeting and challenging the nation's historically underperforming student sub-groups. Finally, using TCAP Value-Added formulas, Walnut Grove consistently exceeds one year's academic growth in reading and mathematics.

Our teachers are excellent at identifying need, forming appropriate intervention plans, and intervening with fidelity. We are most proud of this process and it indicates our collective commitment to the achievement of every child at Walnut Grove.