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

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Northwestern Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 10450 John Williams Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Albion   State PA   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 16401-2002

County Erie

Telephone (814) 756-9400   Fax (814) 756-9466

Web site/URL   http://nwsd.org   E-mail ttrimble@nwsd.org

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. Karen Downie   E-mail Kdownie@nwsd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Northwestern School District   Tel. (814) 756-9400
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 Bilek
(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   2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   1 Middle/Junior high schools
                                         1 High schools
                                         0 K-12 schools

                                         4 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
   [X] 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	30	33	63
1	31	32	63
2	39	34	73
3	34	34	68
4	40	41	81
5	27	31	58
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	201	205	406

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   <u>1</u> % American Indian or Alaska Native
the school: <u>0</u> % Asian
    <u>0</u> % Black or African American
    <u>1</u> % Hispanic or Latino
    <u>0</u> % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    <u>95</u> % White
    <u>3</u> % 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: <u>11</u>%

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 *to* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	17
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	26
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	43
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	406
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.106
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: <u>0</u> %
    <u>1</u> Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
<u>Germanic</u>

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: <u>60</u> %
     Total number students who qualify: <u>241</u>

8. Students receiving special education services: <u>19</u> %
    <u>77</u> 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>1</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>11</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>38</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>7</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: <u>15</u>

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	18
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	13
Paraprofessionals	3
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   <u>23:1</u>

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	95%	95%	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 <u> </u>   No <u>X</u>

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.

Northwestern Elementary School, in partnership with its parents, seeks to instill in its students, high standards for academic scholarship, integrity, leadership, and responsible citizenship.

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

Northwestern Elementary School is part of the Northwestern School District, which is a rural district in Northwestern Pennsylvania. Our school is located in the Borough of Albion and draws students from six municipalities, Albion Borough, Platea Borough, Cranesville Borough, Conneaut Township, Springfield Township and Elk Creek Township. Our district is comprised of Springfield Elementary School and Northwestern Elementary School, Northwestern Middle School, and Northwestern High School. Over our history, the school district has consolidated many of the smaller schools and one room schoolhouses that were spread throughout our 144 square miles into our current school structure. We are especially proud our restored one room schoolhouse that sits on the Albion campus. Our students experience the schoolhouse through walking tours each year.

In 1985, a level F4 tornado moved through the center of Albion leveling the community and resulted in twelve deaths. Our school was spared and immediately became the disaster center and morgue. Despite the devastation and resulting population loss, our town rebuilt as the school continued to be the center of the community.

Nearly 60% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch. We are classified as a rural poor school district with a high aid ratio. Despite these obstacles, our students and staff have demonstrated that they can overcome these difficulties and succeed. Our school is a center point within the community and reaches out to families to provide the necessary home supports and to enable the students to be successful in the classroom and in life. One such support is our partnership with the Union City Family Support Center. This organization provides numerous family supports from in-home visits for parent education as well as parenting classes held within the school setting.

Our school programs include Title One Family Math and Reading Nights as well as an active PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), which provides opportunities for parents to be active within the school. Our school wide positive behavior support program, PAWS (Practice Respect, Act Responsibly, Work Together, and Stay Safe), encourages students to be positive role models for others and learn important character education skills.

We are currently participating in the Americorps volunteer program through Keystone Smiles in Knox, PA. Volunteers support students with academic tutoring both during the school day and after school with programs that foster skill development and teaches sewing skills to support community based programs including the Project Need homeless shelter.

We have pride in the fact that our students have demonstrated exceptional growth over the past several years based on test data. We have taught our students strategies that enable them to be intrinsically motivated as these skills will take our students far in life. Having transitioned to the common core standards, our students have learned many newly developed strategies that have resulted in significant growth.

The Pennsylvania state budget cuts during the 2011-12 school year negatively affected nearly all school districts across our commonwealth. Our school was no exception with a 21% reduction of our regular classroom teacher positions. While most would view this negatively, our school saw it as an opportunity to "think outside the box" and retool the way that we work with students.

While we lost nearly one teacher per grade level during the budget crunch, we decided to reallocate our support services to more effectively work with students. Instead of distributing our title one and learning support teachers across all grade levels, we decided to develop a system of one intervention support teacher per grade level. Support teachers were dual certified in regular education and special education. In some grades, this support teacher also possessed a reading specialist certification. The intervention specialist's role would be to provide all of the title one support for the grade level as well as meet the identified learning support needs. Benefits would be to provide a dedicated qualified staff member to each grade level and eliminate the need to coordinate support schedules across multiple grade levels. It would lead to a more efficient utilization of staff resources. The theory was such that most of the specialist's time would be spent

working with students to remediate academic deficiencies through Title one efforts resulting in more students at grade level and fewer identified special education students leading to less time needed to support the IEP goals. In the primary grades, most of the resource time would be spent on Title one remediation while more time would be shifted toward special education in the intermediate grades. It was our hope that this structure, along with utilization of Rtii (Response to Intervention and Instruction) interventions would help control the percentage of identified special education students, which had become out of control prior to implementing this model. In summary, our school has demonstrated that despite many challenges, we have found ways to overcome and succeed.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Learning standards are based upon the Pennsylvania Core Standards that were adopted and reflect the national Common Core Standards. In order to reflect the PA standards, we dedicated time and professional development activities to revise our curricula in the areas of reading, math, science, and social studies. Our reading program reflects a strong balanced literacy approach. The teachers use and implement with fidelity the components of a balanced literacy instructional program. Leveled readers are used to support guided reading instruction and support young readers at their level. Teachers utilize our school wide literacy library for small group instruction. Books are leveled based on Fountas and Pinnell guidelines. Guided reading instruction involves students reading at various instructional levels in small group settings from 2 to 6 students and follow screening and benchmark assessments including administration of the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) and the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills), which are given in the fall, winter and spring. Regular follow up assessments in the form of running records are conducted between assessment periods to make adjustments in groups based on mastered skills and deficits. Focus is placed on specific skill development as opposed to leveled groups to insure that students are periodically adjusted to flexibly account for skill development needs. Shared reading instruction reflects rigor of the PA Core standards and utilizes more of a whole group approach to instruction. Emphasis is placed on exposing all students to grade level content and the development of key meta cognitive strategies to teach higher order thinking skills. Close reading strategies are used to support student learning and advance student understanding of both fictional and non-fictional text. We recently implemented a new writing program in our primary grades that supports the instruction of the Common Core State Writing Standards. This program includes research-based, highly engaging lessons, tools, and techniques to ensure all students master the standards. We are currently working to enhance our word work or word decoding curricula to address those students who are not achieving at grade level on the DIBELS assessment. Our second grade team is currently piloting a new program that we hope with address these deficiencies.

We also recently revised our curricula to align strongly with the new PA Core math standards. Teachers utilize a combination of teacher made resources, textbook materials, and online lessons/materials to deliver comprehensive, rigorous math content. Our teachers have discovered that the materials found on such sites as Engage NY truly reflect the expectations of the standards. Therefore, these engaging lessons are incorporated throughout the grade levels to support students and their mastery of the standards. We are utilizing technology to support our math curriculum through the use of Learnzillion and Khan Academy applications. This approach permits students to work at skills in a differentiated manner and promotes curriculum expansion for our higher achieving students.

The science and social studies core curriculum are not found as stand alone content areas. In order to make the content as meaningful as possible to our students, the standards are incorporated into math and reading, respectively. Within reading activities, whether guided reading, shared reading, writing, or word work, there are social studies standards reflected. The teachers especially use the standards in social studies and science when either reading or writing about informational and/or non-fiction texts. Additionally, science is part of daily math instruction, where appropriate. Any standard that is not related to mathematics is part of the curriculum where it is the most meaningful. Our teachers excel at recognizing the overlap and teaching the standards and content in each of the four core areas. They do not focus on a specific textbook or resource that guides their instruction. Standards and student needs truly guide our school's core curriculum. We have found that this approach provides teachers with autonomy and the curriculum map tools necessary to best meet the individual needs of their students.

While our district doesn't operate a preschool, we work closely with the numerous preschools that send students each year to our school. Recent efforts have led to the development of a common assessment tool used by the preschools to furnish common assessment data to our kindergarten staff for our entering kindergarten students.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our school offers programs in art, music, physical education and library sciences to all students. Curriculum maps have been developed and reflect the Pennsylvania Academic standards. The content is aligned sequentially by grade and developmentally appropriate. Instruction is provided to all students on a weekly basis. Much of the focus is on alignment with our reading and math curricula to support those areas. Specific coordination examples include the utilization of children's literature in art, music and physical education classes while supporting instruction to teach reading and math content whenever possible. This might include reading a story involving colors to introduce a pastel watercolor art project to kindergarteners.. The music teacher might read a piece of children's literature about fractional parts to introduce the concept of beats, half beats and quarter beats. The physical education teacher has taught social studies and geography concepts through our Run Across America program with students utilizing pedometers to record steps and measure distances between our school and other states. Last year, students walked a total of 18,801,546 steps or 7,520 miles! Our library science curriculum ties many concepts together through the emphasis on research at all grade levels using the almanac and teaching critical text analysis skills when reading nonfiction text.

These content areas enhance our student experience through a variety of supplemental programs with the production of art projects and contests including our recently completed Dr. Seuss Week art program. Students also contribute works of art for consideration to be added to our permanent Fine Arts Collection, which provides for student products being professionally framed and displayed around our school.

Our music department hosts multiple choral and band concerts for families and the community. Our fifth grade elementary band boasts a very high participation rate with 59% of students playing an instrument. This is due to our music teacher who is also our high school marching band director. This strong elementary program has supported our high school band program that is renowned in our state as well as neighboring New York, where they have won five state titles. We also have a hand bell choir for fourth and fifth grade students that produces an annual spring concert. Our school has hosted the regional Songfest for two of the past ten years. Our music curriculum focuses on the transition from music concept awareness using a hands on instrument approach to movement and finally through theory and application. This is especially evident through the introduction of string lessons with violins at the third grade level to recorder lessons utilizing six varieties of instruments at the fourth grade level to brass, percussion and woodwind instruments at the fifth grade level.

Through our library science program, we host an annual science fair that focuses on teaching the scientific method of discovery. Our library science teacher organizes an annual reference challenge with fifth grade teams from both elementary schools gathering each spring to compete against each other. Members of the community including retired teachers serve as contest judges as parents and other community visitors encourage the students. Our classroom teachers on the other hand, teach content rich in the arts and music and often incorporate movement into their lessons.

While we are a rural poor school district, we have utilized our financial resources including grants to purchase technology and enhance student learning. All classroom teachers utilize smart board technology and online access to cutting edge applications to motivate students. Our technology coordinator has been successful with grants to enable our school to have 482 Chromebooks, iPads or Macbook computers resulting in a more than a 1:1 computer to student ratio. Each classroom is furnished with applications in both language arts and math. Our intermediate grades have mobile laptop carts that are shared to access specific learning programs as well as being utilized heavily as part of the writing curriculum.

We have promoted STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math) education initiatives through our after school computer club and our fifth grade K'NEX Club which has been in existence for three years. It is noteworthy that our K'NEX team qualified for and placed first in the Pennsylvania State K'NEX Challenge competition in 2013-14, which was our very first year!

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Teachers use a variety of instructional methods in all content areas. The instructional methods they choose vary based on the curriculum area and student needs. Teachers strive to ensure that instruction promotes higher order thinking and provides opportunities in which the teacher can support instruction, rather than always lead instructional activities. Our goal is for instruction to be child centered with the teacher helping to facilitate the learning process. In recent years, we have provided a lot of support and professional development in the area of close reading as an effective instructional strategy. The teachers as well as students have had great success with this approach. In the area of mathematics, instruction reflects exploratory opportunities in which students can try various methods and strategies to solve a given problem. It also involves utilization of manipulatives especially at the primary level to move students from the concrete to the abstract. This kind of problem solving is encouraged and much of the instruction is truly led by the students and not the teacher. With the shift to Common Core, instruction strives to deepen student understanding and focuses on the depth of the standards, not the breadth or how much is covered in a year.

At Northwestern Elementary School, we use data to drive instruction and intervention support. A tiered instructional process is incorporated in the primary grades and a more flexible approach is used in the intermediate grades. The teachers utilize a leveled literacy intervention program to support struggling readers. Usually such support occurs in small groups outside of the classroom. The intervention teacher works with flexible groups on skill deficits and provides explicit instruction to these students. The frequency of these interventions vary by grade as needs are identified. Teachers closely monitor the progress of struggling students in the areas of math and reading with regular assessments and grade level data meetings to ensure high levels of student learning and achievement.

Technology is used across all content areas to support instruction. IPads, lap tops, and chrome books are in all classrooms. The students use such online programs as Khan Academy, Moby Max, Reading A to Z, Lexia and Learnzillion to further deepen their understanding of various skills. In addition to these programs, a variety of apps are available to students to be utilized at school as well as at home.

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

A formal assessment plan was written to reflect all of the assessments used, how often they are administered, how they are used, and what they measure. This assessment plan has focused our efforts to truly use data to drive instructional decision at the teacher level, at the building level, and at the district level. Summative assessments used include the Pennsyvlania State System of Assessment (PSSA), tests, and quizzes. Diagnostic assessments used across all grade levels include the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Math Their Way, and the Classroom Diagnostic Test (CDT). A variety of benchmark assessments are also used. These include the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), 4Sight, Dolch Word Assessment, and Lexia. All of these assessments are used to support instructional decisions, but most importantly, teachers utilize a variety of formative assessments to guide instruction on a daily basis.

Our attempts to close the assessment gaps include the strategic implementation of our intervention specialists at each grade level. This system eliminates cross grade scheduling conflicts and allows our intervention staff to focus on their assigned grade with specific small group interventions to remediate deficiencies.

Assessment results are collected regularly and housed in an online data warehouse program. This program allows teachers and administrators to view student performance at a point in time, but also provides the opportunity to view historical data that can also be used to improve both student and school performance.

Teachers also meet on a regular basis to monitor student progress, make recommendations for improvement, and request for additional support if necessary. This process is completed by grade level teams that meet periodically and utilize weekly common planning periods that are built into the schedule. Teachers communicate assessment results with parents using an online grade system that parents can access on a daily basis. Teachers also communicate with parents during our bi annual parent conferences. Conferences are scheduled both during the day as well as evenings to accommodate parent work schedules. Our teachers also use a software application called Class DOJO to communicate individual student and class behavior to parents via email on a daily basis. Parents can check both the positive and negative behavior point system for their child with timely opportunities to follow up with their child and the teacher on a daily basis. We have found this to be a highly effective method for assessing and reporting student behavior.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our school promotes a positive school climate through our PAWS school wide positive behavior support program. PAWS stands for: Practice respect, Act responsibly, Work together, and Stay safe. Classroom teachers facilitate lessons teaching positive character traits. Behaviors are modeled by students and staff with students being rewarded with positive PAW tickets that are submitted by students for chances to win weekly prizes. Students can earn tickets for displaying expected behaviors in all areas across the school.

Our school staff has been trained in the Olweus Bully Prevention Program, which promotes a positive school environment that discourages bully types of behaviors. Through this program, we advocate for bully victims and promote a four part prevention theme across our entire school. The prevention themes include: we will not bully others; we will help students who are bullied; we will include others who are left out; and if we know somebody is being bullied, we will tell and adult at school and at home. Whenever necessary, we involve parents in this process when a student is the victim of bully behavior or when a student is the perpetrator of the bullying behavior or part of a group engaging in bullying types of behavior.

We support our teachers in various ways to show that they are valued members of our staff. Our parent teacher organization sponsors meals during our parent conference days each year to recognize the efforts of our teachers and to enhance the conference day experience. Another cultural support for our teachers is that one of our Professional Learning Communities (PLC) focuses on staff moral. They produce a monthly newsletter with important dates and events as well as humorous and inspiring information. They recently sponsored a "Get Mugged" event where teachers secretly gave coffee mugs filled with candy to support each other.

Our school promotes social and emotional growth through a partnership with Safe Harbor Behavioral Support to provide a school based mental health counselor to be housed on our site for one day every other week to provide counseling and other support services to our students and families. As our school is located 25 miles from the city of Erie, Pennsylvania, access to many support services is a challenge. This partnership has enhanced our ability to provide those services and keep students in school. As a result, participation is high and we are seeing positive results in the classrooms.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Technology advancements have increased the level of family engagement within our school. We provide online access to student grades and assignments through our district website. Parents can also track student behavior progress communicate with teachers through daily emails sent using our Class DOJO app. Families can track student cafeteria account balances and add money to accounts using software available through our website. We also employ a One Call Now phone system that enables the school to send phone messages to all parents regarding important school events. Of course, teachers also engage families through weekly newsletters as well as web pages. We have noticed a significant increase in the level of parent engagement as a result.

Our school has an active parent teacher organization that enhances our school's capacity for providing a meaningful learning experience for our students. Parents, grandparents and members of the community volunteer in our school and provide many hours of support to enhance student learning. The organization raises funds to provide field trips and assemblies that students might not otherwise experience. Students visit the Albion Fair each fall as well as Camp Fitch, which is a summer camp that is operated by the YMCA. The parent teacher organization has also sponsored school wide assemblies to enhance student lives including music groups that promote character education and anti bully themes.

One of the most successful community involvement programs has been our Grandparent Breakfast Program. Each year, we hold six grandparent programs across the school year (one for each grade level K-5) in which we invite grandparents to visit our school, eat breakfast with their grandchild (ren) and

experience a program or performance by the students. The purpose is to reach out to our community and share the exciting and wonderful things that are happening within our school.

Another successful program support involves students from our district high school early childhood program. High school students wanting to choose a career in teaching or child care sign up to support one of our primary grade classrooms. Students are assigned for two periods per day and perform a variety of support tasks including reading with students and helping them complete schoolwork. This program gives our high school students experience and skills as they potentially choose a career in school or childcare.

3. Professional Development:

Our school continues to search for strategies and methods to enhance student learning and promote higher order thinking skills among our students. One of our most successful initiatives was to provide professional development training in balanced literacy. This was started during the 2009-10 school year as we contracted with REACH Associates to provide ongoing staff development and on site support to enable our teachers to enhance student learning. The initial professional development took place over 18 months until the 2011-12 school year. Most of the training took place during the school year with between 3 and 4 full days of in service provided to each primary level teacher. The purpose was to bolster our core reading program to align with best practices and current research that supported the teaching of meta cognitive strategies to promote higher order thinking skills among the students. The training not only involved strategies and techniques including visualization and making connections but it provided a uniform platform to "get everyone on the same page instructionally". Key elements included lesson planning and implementation with focus on language arts block development. Teachers were in-serviced about shared reading, guided reading, word work, interactive read aloud strategies and developing word walls in the classroom to enhance student writing abilities. Students were becoming readers and thinkers and our DIBELS and DRA assessments results showed the growth.

During the 2013-14 school year, our intermediate level teachers implemented a new reading and writing strategy called RAS. RAS stands for Restate, Answer and Support. It have since been further refined to the acronym RACE (Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain). More about this initiative will be detailed in part VI Indicators of Academic Success.

We continue to provide professional development to enhance our abilities to implement the common core standards. Perhaps one of the more significant trainings to occur over the past two years have been the workshops that our intermediate level teachers attended related to teaching students how to use text dependent analysis (TDA) strategies to write constructed responses. This has been particularly effective with Pennsylvania's transition from the PSSA writing test to the ELA (English Language Assessment), which combines both reading and writing standards into one assessment. Based on last year's PSSA results and comparisons with results from across the state, we felt that these trainings helped our teachers to teach students those skills to show significant growth and demonstrate a higher level of understanding.

4. School Leadership:

Our school leadership takes place in the form of distributed leadership and shared ownership. The philosophy is to develop the massive talent that lies within our skilled and experienced teaching staff. Ideas that are researched and developed by our staff are more likely to be accepted and "owned" by them. Our principal's role has been to channel the teacher efforts and align them to provide a sense of instructional uniformity among the staff. His role has also been to ensure that the initiatives align with best practices and the common core standards. We have established a balance between new and experienced teachers that blend cutting edge techniques and strategies with tried and true methods that have produced results.

One prime example of distributed leadership has been one of our fifth grade math teachers whose leadership and initiative led to his selection, from more than 3,000 applicants from around the country, to the 2013 Learnzillion Dream Team sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The team selected 200 teachers based on their understanding of the common core standards and ability to develop high-quality highly conceptual lessons. from more than 3,000 applicants from around the country. This teacher's involvement was due to the distributed leadership atmosphere promoted within our school by the principal. Needless to say, this teacher has used his talents to become a master teacher and share his expertise with the rest of our staff. He has also been published in a national trade journal.

The current principal has been in this school for the past 15 years after serving 8 years as the principal of the district's other elementary school. Over his tenure, he has worked to ensure that teachers have a framework for collaboration. Structurally, he set up schedules that give teachers a minimum of 2 common plan periods per week to meet in grade level teams. This system has led to the establishment of common lesson plans among many of the grades to insure more uniform content instruction as well as the development of a standards based report card. This system has also led to common plan time for grade level data teams to meet and discuss much of the assessment data including DIBELS, DRA, CDT and PSSA. Many of the initiatives described above in the professional development section were developed as a result of teacher searches and consultations to discover new instructional ideas.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

With the implementation of the common core standards, there has previously never been such a push for students to think about their learning, promote higher order thinking skills and have students demonstrate understanding through the development of constructed written responses.

Perhaps the implementation of the RAS and RACE strategies related to the development of constructed responses has had the greatest impact for closing the achievement gap across our school. Researched and implemented as a pilot by fifth grade language arts teachers in 2012-13, this initiative quickly grew to take on a life of its own. During the 2013-14 school year, it was expanded and utilized in the fourth and third grade classrooms. As previously described in part V, RAS is an acronym that stands for Restate the question, Answer the question, and Support your answer. The strategies taught to students have led to them searching text in much greater detail than previously taught and using key organizational techniques to construct written responses that demonstrate a much higher level of understanding as measured by the PA Writing Rubric.

More recently, the initiative was further expanded to teach these strategies in the primary grades. The common teacher statement was: "If we could just teach this concept in the lower grades and the students came into my grade with more of these skills, we would be so much further ahead!" We are now seeing the benefits of these strategies as students are now much more prepared to develop constructed written responses on assessments using the PA Writing Rubric. These strategies are now being taught to students in all grades in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Further refinement has taken place this year with the enhanced technique called RACE, which is an acronym standing for: Restate the question, Answer the question, Cite specific evidence from the text and Explain your response. This further development of the concept is leading to some very promising results as indicated through our mid year assessments. We are hopeful that this initiative coupled with our TDA (Text Dependent Analysis) staff development efforts will continue to show in our student achievement and growth data.