

U.S. Department of Education
2017 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 Mrs. Trina Petty-Rice
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 8636 Litzsinger Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Brentwood State MO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 63144-2423

County MO

Telephone (314) 962-0613 Fax (314) 963-7724

Web site/URL http://www.brentwoodmoschools.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=252004&type=d&pREC_ID=577466 E-mail tprice@brentwoodmoschools.org

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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Brian Lane E-mail blane@brentwoodmoschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Brentwood School District Tel. (314) 962-4507

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Keith Rabenberg
(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.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

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. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. 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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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 (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 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
 - ☐ Small city or town in a rural area
 - ☐ Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	14	16	30
1	17	13	30
2	20	14	34
3	17	21	38
4	17	12	29
5	19	14	33
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	104	90	194

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- | |
|--|
| <u>0</u> % American Indian or Alaska Native |
| <u>11</u> % Asian |
| <u>21</u> % Black or African American |
| <u>5</u> % Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>0</u> % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| <u>56</u> % White |
| <u>7</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 2015 – 2016 school year: 8%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	194
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.077
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

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

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

Hindi, Russian, Telugu, Chinese, French, Urdu, Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 26 %
Total number students who qualify: 47
8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
24 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>4</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>4</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>1</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>9</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>2</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>3</u> Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5

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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

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 13:1

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

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	98%	96%	97%	96%	96%
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 2016.

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 X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2009

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

At Mark Twain Elementary, we expect our students to Give their best efforts, Guide responsibly, and Grow respectfully as they become leaders of our 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

Mark Twain's mission statement (Give, Guide, and Grow) is simple enough to be quoted by every kindergartner, yet deep enough to be internalized by every fifth grader. Our common goal is to give our best effort, guide responsibly and ultimately grow to become productive leaders of this global society. Our school community is housed in a nostalgic building, nestled in a warm community of dedicated parents, where it is believed that there is a leader in every child.

Mark Twain's stately brick school was constructed by the PWA (Public Works Administration) in 1934, in a small suburban community in St. Louis County, Missouri. Located in the prestigious Brentwood District, this classic building still has the original rock walls surrounding the school and playground. The city of Brentwood, known as the "City of Warmth," has about 8,000 residents and is considered by our community as the "best-kept-secret" in St. Louis County, occupying its 1.9 square-miles. Mark Twain Elementary School, located at the eastern edge of Brentwood, is a "melting pot" of cultural diversity. We believe that diversity yields richness, and diversity in schooling is a source of richness for our culture. As our students prepare to lead with capacity, they must have sound judgment, be critical thinkers, cultivate a love for literacy, be collaborative, and make contributions to the larger community. At the center of everything is a deep and genuine concern for children and their well-being, now and in the future.

Our dedicated faculty and staff realize that our students will be living in a world different from the one they now occupy and they must be equipped to deal with that world. Thus, we prepare our students for the future by empowering them to deal with the present with flexibility and reflective practice. We believe in an educational process that is meaningful to students so we challenge them with problems and ideas that they find both interesting and intellectually demanding. We do not believe in a one-size-fits-all curriculum with one single set of goals for everyone. We invite our parents and our community to play an active part in all that we do. "Together we are Better" – synergy is something we strive for every day.

The Mark Twain community understands that education is more than an individual affair, so we have formed a collaborative partnership, Community Builders, with McGrath Elementary School, Brentwood's other elementary school. This process of collaboration gives birth to new ideas and develops social skills that matter in democracy. As we prepare our students for today and tomorrow, our goal is to promote the realization of each student's unique talents, aptitudes, and potential. Our aim is to help each student identify his or her individual strengths and make it possible for all of our children to follow their dreams. After all, the primary aim of education is not to enable students to do well in school, but to help them do well in the lives they lead outside of school.

How did we get to where we are? We are a community of leaders. We developed a "growth mindset" and understood that we needed a whole-school transformation. As a National School of Character, we challenged ourselves to grow further. The Leader in Me, developed by Franklin Covey, took us to the next level in considering how we behave or what do we do when no one is watching. This transformation process taught us that 21st century leadership and life skills were what we needed to create our own culture of student empowerment based on the idea that every student can be a leader. We incorporated The Seven Habits of Happy Kids. This provided universal language on how to take action and become the leader we wanted to be. We made Leadership binders and goal setting a part of our daily curriculum. Students model their leadership skills through bi-weekly leadership cadet training and planning, and from this leadership, committees are created. Now, students are challenged to create the reality they want to see in their school.

In addressing our positive supports for students, we first acknowledged that students develop and grow at different rates. Once again, we went back to our "growth mindset" belief system and incorporated a Comprehensive Three Tiered (CI3T) model for bringing structure to what we had in place. School-wide expectations were clearly explained and modeled for students at every grade level. We revised our referral system and established behavioral and academic expectations that were meaningful with student voice. The CI3T model provided us with data-informed, graduated systems of support that addressed our academic, behavioral, and social domains. It provided support for all of learners.

Finally, we developed weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This meaningful time for regularly scheduled collaboration allowed us to share our expertise to improve our teaching skills and the academic performance of each of our students. As a former National Blue Ribbon awardee, we kept the momentum going by keeping student needs at the center of our daily practice.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The cornerstone of the Mark Twain experience is a high-quality core curriculum that is composed of Reading/English-Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Mark Twain's core curriculum is comprehensive and meets each learner at their level. The goal of our curriculum is to provide students with the learning required by the state and to extend that learning beyond the classroom. Students are provided with opportunities to reach the broader community and become agents of change, peace, and growth. Our goal is that each student gains the knowledge and experiences needed to be successful in an ever-changing and global society.

Our Literacy framework is anchored by programming developed by the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Program. The Units of Study authored by Lucy Calkins have transformed our instruction and professional practice. We guide students to become avid readers and writers. This enables them to build a broad vocabulary and express their thoughts to a receptive global audience.

Through our Mathematics instruction, students become critical thinkers and problem solvers. Learning for our students is about more than understanding an algorithm. It is about the application of the concepts in the daily activities of ordinary people. Mathematics helps students to understand and make sense of the world. We have adapted the new Everyday Mathematics 4 bringing a new level of transparency to the spiraling that was always present in the former program.

With the hiring of a K-5 Science Facilitator, we were able to implement Project Lead the Way Launch curriculum, empowering our students to adopt an Applied Project-Based Approach mindset to science. This facilitated students making real-world connections from their learning in the classroom to their learning around them. The four-tiered curriculum focuses on Life Science, Earth Science, Physical Science and Computer Science. As a result, students have significantly increased both their problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Enhancing this science curriculum, we have incorporated annual Family S.T.E.M. and Star Gazing Night - bringing science, technology, engineering, and math together with family and community engagement.

With non-fiction reading materials, we've been able to expand our social studies, history, and civic learning with engaging and hands-on activities. We've also incorporated applied project based learning throughout the building in science and mathematics. Furthermore, our 5th graders are becoming financially literate with our partnership with Junior Achievement (JA) BizTown Finance Park each year.

The district hired six certified Teaching Assistants per school to increase enrichment and intervention opportunities. When classroom teachers are absent, instruction is able to continue as planned, because the TA's become the substitute for the classroom teachers.

We revised our Student Support Team (SST) to meet the needs of students who were not meeting the standards and used data to help drive our instruction. The Student Support Team (SST) met monthly and provided practical and concise guidance to teachers on effective pedagogy, strategies, and interventions using baseline data obtained from formative assessments. This paradigm shift resulted in each student receiving a leadership binder to begin setting weekly goals to improve their performances in ELA and Math. Based on weekly collaboration, research-based interventions - such as Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), a coherent and cohesive curriculum, student goal-setting, and prompt teacher feedback - yielded an increase in student achievement. Data recording was analyzed and adjusted to include an individual, student data spreadsheet. This spreadsheet included assessments, interventions, strategies, and enrichment for each student and followed the students throughout their elementary academic career.

Remarkable gains were achieved. In 2012, 70% of our third graders scored Proficient or Advanced on the MAP assessment in ELA. By, in 2016, that number increased to 91.9%. In the area of Math in 2012, 65.6% of our fourth graders scored Proficient or Advanced on the MAP; by 2016, 92.9% were Proficient or Advanced.

A review of our subgroups showed gains from 60% Proficient or Advanced in 2014 to 87.3% Proficient or Advanced in ELA in 2016. We observed similar growth in Math as well. In 2014, 65.6% of our subgroup was Proficient or Advanced; in 2016, 95.3% were Proficient or Advanced. Although we are very proud of these gains, we realize that we still have work to do.

These are just a few areas that have contributed to our curriculum growth and success.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Mark Twain recognizes the intricate benefits of a highly effective arts integrated learning model that is infused into the academic rigor and culture of our building. To increase student success, our specialist teachers diligently manage the systems, programs, and resources that support every educational endeavor.

We offer a choice-based art education program that regards students as artists and offers them real choices for responding to their own ideas and interests through the art making process. This supports multiple modes of learning and assessment for the diverse needs of students, differentiation at its best. Students are offered a voice in the theme, medium, size, and subject of their work. The studio is buzzing with collaboration, and the teacher is seen as a facilitator in the classroom, not a person standing in front lecturing. Students vote on themes, select materials and decide how they will solve a problem. The classroom teacher offers a set of wide parameters to work in, along with a few “have to’s” while completing a project. One “I Can” statement is clearly displayed with each unit of study. This statement is an art concept that has to be demonstrated in the final product produced by the student. Our art studio is a safe haven for students to explore while also urging them to solve problems in an original way.

We’ve expanded our technology integration within all classrooms. We are 1:1 with the addition of Chromebooks in grades four and five, 1:1 in third grade with Microsoft laptops, and we are 2:1 with Google Notebooks in grades K-2. Each classroom is equipped with a document camera and SMARTBoard. The computer lab has twenty-seven desktop computers allowing teachers to schedule a block of time to enhance technology integration and six desktop computers in the library media center. Google Classroom has allowed us to integrate social studies, history, and civic learning with engaging activities. The computer science curriculum is enhanced with simulations and interactions through the use various applications with a student 2:1 iPad use. We participate in The Hour of Code which has become a global movement. Our software use ranges from reading, math, parent communication, and Lego Robotics to video production and yearbook assimilation.

Students in grades K-5 participate in Spanish class twice a week in thirty-minute classes. They explore the Spanish language and cultural activities through music, art, kinesthetic activities, and games. Throughout Hispanic Heritage Month, each grade level explores a cultural topic, including the 4th graders who strive to recreate an authentic Mexican market where all students get to shop for crafts and play games using pesos! The Spanish program is focused on both language proficiency and cultural understanding and the curriculum is aligned with the National Standards for Foreign Language Education.

Our Physical Education program contributes to the overall development of the whole child. It focuses on the development of the physical, mental, and social well-being of every student. A major goal of our program is to get students active. Activities and games are designed for enjoyment and success. Classes incorporate fundamental movement skills and at least one fitness component. We also incorporate character education through Leader In Me into various lessons, which help our students develop skills in sportsmanship, leadership, cooperation, goal setting, respect, and honesty.

We have a supportive music program offering students the chance to feel successful in composition, music reading, performing right away as they enter kindergarten. Since music is a performance art, every opportunity to perform is taken in formal performances and informal “informances.” Informances are a way for students to gain confidence in front of their peers and parents while minimizing the stress of performing. In an informance, the students teach the audience what they have learned thus reinforcing it in their minds as well. Music concepts are taught through exploration and personal assessment. Students are encouraged to

reflect on each project fostering the universal sentiment that music is for all and success needs to be celebrated. Students become adept at rhythmic values, pitch, historic context, and musical expression. Since music incorporates all core subjects, creative ways to enforce math, science, reading, and writing are integrated into the music curriculum through collaboration with classroom teachers.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Teachers employ multiple instructional approaches to foster student achievement. All teachers participated in a study of Carol Dweck's Mindset. Our common commitment is that we must all lead with the shared mindset that all students can and will learn. The language of commitment is shared daily with students as part of their vocabulary. Teachers have embraced The Leader in Me approach to teach students leadership, responsibility, accountability, problem-solving, adaptability, communication, initiative and self-direction, creativity, cross-cultural skills, and teamwork. Acting from our school vision, our students are encouraged to live like leaders when "no one is watching." We empower our students to become self-directed, life-long learners. Additionally, each student has learned The 7 Habits of Happy Kids, which provides students with tools and strategies to be successful and make decisions as a "leader" would.

A cadre of teachers trained to use the Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-tiered (CI3T) model of prevention to address students' academic, behavioral, and social needs.

In addition to using teacher-made assessments, student progress is assessed in grades K-5 using Discovery Education Assessment (DEA) four times each year, Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment three times a year, and Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP, Calkins) writing assessments four times per year. Students in grades 3-5 also take the required Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) assessments annually.

Using the TCRWP for English/Language Arts, students and teachers have seen tremendous growth in students' reading and writing skills. Teachers unpack standards methodically to guide students to understand, attain, and often exceed expectations. As students build foundational reading skills and strategies and experience supportive teaching of interpretation, synthesis, and main idea, they also develop greater independence and fluency through intensive writing opportunities. Words Their Way is used to enhance students' spelling, vocabulary, and phonics skills. These programs are research-based and support differentiated instruction.

Many teachers also use "literature circles," a strategy to promote student ownership in what they read and leadership in sharing their comprehension of meaning. Students select novels from teacher-prepared lists of books with varied levels of challenge; student groups are formed according to the chosen novel. Within groups, students lead the process of asking each other about what they have read, sharing insights, and delving into structure and meaning.

The Everyday Math 4 program brings new clarity to the spiraled structure to ensure that students master the standards for each grade. With a new writing component, students write and explain how they derive their answers. New tools help teachers evaluate and record students' performance. Teachers access detailed data with actionable information about students' progress.

Reading intervention groups are formed based on a variety of student data. Students who are performing below their expected Guided Reading Levels are placed in Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) groups. LLI groups of 3-4 students meet for about 20 weeks. Reading A-Z, a reading technology program, assists with moving students to their appropriate reading level. Students must listen, read, and answer questions about fiction or non-fiction passages. Progress is recorded on our school data spreadsheet.

Students are supported through writing interventions based on assessment of on-demand writing prompts or on DEA results. Progress is collected from writing rubrics. Intervention groups meet 3-5 times a week for 15-30 minutes.

Math intervention groups are formed based on Everyday Math assessments or other common formative

assessments. Student data from intervention strategies is always shared on the school-wide achievement data form.

If students, after classroom interventions, do not show expected progress, they are brought to the Student Support Team to discuss additional methods of assistance. Team members may suggest more Tier-2 or Tier-3 interventions. If the data warrant a referral, the team may suggest testing to rule out an organic learning disability. Once a learning disability is ruled out, alternative approaches, such as Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS), may be employed.

All students have the opportunity for enrichment beyond the required curriculum. Enrichment groups, based on student interest, have included Coding, Shakespeare, Astronomy, Mythology, Robotics, and Literature Clubs. Students who meet the qualifications for gifted instruction participate in the LEAP program. Students whose giftedness exceeds what grade-level differentiation support may be brought to the SST for consideration for grade-level acceleration or cross-grade placement by subject.

1. School Climate/Culture:

We are proud to be a Leader in Me school. Dedicated to helping students develop leadership skills, we give each student opportunities to take on leadership roles at school. Fourth and fifth graders are Leader Cadets who lead seven leadership committees. K-3 students serve in various leadership roles around the building. We also utilize The 7 Habits of Happy Kids, which are leadership qualities all students can learn to be equipped for the future. They are taught in the classroom and during our monthly “Family” meetings. Every student is a part of a cross-grade-level Family, which meets to focus on social skills development around the Habits and to perform other character-building activities.

Our Navigator Buddies program supports students who need extra social support, which is provided by a staff partner who provides attentive, “tender, loving care” through personal meetings. Meeting activities may include academic conversations or adult/child games for social support.

Students who need extra academic support attend Academic Success Lab (ASL), which meets after school three times weekly for seven-week sessions. The sessions are taught by classroom teachers and certified teaching assistants.

Several classes utilize “Mindfulness/Calm Classroom” training, which provides techniques to help students develop self-awareness, focus, and inner calm. We collect data to assess growth in this area.

Our Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program allows fifth graders to interact positively with our district police liaison. This character program encourages accountability and builds self-esteem.

Annual school-wide surveys are reported to our teacher leadership committees. To promote a positive school culture, we have adopted an “All Hands on Deck” mentality, and we reinforce “Living Leadership with a Shared Mindset” with “Bucket Fillers” for our staff. Each month, a staff member’s photo is featured in the workroom and colleagues leave encouraging comments about the staff member’s contribution to the community. Students and staff also send each other “Bucket Fillers” to promote kindness and camaraderie. Finally, we promote Random Acts of Kindness throughout the year.

Friendship Benches on the playground promote kindness and self-advocacy against bullying. A student who goes to the bench is communicating a feeling of being left out or a need to talk with another classmate about an issue. It promotes social and emotional growth.

When students and teachers know they are valued, this knowledge enhances the community. Fifth grade graduation is a jubilant yet sad experience as our fifth graders are excited to go to middle school yet sad to say goodbye to Mark Twain.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Mark Twain reaches out to families in a variety of ways to forge a strong connection between home and school, which is essential to student achievement. A weekly eLert goes to all families that includes coming events and notices of interest. The Principal sends a monthly newsletter to homes informing families on the focus of the month. Teachers share up-to-the minute comments as well as academic and citizenship grades through Infinite Campus, the online gradebook. We foster an open door policy for families, who serve the school in multiple ways: room parents, weekly readers, daily classroom helpers, volunteers for special events and field trips. Parents are encouraged to participate in Parent/Teacher Conferences, and many teachers offer student-led conferences in the spring.

Mark Twain has an active Parent Association that is involved in every aspect of school life. They support our school through fundraisers, assemblies, and special events.

The school year begins with a back-to-school ice cream social and parent breakfast, providing opportunities for parents to connect. An annual PTO phone book lets parents know the names and numbers of students

in their child's class. Parents plan themed parties, host book fairs, provide for movie night, host a Holiday Shop for students to purchase gifts for family members, provide a Mother's Day plant sale, and provide food for teachers during Conference nights. Our awesome parents donate money for each teacher at the end of the year to provide extra supplies.

Considerable effort is put into greeting families who are considering moving to the district or who have just arrived. Each family is taken on a tour that includes a thorough description of the school program and experience. "New to Mark Twain" students and their parents meet with the counselor to talk about the "New Kids" group that their child will attend.

Workshops are provided for parents throughout the year to support parenting. The Special School District and Brentwood co-host workshops for our parents throughout the year. Family events throughout the year--Fall STEM night, Fun Day at Thies Farm, Astronomy night--bring parents in after school with their kids to promote family learning.

We are extremely grateful for the bond we have with our families and the Brentwood community.

3. Professional Development:

Mark Twain takes great pride in professional development. Our professional development committee (PDC) is known as the "Grow Committee." Led by teachers, it meets monthly to plan faculty meetings and holds to a model of providing support for teachers to lead with capacity. Learning modules are differentiated for staff, where possible, and the PDC adapts to include district-wide PD initiatives.

All teachers have received training to implement the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), Balanced Literacy, Fountas & Pinnell assessment, and Words Their Way. Teachers also participate in peer-to-peer observation training. Teacher-leaders act as "scouts" and report back to the staff what they learn in visits to other schools or at individual workshops.

Teachers plan and document their individually-planned PD through leadership binders, which include their professional and personal goals for the year, research-based strategies, assessments, standards, data, reflections, and artifacts to mark progress toward their goals. At least two annual goals must be aligned with student-growth goals. Periodic meetings are held with the principal to allow teachers to report their work and the means by which they validate the impact of their learning in relation to student achievement.

While the district reserves specific dates for PD, the Grow Committee determines the focus for the building PD. Data from our annual state tests and local formative assessments help drive our building-level goals. Teachers meet in grade-level teams and/or vertical teams to analyze data, design assessments, and discuss ways to address concerns about student progress. Teachers look at their curriculum, formative assessments, student data, and interventions to determine causes and solutions for issues. For example, our 2014 third grade ELA data showed that only 53.3% of third graders scored proficient on the state test. Analysis of our ELA curriculum showed that it lacked cohesiveness. We also discovered that newly hired teachers had not been trained in Balanced Literacy. Students were taught to edit their writing one way in 2nd grade and a totally different way in 3rd grade. Although each group of teachers was teaching well, the disconnect in approaches created gaps in student achievement. By bringing unity to our approach, we facilitated students to continue to apply new learning each year.

Principals and administrators are required to keep current on PD in their area or field. Elementary principals attend area-wide elementary principals' meetings as well as the Missouri Elementary Principal's Conferences. Principal's PLCs are a great way to keep current with new PD initiatives from other districts.

4. School Leadership:

Our motto for ensuring that all children achieve at high levels has been "All Hands on Deck" for the past five years. Teachers are empowered to collaborate with each other and the principal in a variety of ways.

We meet weekly during Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), evaluate curriculum, revise schedules, and design supports for students.

Teachers are encouraged to build leadership capacity. School leadership was distributed by creating two teacher leadership positions for K-2 and 3-5 teams. These team leaders help teachers voice their concerns and discover solutions, implement new ideas and strategies to improve student achievement, and help implement new Professional Development and training. Because our central theme is “Leadership,” the principal wants all teachers to feel part of the Leadership Team. Our mission statement, “Give, Guide and Grow,” consists of three leadership areas in which the entire faculty work on improvement plans and set up building goals in the areas of curriculum, research-based instruction, safety, expectations, achievement, and student leadership.

The principal meets monthly with the Student Support Team, consisting of the counselor, classroom teacher, Special School District teacher or Enrichment teacher, and reading specialist, to consider research-based strategies and/or data-based referrals regarding individual students. Referring teachers implement recommended plans with students and report back to the SST at six-week intervals to determine whether progress has been made or if new strategies are required.

The principal meets monthly with the school parent association to get feedback on the school climate and programs and to talk about additional ways parents can serve the school. Parents fund many K-5 field trips, teacher stipends, dinners during conferences, and special assemblies.

The principal chairs the Crisis/Prevention Team, which consists of the principal’s secretary, school counselor, PE teacher, an SSD teacher, and three classroom teachers. The team has implemented several changes to increase school security and our capacity to respond to emergency situations.

In response to greater understanding of student trauma, the principal promoted awareness around trauma-informed therapy, attended a workshop with staff members, and continues to lead the dialogue. The result has been deeper discussions on the social and emotional well-being of each child. From that discussion came the implementation of the Calm Classroom/Mindfulness in several classrooms from which there has been 60% decrease in office referrals from trained classroom communities.

The principal is honored to have such incredible students, dedicated staff, and an amazing group of parents.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Academic success at Mark Twain is based on a myriad of strategies. Having strong congruence in the school, awesome interaction among teachers, and meaningful professional development for staff definitely relate to better academic performance. In addition, the methods we use in addressing the needs of the whole child is critical for their success. These methods include rigorous academics, meaningful assessments, and research-based social and emotional development for the child.

A child's academic journey begins with direct teaching of the standards with the opportunity to practice in settings where we want to see the skills emerge. At Mark Twain Elementary, our goal is to meet the needs of each and every student. When students have not met the standards or skills with success, interventions are provided. We use assessment data to help drive our instruction. For example, the trend from our Missouri Assessment Program Math data revealed that only 46.7% of our students scored Proficient in 2014. After carefully analyzing the data, we discovered subgroup scores suffered in the areas of Measurement and Data. Through carefully reviewing the curriculum, providing common formative assessments, and ensuring that our interventions were done with fidelity, our Subgroup scores improved to 62.5% in 2015, and by 2016, 79.2% of this group scored Proficient or Advanced.

This success is not only attributed to academics and goal-setting but also to attention to social and emotional learning of students. Research-based strategies help students self-calm through sensory activities. We believe that when a child's social and emotional needs are met, they do better in school. Students are taught self-regulation strategies to help them learn to work independently and develop flexibility skills. Self-regulation strategies also help students stick with challenging problems in order to find solutions. When students with disabilities learn to self-regulate, they think of alternate ways to deal with frustrating situations.

Finally, we believe that our "All Hands on Deck" approach to student achievement is the key to our students' success now and in the future. This approach requires that we get to know our students personally and that we avail ourselves as partners for success, such as the Special School District (SSD), which can provide wrap-around supports to help our students. We love our students with our emotional hearts and serve them with our rational minds, knowing that in each one is a unique leader longing to be valued and appreciated.