

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Olive B. Loss Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 200 Brennan Boulevard
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Bear State DE Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19701-6360

County New Castle

Telephone (302) 832-1343 Fax (302) 832-3213

Web site/URL <https://www.olivebloss.org> E-mail jenine.thomas@appo.k12.de.us

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. Matthew Burrows E-mail mattew.burrows@appo.k12.de.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Appoquinimink School District Tel. (302) 376-4128

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 Mrs. Michelle Wall
(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, leave blank.*

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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 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.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 13 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
4 Middle/Junior high schools
3 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 20 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

☐ Urban (city or town)
☒ Suburban
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	0
1	112
2	109
3	113
4	135
5	119
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	588

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- | |
|--|
| <u>1.4</u> % American Indian or Alaska Native |
| <u>30.2</u> % Asian |
| <u>16.1</u> % Black or African American |
| <u>4.5</u> % Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>0</u> % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| <u>42.2</u> % White |
| <u>5.6</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 2021 - 2022 school year: 3%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	11
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	16
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	563
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

Akan, Arabic, Cantonese, Creole, Gujarati, Hindi, Mandarin, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Pashto, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Tiwi, Turkish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 9 %
54 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 15 %

Total number students who qualify: 88

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 18 %
Total number of students served 103

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>13</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>15</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>9</u> Developmental Delay	<u>19</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>40</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 5 %
Total number of students served: 29

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 6

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	30
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	95%	98%	97%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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. 2017

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

Our mission at Olive B. Loss Elementary School is to inspire a community of learners to strive for excellence. Our vision is that collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity will empower students to impact the global society.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

https://olivebloss.org/m/cross.jsp?wREC_ID=563&crossPath=/apps/pages/index.jsp%3FuREC_ID%3D281536%26type%3Dd

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Olive B. Loss Elementary School. Since opening our doors in 2002, we've led the Appoquinimink School District and the state of Delaware in achievement of academic excellence. Through two decades of shifting demographics, evolving pedagogy and challenges within the social-political landscape, we have maintained a culture of accountability, community, and school pride. Our school is a safe place to struggle and to be vulnerable because we believe that teaching and learning are social experiences rooted in relationships of reciprocal trust and mutual respect. Honest conversations and a common purpose are the change agents that drive instruction and contribute to our positive school culture.

In 2018, we embarked on a transition from a PBS model to a Responsive Classroom approach to supporting the whole child. By creating safe, joyful, challenging learning communities grounded in developmentally appropriate expectations, focus shifted from external incentives to intrinsic motivation. As a school, we have funded Responsive Classroom certification for 30 staff members. Morning Meeting builds community and connections at the start of each day. A midday quiet time is planned with intention to facilitate self-regulation. Rules and expectations are developed alongside students, leveraging student voice to establish ownership and accountability. Based around the individual hopes and dreams of each student, classrooms collaborate to develop expectations that will support their collective learning and allow everyone to achieve their goals. Homeroom representatives, alongside administration, synthesize and prioritize these suggestions, arriving at five core schoolwide values. In a whole-school morning meeting, these expectations are unveiled before students and staff. Students are accountable to themselves and others, emboldened with responsibility.

Our Blue Ribbon recognition in 2017 was a catalyst for strengthening OBL's reputation as instructional innovators. Blue Ribbon inspired all stakeholders to think beyond the limits of our existing resources and pursue previously impractical possibilities. Fueled by excitement, multiple funding sources were pooled to issue iPads to each teacher, prompting increased creativity and allowing for greater efficiency with daily tasks. As teachers became more proficient with applications and digital tools, the focus shifted to devices in the hands of our students. Staff and families embarked upon grassroots fundraising, and the unified efforts of our community far exceeded the capabilities of district-level budgets. As personalized technology became more commonplace in our classrooms, professional development interests evolved towards strategies for implementing sustainable change; our journey with blended learning was born. Building-wide book studies and systematic partnerships with Instructional Technology Coaches explored how, why, and when station rotations, flipped classrooms and playlist models could transform lessons.

Grounded in a spirit of collaboration, teachers maximized our pre-Covid arsenal of devices to increase access, engagement and outcomes. When the pandemic expedited a move towards one-to-one technology across the district, OBL was ahead of the learning curve, with advanced knowledge of instructional technology and in-person experiences beyond those of our novice colleagues. Thanks to the advancements made possible by Blue Ribbon, when the world was faced with unprecedented challenges, our staff was able to lean into the past as leaders for the future.

Since 2017, out-of-district enrollment has increased an average of 8% annually. Our office regularly receives phone calls from prospective families seeking verification of feeder pattern addresses. Homes within our school community do not stay on the market long; families prioritize enrollment at OBL based on our status as a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. While test scores and standardized rankings may fuel initial interest in our school, we believe our emphasis on kindness and community is what truly sets us apart.

Our students are proud to be part of OBL celebrating 20 years and they fully understand why this is kind of a big deal! This milestone has been rooted in our strongest core value of kindness, starting with a staff-selected summer book club. With inspiration from *A Passion for Kindness*, an organic framework was born. As kindness cultivators, classes have worked to share 20 acts of kindness throughout the school year, tracking their good deeds and watching the ripple effect grow. Our students have been hands-on, leading food drives, collecting items for animal shelters, adopting families in need, and writing letters to servicemen and women. These service experiences help students deepen their personal sense of gratitude while

demonstrating their commitment to others. Our school has also been the recipient of kindness on multiple occasions. Somerset Farm, a local business owned by an OBL family, has provided ice cream on various occasions. Home Depot and Lowes donated materials and décor to renovate our common areas, creating a more serene and inviting space. Local Eagle Scout alumni created an outdoor classroom and sensory path, exemplifying the community's commitment to student success and school improvement. We are proud of the many community ties we have established over the past 20 years and will continue to deepen our roots with service and kindness.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Our ELA curriculum, Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts, is based upon Scarborough’s Reading Rope and rooted in the science of reading. Through a systematic and sequential approach to instruction, word recognition and language comprehension skills flourish, producing capable, confident readers and thinkers. In the primary grades, explicit instruction targeting phonemic awareness, phonics, and sight word recognition provides a vital foundation for decoding and fluency. As students advance into the intermediate grades, skills instruction is integrated into high-interest units of study and embedded in close reads of increasingly complex text. Across all grade levels, students’ reading and listening comprehension strategies are strengthened by building a wide breadth and diverse depth of background knowledge and vocabulary, allowing students to make connections and draw inferences across time, places and topics.

Our teachers leverage the power of student discourse and collaborative structures to activate prior knowledge and explore the meaning of sophisticated academic vocabulary. With a heavy focus on informational text, students at each grade level learn to reference multiple sources, cite evidence and synthesize information to communicate ideas clearly and concisely. The creativity of our teachers ensures that all students have equitable access to meaningful and memorable learning experiences. Interactive museums appear in first grade classrooms, inviting students to explore Aztec, Inca and Mayan civilizations. Models of human body systems are built by third graders, using Q-tips and rubber bands to illustrate the relationship between bones and ligaments. Towns from the Middle Ages take shape as fourth graders use 3-D printers to design elements of architecture and landforms, bringing to life scenes from the past.

Recognizing the power of autonomy in learning and the impact of data-based differentiation, teachers at OBL routinely supplement and enhance their core instruction to provide students with voice and choice in their learning. Students are assessed three times each year with the DIBELS screening tool, identifying areas of need in letter naming, phonemic awareness, decoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. Teachers leverage standards-aligned digital platforms such as Amplify Reading to set personalized goals for students across the continuum of ability. Skill growth from season-to-season and year-to-year is replicated and celebrated. Blending digital resources with intentionality into the overall lesson design allows our teachers to spend more time working with small groups, providing targeted interventions and enrichment activities.

Assessment in ELA is ongoing and multi-faceted. Formally, students have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning progression at the end of each unit of study. Informally, teachers utilize checks for understanding and hands-on performance tasks to help make each student’s thinking visible and inform the next steps in planning and instruction. In Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), teachers are able to engage in data-rich discussions about students’ varying levels of understanding and collaborate on plans for closing achievement gaps and stretching evidence of mastery.

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Olive B. Loss is home to mathematicians, both tall and small, as teachers and students interact in a culture of problem solving and discourse. Mathematics instruction is a vehicle for building mental discipline, encouraging logical reasoning and exercising cognitive rigor. Mathematical competency plays a crucial role in supporting an appreciation of cross-curricular disciplines from science and social studies to music and art.

Our current curriculum, Bridges in Mathematics, was adopted in 2018. With this resource, teachers have the tools and expertise necessary to blend direct instruction with structured investigations and open exploration. A focus on concrete models and visual representations provides a strong foundation for all lessons. Through math discourse, students share a variety of conceptual and procedural strategies progressing towards abstract thinking. This differentiated approach to mathematics appeals to mastery-oriented scholars who work best

step-by-step, as well as understanding-based thinkers who look for patterns, categories and reasons. Interpersonal learners benefit from conversation, relationships and associations, while self-expressive students visualize and create images in pursuit of multiple strategies. We pride ourselves on making mathematics relevant and accessible to all students, balancing support through productive struggle with opportunities for successful independence.

The Bridges curriculum suggests a variety of instructional strategies which our teachers execute with superior effectiveness. Problems and Investigations focus on building mathematical reasoning through problem-based learning. Work Places present games and activities rooted in each unit's major concepts, allowing for novel collaborative practice experiences that are based in play. With students engaged in hands-on application of targeted skills, teachers are able to regularly meet with small, flexible groups. Number Corner begins as a daily calendar procedure and includes instructional routines that preview or review particular skills. All three components are distinct but integral parts of the mathematical day.

To deepen teachers' understanding of best practices in mathematics instruction, we partnered with Pia Hansen of The Math Learning Center for job-embedded coaching and professional development. Through lesson studies, modeling and reflective debriefs, Ms. Hansen joined PLCs and worked within classrooms to enhance opportunities for strategic partnering, fluid grouping, and purposeful Work Place differentiation.

Our mathematics instruction is standards-aligned, with units that spiral both content and practices to follow a linear succession of expectations for introductory, developing and mastery level learning. Teachers have a clear understanding of what students need to know and be able to do and can scaffold their instructional design accordingly.

Throughout each unit, checkpoints inform teachers of student progress and these benchmarks are communicated with families, as well. Teachers embed a variety of informal checks for understanding, including observational lists, math forums, and anecdotal notes to inform instructional decisions for remediation and extension in preparation for summative assessments.

Beyond basic memorization and formulaic computation, children acquire a repertoire of core mathematical practices. Our students make sense of problems, persevere, construct viable arguments, use models to demonstrate thinking and attend to precision. These skills help students find success in mathematics, contributing towards well-rounded identities as college and career ready scholars.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Our classrooms take an investigative approach to science instruction, exciting students to question and discover. Delaware adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in 2015, empowering teachers to embed science and engineering practices into our existing exemplar lessons. Our current curriculum, STEMscopes, is founded in NGSS and centered around everyday phenomena. With this resource, teachers are able to inspire future scientists, promoting three-dimensional learning through inquiry and experimentation.

STEMscopes provides interactive components of science, technology, engineering and math. Students are asked questions about phenomena, generating discussion and bringing forth prior knowledge or misconceptions. Engaging in data analysis, students create models and construct explanations to form hypotheses. Cross-curricular opportunities are provided through readings, picture vocabulary, math extensions and videos. Media presentations and activities allow students to access science at their personal learning level, deepening their understanding.

Assessments are based on the scientific practice of arguing with evidence. Throughout each scope, students have opportunities to use the claim-evidence-reasoning model. Referencing a variety of resources such as graphs, diagrams, charts, pictures, scientific text and investigations, students reason the outcome of an argument. Assessment drives discussion and exploration focused on the initial phenomena.

Students experience science through all contents, with an informative teaching approach that interweaves

core vocabulary with deep content knowledge. First grade students participate in an embryology study with the University of Delaware and the New Castle County 4-H program. Fifth grade partners with the Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife for a field trip experience exploring the natural brackish and marsh ecosystems of our state. Our Outdoor Classroom provides space for students to experience science in a natural environment. Partnering with Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids will provide students with seed-to-table growing seasons, learning the skills and joy of gardening and the habits of healthy eating.

Science is taught consistently with respect and integrity, creating equitable opportunities for future scientists and engineers.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Social studies standards are met through three curricula: Little Thinkers, Delaware Recommended Curriculum (DRC), and Delaware Social Studies Coalition Model Lessons. These programs address civics, economics, geography, and history standards.

Global awareness strengthens our first graders discourse around real world scenarios sparking authentic projects through which students begin to experience their impact. Second grade partners with Winterthur Museum Garden and Library using artifacts to compare and contrast their lives with those of 18th and 19th century children. Third grade examines rights, responsibilities and privileges, showcasing their knowledge through posters which also serve as reminders of school expectations.

Citizenship is fostered in fourth grade through an engagement project helping Delawareans experiencing food insecurities. Students design flyers, organize collection boxes, raise awareness on announcements, and inventory collected food. This year, donations to the Food Bank of Delaware totaled 1,438 pounds. Students reflect on their personal involvement and the importance of giving back to their community.

Fifth grade met with State Treasurer Colleen Davis to learn about financial literacy and the role of banks and financial institutions. The design of DRC lessons built background knowledge prior to this visit, preparing students to engage in meaningful discussions with their elected official.

Students gain a diverse appreciation of our nations' past, going beyond a singular narrative of historical events and learning to analyze multiple perspectives of the same event. Primary and secondary sources are used to develop an interpretation of events and determine validity. Students think about past events and their impact on decisions made in today, becoming critical thinkers and using evidence to draw conclusions and construct meaning.

Assessment goes beyond memorized facts, as students analyze, evaluate, and think critically. Synthesizing information from multiple sources reveals a deeper understanding of content. Assessment fuels anecdotal discourse representing the diverse perspectives within our democracy.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

OBL's Performing Arts program, recognized nationally as a Best Communities for Music Education, fosters the belief that all students are musical and can engage in music for a lifetime. Weekly, students experience

music from a variety of genres and cultures, developing their musicianship through singing, chanting, moving, and playing instruments. Students extend their musical thinking and creativity through improvising and writing compositions. Fourth and fifth grade students can deepen their musical understanding by participating in Band, Strings, Choir, and the Musical. Students have multiple opportunities throughout their five years to share musical growth with families and our school community through performances. Participation in our performing arts program helps students think creatively, work collaboratively, and become disciplined critical thinkers.

The OBL Visual Arts program is rooted in the philosophy that art makes people powerful through creativity, courage, style, and cultural connections. The OBL Art room is a studio environment full of productive struggles, perseverance and celebrations. Through the study of artists and a growing appreciation for the creative process, students become stronger in idea development, problem-solving, and techniques. Working both individually and collaboratively, student artists gain confidence as critical thinkers, innovators, and advocates of diverse ideas.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Physical Education plays a vital role in child development. OBL students have multiple opportunities to be physically active beyond recess. In the early grades, weekly structured physical education and health lessons focus on foundational movements, manipulative skills, and social interactions with peers. As skills develop, lessons for the older grades incorporate specialized movement, teamwork and fitness skills, while health lessons focus on overall well-being and nutrition.

Our commitment to physical education extends beyond the classroom, providing students with scheduled support in learning to ride a bike. A paved quarter-mile fitness trail, made possible through community fundraising, welcomes daily opportunities for peers to walk or jog and explore various exercise stations. With the habits of healthy lifestyles established in the primary grades, 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students are inspired to join our Girls on the Run and Let Me Run teams, building character and stamina.

Our students have open access to a Fitness Lab with a climbing wall, free weights and cardio machines to develop core strength and endurance. This unique setting is a safe place for students to regulate their physical and emotional needs, increasing sustained attention in the classroom.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

Language comes to life in our Spanish classroom, an immersive and interactive learning environment rooted in celebration of culture and inclusivity. Exposing students to a second language at the elementary level encourages global citizenship and enhances higher-order thinking skills. As students gain a deeper appreciation for language and culture, they reflect on personal experiences and learned biases, paving the path for a new generation's more inclusive perspective.

Dressed as Frida Kahlo, Senora exposes students to artifacts and history through the eyes of a prominent Mexican artist. Traditional holidays, such as Dia de los Muertos and Las Posadas are studied and celebrated. As an extension activity, students are invited to participate in after-school cooking lessons.

Students have multiple opportunities to utilize their receptive and expressive language skills. In primary grades, 90% of instruction is delivered in Spanish. Fourth and fifth graders increase their independence, leading portions of the lesson in the target language. Senora contributes to a school-wide culture of language immersion through informal interactions in Spanish with adults and students each day.

Our well-rounded Spanish program supports the development of students as global citizens in a communicative, collaborative environment.

2d. Technology/library/media

Our library is unique in its semi-flexible schedule, allowing our certified librarian to work collaboratively with teachers in planning and implementing inquiry-based research units tied directly to our curriculum. Students learn the skills necessary to be discerning members of our information rich society. As elementary scholars, students develop effective research questions, evaluate the reliability of sources, efficiently take notes, cite sources to avoid plagiarism, synthesize information, create products, and communicate learning through a variety of media.

Our open library provides access to many resources, both print and digital, for students and staff. Circulation statistics at OBL are more than 60% higher than comparable elementary schools in our district. Students and teachers have access to numerous digital reading platforms including Sora, Hoopla, and Epic. Weekly literature circle discussions with our fourth and fifth grade classes foster a safe environment where students are comfortable sharing their opinions and responding to the thoughts of others. Our annual One School, One Book program promotes a love of reading while bonding our school community through enjoyment of a common text. A love of reading is fostered when we host authors who share their personal stories and writing techniques with students.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

Purposeful technology integration extends beyond the scope of core classrooms, further developing 21st century skills. Every student is enrolled in at least one semester of technology. Direct instruction with a variety of productivity tools, including iPads and desktop computers, provides basic skills and platform proficiencies that transfer into effective teaching and learning. Grade level learning targets are infused into technology lessons. Core subjects are oftentimes weaved into coding adventures to support hands-on, project-based learning.

Coding skills are introduced and built upon each year. After establishing basic skills, students apply their growing expertise in the creation of uniquely expressive projects. Experience with a variety of robots allows for differentiation, appealing to coders of all ability levels. Engagement peaks as students participate in action-based coding challenges and discover the power of collaboration and communication. The robotic excitement built in our technology classes culminates with our annual family Hour of Code event.

Digital citizenship is prioritized by establishing the ISTE competencies: inclusive, informed, engaged, balanced, and alert citizens. A foundation in technology and digital literacy skills is built throughout curricular-based project learning in the lab, preparing students for responsible participation in a global society.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

The emotional, academic, and social development of each child is a shared responsibility of our interdisciplinary team. Our Student Success Team (SST) leverages a variety of interventions to support students performing below grade level. The administrators, school counselor, educational diagnostician, psychologist, nurse, social worker and instructional coach meet regularly to discuss students through a whole-child, solutions-focused lens. With feedback from the classroom teacher as well as related service providers, action plans are developed to meet targeted goals with a commitment to tracking student progress. Plans are revisited routinely to ensure effectiveness, with adjustments made in response to data-driven needs.

Students who continue to struggle academically are placed into a Multi-tiered System of Supports (MtSS). OBL facilitates rigorous and engaging Tier 1 instruction through the use of blended learning, Kagan Cooperative Learning Strategies, and authentic real-world experiences. Tier 2 and Tier 3 students who require more direct, remediated instruction receive small group, research-based intervention in targeted skills and are progress monitored regularly. In reading, mCLASS Intervention lessons provide systematic instruction and assessment which tracks student progress. Lessons are adjusted and specific skills are determined based on each student's current level of performance. In math, students engage in Bridges

Intervention where teachers assign targeted, differentiated Work Places, and lessons based on deficits.

Beyond the hours of our typical school day, OBL has also initiated a free, before school tutoring program for second and third grade students. Taught by classroom teachers, the tutoring sessions build upon curriculum covered in the classroom through exciting games and activities. Our commitment to closing the achievement gap continues to drive our instruction and is a catalyst for providing tailored instruction to our students.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

In all grades, teachers target the needs of advanced level students through skillful in-class differentiation. Partnering with district technology specialists, a whole-staff book study strengthened our collective knowledge of blended learning practices designed to provide challenging extensions for our most capable, curious students. Through purposeful technology integration, teachers give students autonomy in learning. Technology has empowered students with a greater degree of voice and choice, determining a personalized path and pace for demonstrating mastery.

Blended learning is executed through multiple engaging mediums, for example, EdPuzzle, an online interactive video lesson, in which students are responding to higher order thinking questions in the moment. Another favorite digital tool, Flip, allows students to record their acquisition of new knowledge. Collaboration takes place when students evaluate one another and communicate their responses, pushing their student-to-student discourse to new heights.

Through open ended questions and real world problems, teachers at OBL are finding new ways to engage all learners. In order to meet the unique needs of our accelerated learners, students are often engaging in a playlist model through our Learning Management System, Schoology. Students are able to move fluidly through activities to demonstrate and enhance their mastery of any standard. Autonomy of learning cultivates intrinsic motivation and inquiry in a safe and supportive environment.

In all grade levels, students engage in many STEM, play-based and project-based learning opportunities. Learning comes alive as classrooms and hallways are transformed into an immersive learning experience to propel student investigation and exploration. Over the past five years, our commitment to serving advanced learners has prompted staff to pursue Gifted and Talented certification. Recognizing the need to provide appropriate access to all students, we continue to explore research based interventions advancing the achievement of talented learners.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Our school prioritizes a fully inclusive model for all students, including students with Autism, Emotional Disabilities, and Intellectual Disabilities. At each grade level, we intentionally structure classrooms to offer the full continuum of services based on student need, balancing the provision of accommodations with opportunities for independence. Co-teaching classrooms led by two certified teachers benefits students who require a lower student-to-teacher ratio. Classrooms led by a single dual-certified teacher offer a less restrictive learning environment, with paraprofessional support leveraged as needed. We are strategic in our placement of students with a needs-based schedule approach for not only students with disabilities, but students with 504s and Multilingual learners.

Students with disabilities are instructed through advanced, in-class, and specialized supports integrated into the core instruction. Teachers strategically plan scaffolded lessons to allow students to access the grade level curriculum. Students use advanced supports such as technology to read aloud text, visuals to aid in comprehension, graphic organizers, and color coding of resources. Teachers utilize co-teaching models in order to provide access to students who require a lower student to teacher ratio. This may include parallel teaching, presenting the same information to two heterogeneous groups of students at the same time. In addition, teachers may use station teaching, allowing students to rotate through stations, integrating blended learning, and differentiating skills and standards. Similarly, teachers may differentiate instruction through alternative teaching which allows for a smaller group to focus on one particular skill, concept, or strategy.

Lastly, research-based, specialized supports are used for targeted students that require intensive instruction. Teachers adapt the instruction so students can transfer skills into their core learning. Utilizing these strategies, teachers are able to provide specially designed instruction that promotes equity and access in an inclusive setting

3d. English Language Learners:

Our Multilingual Learners program begins with our registration process. Using multiple data sources, including Home Language surveys, family interviews and record reviews, our preliminary roster of potential students is intentionally broad and comprehensive. From there, screener assessments and placement tests provide additional data that either confirms or corrects initial impressions. With proper identification, appropriate programming can be planned, establishing cohorts of multilingual learners for both in-class and small group support. Instructional design is driven by research-based practices and student needs. For example, students with limited or interrupted formal education and those experiencing the greatest Tier 1 struggles receive a more intensive level of push-in services. Students demonstrating more advanced language development skills receive explicit, systematic pull-out instruction designed to support high levels of achievement. The ultimate goal is for all students to meet the exit criteria for MLL programming and return to full-time, immersive, inclusive learning.

Our MLL specialist works closely with teachers, allowing for focused pre-teaching of academic vocabulary and intentional development of background knowledge. This helps support access to the curriculum and promote diverse classroom discourse. Each marking period, student data is reviewed and shared with families. Conferences with families are collaboratively led by the MLL and classroom teachers, enlisting caregivers as partners in advancing students' language acquisition and fluency. Strategies are shared with families to encourage natural practice and create opportunities for the application and generalization of skills within the community.

As our MLL population continues to grow and diversify, so too must our programming resources. Professional development for staff highlights the eight components within Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) beginning with lesson preparations that will strengthen listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Many SIOP strategies and techniques are beneficial to all learners, and teachers embrace these practices as a fluid extension to daily differentiation.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

Our academic supports extend beyond consideration for how students are performing in comparison to their peers. Students who are truant, newly registered, or present challenging behaviors receive individualized attention to enhance their experience of belonging within our school. Each student's success requires innovative thinking, collaboration and refinement to match needs with interventions. Our social worker partners with families to encourage daily attendance. Home visits, frequent communication and attendance contracts strengthen partnerships with families.

Students enrolling after the first day of instruction participate in a New Student Orientation. This process creates unique relationships with the student, family and staff from the first day of enrollment. Families share their hopes and dreams about the school year. The librarian and school counselor deepen the relationship with new students during a personalized meeting. Within a few weeks, the instructional coach collaborates with the classroom teacher to dig deep in data for acceleration or remediation. Creating a sense of belonging immediately is a priority of our staff as we welcome new students to become successful Wise Owls.

In collaboration with the Student Success Team, teachers implement behavior interventions tailored to specific students to prevent and minimize the potential for conduct issues impeding academic progress. First and second grade students learn strategies through lessons on the Zones of Regulation. MtSS supports for behavior include social skills group instruction, lunch bunches, mentoring, strategic breaks with relatable role models, and daily communication logs. Logical consequences are utilized stemming from Responsive Classroom as well as Restorative Practices. When disruptive or disrespectful interactions occur, the specific

student and those impacted engage in a restorative circle to voice their feelings and come to a mutual resolution, where all parties are able to feel seen, heard, and respected. Promoting equity and access in an inclusive setting remains a core value at OBL.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” This belief lies at the heart of our school community. Meaningful connections with every student ensure that our children’s best interests remain at the forefront of all decisions. Relationships begin each summer, with events planned to integrate staff, students and families into a cohesive partnership. Principals on the Playground invites students to meet administrators, explore the playground and discover new friends. This relaxed forum eases the transition into a new environment, promoting comfort and familiarity. When children feel valued, they know they belong. And, when you belong at OBL, your hopes and dreams determine our building priorities.

Student engagement drives our daily routines, instructional schedule, lesson design and learning environments. Morning announcements play an integral role in fostering engagement because the structure is expected and positive. Mindful Mondays, Wise Owl Wednesdays and Funny Fridays reinforce core values, reminding everyone of what unites our community. We recite our school mantra and within this pledge, each student pauses to set personal intentions for a successful day. Although brief, this time motivates students and cultivates engagement.

High-interest activators create excitement for each new unit of study. Participation intensifies with practical application of classroom objectives in the real world. Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures create interdependent student teams in which all members are equal partners in the group’s success. Student discourse multiplies when voluntary participation is replaced by a culture of intrinsic engagement. Small group station learning and technology integration allow teachers to differentiate, remediate and extend lessons based on needs, interests and goals. Student engagement yields increased stamina, enthusiasm, and productivity.

Learning environments are engineered with a variety of flexible seating options and sensory tools are available within each classroom. Movement breaks allow students to re-energize their bodies, embedding processing time between learning exercises. Cool Down corners offer safe spaces to reset and regulate. These proactive accommodations align with brain-based learning and neuroscience, setting the stage for readiness and maximizing engagement.

Numerous extracurriculars extend engagement beyond the traditional day. Nurse’s Club, Safety Patrol, and reading buddies exercise leadership skills and build role models. Chess, Math 24, Yearbook, Musical, Play in May, and Odyssey of the Mind develop students’ critical and creative thinking skills. Girls on the Run and Let Me Run promote physical well-being, healthy connections and strong character. These experiences allow for successful engagement within local and global communities.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Strong relationships with families is a source of pride and a hallmark of our school. Purposeful community engagement amplifies the efforts of our staff, as all stakeholders share responsibility for our children’s collective success. Engagement begins with an open-door policy, welcoming visitors and volunteers into our school with respect and gratitude. Each school year kicks-off with an open invitation to Meet the Teacher, bringing children and their families back to the building a week before school begins, eager to receive classroom assignments and reconnect with peers. Alumni also join, excited to visit previous teachers and reminisce over elementary memories. Participation is tremendous, with 81% of families in attendance. Our “flipped” Open House has been restructured to honor our families’ busy schedules. Grade-specific pamphlets provide much of the information traditionally packed into classroom presentations. As needed, in-person mini-sessions supplement this advanced resource. This unique format empowers families with options and promotes active, year long engagement.

A systematic method for communication ensures our families remain well-informed of events and well-aware of student progress. Classroom and schoolwide digital newsletters highlight recent accomplishments

and share upcoming events. Paper copies and translation service are available for families, upon request, as well.

Individual student conferences take place a minimum of twice each school year, many of which are student-led. These meetings focus on measurable and meaningful growth, with goals set collaboratively by each student's team.

We host a wide range of family engagement events throughout the year, both within and beyond the instructional day. Owl Fest is a free family event, run entirely by volunteers, launching the school year with fun and friendship for the entire community. Each spring, our Related Arts team leads a schoolwide Activity Day, made possible by a roster of nearly 100 volunteers, annually. Throughout the year, additional engagement events include book fair nights, choral and instrumental concerts, and family STEM fairs. Our OBL Booster Club hosts Bingo Night, organizes Staff Appreciation activities and supports fundraising efforts for students. Inclusivity is always our focus when engaging students and families. Our inaugural Sock Hop, in connection with Rock Your Socks, raised awareness and donations for World Down Syndrome Day.

Since our Blue Ribbon recognition in 2017, community partnerships have included mentoring with Connecting Generations, a Books & Basketball program with the Delaware Blue Coats and Nemours Children's Health and numerous positive interactions with our local first responder agencies.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Strengthening our collective capacity to meet our students' diverse academic, social-emotional and behavioral needs is a shared responsibility prioritized by administration and staff. Teachers are encouraged to follow their passions, lead with confidence, broaden their professional learning networks and deepen their knowledge of best practices. With this trust and encouragement, teachers feel valued by administrators and supported by colleagues in an atmosphere that welcomes productive struggle, collaborative problem solving and innovation. Efficacy in the classroom is an organic and continuous pursuit. Serving as team leaders, curricular leads and committee chairs, our staff influences decisions and impact outcomes for students.

Professional learning is of paramount importance in our commitment to remaining current and effective in our programs and practices. Attendance at national education conferences is encouraged, both as participants and presenters. Upon return, staff turn-key what they've learned, meeting with PLCs, sharing resources and inspiring others to apply current research and create innovative learning experiences for their students. A professional learning opportunity unique to our school is a "Pop-up PD" series with topics crowd sourced from staff. Teachers' hopes, dreams, and goals for a successful school year are reviewed by administrators and the instructional coach, identifying common themes of need. Inclusive practices, student engagement, and technology integration emerged as recurring areas of interest, sparking structured opportunities for flexible groups of educators to learn through hands-on collaboration. Teachers were invited to co-lead each session based on experience and expertise, further cultivating teacher leadership.

Our instructional coach works with teachers as a thought partner through impact cycles of inquiry promoting student success. Serving as a mentor to all teachers, she helps improve instruction through modeling of blended learning and exemplary teaching strategies. The role of our instructional coach is to empower risk-taking and reflection. Making teachers feel valued and supported allows for greater creativity and effectiveness in the classroom.

Our lead mentor and instructional coach welcome new staff members into our school culture through a detailed on-boarding process. Newly hired teachers and paraprofessionals receive a tour of the building, an outline of expectations and an introduction to collegial resources. As embedded professional coaching, new staff meet with administrators, team leaders, our school counselor and educational diagnostician to form productive partnerships.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership at OBL is focused on learning, with an expectation that all stakeholders look beyond policies and programs to the purposeful prioritization of people. Having earned Blue Ribbon recognition in 2017, leadership could easily have rested on a reputation of excellence and passively assumed a future of continued success. However, with a school culture rooted in innovation and leadership valued as a shared responsibility, an approach of this nature would neither be considered nor tolerated. As administrators, our leaders create an environment that encourages risk taking, openly reflects on failures as opportunities for improvement and proudly attributes growth to effort over ability. As teachers, classroom leaders are respected as highly-skilled professionals, masters of their craft and practitioners of best practice. Support staff are relied upon as leaders behind-the-scenes, transcending multiple settings and domains. Leadership is not a title or a role, but an interdependent sense of ownership and purpose. With this mindset, leadership is inclusive of bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers and office secretaries. Student leadership is developed in small and grand moments, empowering children with autonomy over their learning. Family and community leadership strengthens the work that unfolds within the four walls of our school through authentic extensions of our core values and genuine celebrations of progress over perfection.

Leadership is eclectic and inclusive, dynamic and responsive, courageous and humble. Leadership lies at the heart of each decision made by every member of our OBL family because leadership is defined as actions reflective of our character and our vision. This goes beyond empty rhetoric. Leadership is challenging and messy, and these traits are embraced as driving forces behind our success. With so many moving parts and interdisciplinary players, effective leadership thrives on a culture of feedback and discourse. Working in silos is unacceptable and operating outside of a collaborative framework is counterproductive. All stakeholders are charged with calling attention to what's working in our school, allowing leadership to grow the good through intentional planning. Likewise, all stakeholders are encouraged to shine a spotlight on gaps and missed opportunities because honesty, awareness and a solutions-focused lens are essential elements to sustaining positive outcomes for every child entrusted to our care. Ultimately, leadership yields leadership. When we do our jobs well, we graduate global citizens who have the capabilities and the confidence needed to move society forward with empathy and ethics.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Culturally responsive teaching and learning is multifaceted at OBL. A sense of belonging is a prerequisite to academic engagement and student success. Beyond acknowledging student culture, we support diversity, equity and inclusion through respectful activities and trauma informed practices.

Diverse representation in our curriculum and strong relationships with our community celebrate the backgrounds and cultures of our students and their families. An interactive map of the world hangs in our main hallway, highlighting the many countries of ancestry represented in our school. Cultural artifacts, mementos and curricular connections to numerous holidays and heritages are displayed in our library, sparking curiosity and conversations. Each spring, we partner with families to host a multicultural celebration, All Roads Lead to OBL. Teachers welcome families into our classrooms, blending best practices for instruction with authentic stories of culture from over 15 backgrounds to create honest, positive, interactive presentations for our students. In preparation for this event, classrooms engage in research projects designed to build background knowledge and deepen understanding of people and places around the world. Heritage and history is showcased throughout the building, with students and guests enjoying this Gallery Walk of presentations celebrating our melting pot community.

We believe diversity embodies more than culture. Inclusion, safety, belonging are integral to our core values. Our school counselor and psychologist work with teachers to prioritize social emotional learning. Semester-long SEL classes are taught based on ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success. Lessons on the Zones of Regulation engage whole classes, small groups and individualize students. Start with Hello Week and Be a Hero activities promote the powerful and practical generalization of skills across settings throughout the year.

Topics of equity, culture and social justice are explicitly investigated through a professional development partnership with the Educere Institute, growing cultural comfort and competency. Recurring shoulder-to-shoulder coaching days with the co-authors of Hacking School Discipline strengthen our understanding of

Restorative Practices, viewing all behavior as a form of communication. Aligned with our District Code of Conduct, this approach teaches students to reflect and restore relationships, repairing harm through accountability and conversation. Empathy is cultivated amongst all stakeholders through respectful, courageous dialogue.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it. Students will graduate, families will move and teachers will retire, but the legacy they leave behind is reflective of and reflected in a foundation of community. As a district, our efforts towards 21st century college and career readiness center on creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication. As a school, our daily work proudly aligns with these priorities, however this foundation is just the beginning. Any cook can follow a recipe and arrive at a meal, but it takes the heart and intuition of a chef to produce a masterful, memorable experience. At OBL, we blend the essentials of the 4Cs with equal parts of compassion, courage, curiosity and consistency. This unique flavor is what makes OBL stand out as a chef among cooks and it's what keeps our community invested in excellence. Our families hold staff to the highest of standards and, in turn, our staff give their full attention to positively impacting each students' holistic success. Students meet our high expectations with an enthusiasm for productive struggle, confident that their teachers will sit knee-to-knee with them to bridge gaps, strengthen understanding and stretch possibilities. Our community believes in magic because OBL is where wisdom meets wonder.

The most instrumental practice to our school's success is just that: we practice. Knowledge is of no value unless it's put into practice. And, practice is the difference between ordinary and extraordinary. Each day, we join voices as a community of learners and friends and proclaim, "I will be the best possible me, growing better every day. I know I can achieve my dreams, 'cause that's the Wise Owl way." So simple, yet so true, each day presents a new opportunity to dig deeper, to be resilient, to fail, to try again and to redefine our standards for excellence. As educators, we practice our craft, supporting students in practicing lessons, always cognizant that families are practicing trust in our abilities. It's this interdependent practice that binds our community and catapults OBL to success. Together, we expose vulnerabilities, ask hard questions, listen without judgment, all anchored in care. Our community comes together day after day, year after year, never stagnant in our practice because this philosophy of continuous improvement is what we expect of one another. This is what defines Olive B. Loss Elementary School.