

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Gary Alan Wheeler

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

Official School Name Chanute Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 500 Osa Martin Boulevard

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

City Chanute State KS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 66720

County Neosho County

Telephone (620) 432-2560 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.usd413.org E-mail wheelerg@usd413.org

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page http://goo.gl/R44KaJ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Rich Proffitt E-mail proffitr@usd413.org

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

District Name USD 413 Chanute Tel. (620) 432-2500

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Sean Bowman

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	65	61	126
1	59	69	128
2	72	58	130
3	83	78	161
4	86	85	171
5	80	68	148
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	445	419	864

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 11 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 82 % White
 - 4 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 25%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	99
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	117
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	216
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	864
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.250
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	25

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
28 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 72 %
Total number students who qualify: 622

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
138 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>11</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>51</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>20</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>7</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>5</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>30</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 9
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	3
Classroom teachers	43
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	24
Paraprofessionals	34
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	94%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No

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

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

CES is committed to creating a 21st-century learning environment which ensures all students have the skills necessary to maximize their potential as 21st-century learners.

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

Chanute, Kansas is a small community of around 9500 people. Like many cities our size the recent economic downturn has had a major effect on our community, with some of our largest employers either downsizing or closing completely. The manufacture of recreational vehicles was a major part of the community's economic structure a few years ago, not only employing well over 200 employees, but also supporting several private entrepreneurial ventures by serving as a market for their products. Unfortunately this employer has reduced their workforce to a dozen or so employees.

All of this has impacted our school. The number of students receiving free and reduced price lunches over the last 8 years has increased dramatically. We have begun providing weekend food packets for nearly 100 students who might otherwise have limited meals on weekends. We provide free breakfast and lunch to any child under the age of 18 for much of the summer and we make our facilities available to multiple groups including rec programs, boy and girl scouts, 4-H, and other civic groups.

Having said this, our community is showing signs of a strong recovery. In the last couple of years, two of our largest employers have expanded their operations--not only providing jobs to our patrons, but also increasing the tax base of Chanute. The local hospital continues to expand it's health services and community footprint. The local airport is making plans to extend runways to accommodate larger private jets and we continue to have new service-oriented businesses open in Chanute.

Our district and our school have been a part of that turnaround. Ten years ago, our school district formed a committee consisting of school and community members and assigned that committee the task of reviewing all district facilities and bringing facility update recommendations back to the school board. After spending numerous hours touring the district's four elementary schools, middle school and high school, the committee recommended building a new high school, renovating the middle school, and building a new elementary school to house all elementary students. The community voted on and passed a 47 million dollar bond referendum and new schools were opened eight years ago. Quality schools have been a strong component of recruiting businesses and individuals to Chanute. Many prospective doctors and business owners have toured our schools and agree that quality schools were a part of their decision to call Chanute home.

This has not been the only advantage in the decision to unite four completely autonomous schools into one. We no longer have schools associated with high and low-socioeconomic areas. Elementary teachers are now collaborative rather than competitive. Through our professional learning groups, we have programs to meet the unique needs of many of our students rather than busing students around the community. We have now implemented systems of academic and positive behavior supports for all students. A major key to our success has been the development of tier-two and tier-three programs for students who need additional learning time or unique instruction.

It really does take a village to educate our children. We need a community who is willing to commit 47 million dollars during an economic downturn to provide students with the best facilities possible. We need a school staff wherein everyone from the bus drivers to the superintendent feels responsible for the learning of all students and believes in the "student-first" mantra. We need parents who treat teachers with respect and understand the importance of students being in school and celebrate the success of children. Finally we need--and have--students who treat each other with respect and value kindness and tolerance. Blue Ribbon schools have Blue Ribbon students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

As a Professional Learning Community, each grade level in our school operates as a professional learning group. This group consists of classroom teachers, Special Education Teachers, Title teachers, and at least one building administrator. Chanute Elementary School relies on each professional learning group to drive the entire instructional process--from the development of curricular standards and essential outcomes--to summative assessments. The best way to describe curriculum and instruction is to discuss how the school addresses each of the four essential PLC questions:

"What do we want kids to know?" Each PLC group reviews district standards and essential outcomes in ELA and math annually. Although this review will examine alignment to district and state standards, it does not stop there. Our teachers also examine the learning target to insure that it is appropriate cognitively, whether it is essential for understanding at a later date in that grade level, and whether it has endurance (meaning over time.) All professional learning group leaders meet monthly. Proposed changes are reviewed by this group. This allows the entire learning community to determine if the change could have an adverse effect at some other grade level. This process is also used to review science and social studies/history--albeit not as regularly.

"How will we know if they have learned it?" This question is at the heart of our student's success. A major component of lesson planning now centers around appropriate formative common assessments as developed by each group in the areas of reading and math. The outcome of these assessments is recorded and reviewed by each group and the data is maintained throughout the student's enrollment at Chanute Elementary School. This reliance on data has been a major pedagogical shift for many of our staff. Fortunately, "What do the numbers say?" has become a common question in our professional learning group meetings.

"What do we do if they have not learned it?" As part of the preparation for professional learning group meetings, each group is expected to input their data into a spreadsheet and have it ready for the weekly meeting. The group then reviews the data and identifies students who need additional instruction, students who have mastered the learning target and students who need the opportunity for enrichment. Intensive reteaching in small groups is provided for students needing additional instruction or enrichment--students are placed in small groups and reteaching and re-assessment ensues. A key piece of that reteaching is a requirement that the instruction has to be different than the core instruction. In both reading and math, that might mean a computer-based series of lessons, it might mean a different type of practice activity--the key is to change the way instruction is delivered to access different learning modalities or provide different stimuli to help students make connections to the learning.

"What do we do if they have learned it?" Interestingly, this has been one of the most difficult questions for us to answer as a school. Each of our PLCs has been asked to provide enrichment activities during Tier 2 and Tier 3 times for students who have shown mastery of reading and math standards. Many times this enrichment takes the form of multi-discipline activities or projects. Many of these activities focus on Science and Social Studies--two areas that sometimes are shorted in elementary schools.

Although we do not house the Early Learning preschool in our building, we do recognize the importance early education places on school readiness and the importance of a seamless transition from the Early Learning Center. A member of the CES administrative team focuses on our primary classes here at CES and also serves as the administrator of the Early Learning Preschool. His leadership helps to insure alignment between the Early Learning Center and Chanute Elementary School--even though they are housed in different buildings.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

We are very fortunate to have a school board and district leadership team that supports the fine arts and non-core academic areas. Each student in our building K-5 receives at least 60 minutes of art instruction weekly-

-by skilled, accredited art teachers. Instruction is provided in a wide variety of mediums, including clay, chalk, pencil, and paint. Their work is displayed in display cases throughout the building, during district art fairs, and at the local art museum. Parents can access photos of their child's artwork via the internet.

We also have a fully staffed music program with voice and instrumental practice. The local auditorium hosts programs for 4th, 5th grades shortly before Christmas and our 2nd, 3rd grades in the spring. It is not unusual for well over 1000 people to attend these performances. Our K,1 students perform in a "Music-on-the-Lawn" program we host here at Chanute Elementary School in mid-May. Our administrative team hosts a cookout for everyone in attendance, people bring their lawnchairs, and this turns into a community event. We believe it is important for students to have the opportunity to perform before an audience.

We also allow our 4th and 5th-grade students to audition for the district honor choir. Students chosen for honor choir join with honor choir students from our middle school and perform at local events and area music competitions. This year we had 4 students chosen to be a part of the state honor choir.

We have a multi-media library and hard-wired computer lab with a full-time technology teacher and a full-time accredited librarian. Students receive an hour of library/technology instruction weekly--with our library being open for students to check-in and check-out books multiple times throughout the week. One transition we are making is moving towards the availability of e-books. This allows students and parents to access approved books from home.

Technology-wise we begin our instruction with some basic keyboarding for Kindergarten, but students in grades 3-5 are expected to develop skills in various programs including PowerPoint and Google. Additionally, we spend a lot of time helping our students become responsible in the use of technology focusing on the strengths and dangers of social media and the internet.

Finally, each student has at least one hour of physical education per week and a 15 minute structured aerobic play time daily. We focus on the importance of physical activity and exposing students to a variety of lifetime sports. The local bowling alley partners with us to provide opportunities for students to go bowling, the local rec department works with us to provide swimming opportunities for children, etc. Our PE teachers also provide instruction for some of our "healthy living curriculum.

A key component of these "specials" classes is their desire to partner with classroom teachers to integrate the fine arts into the classroom curriculum. Some examples include the development of PowerPoint presentations or art exhibits for classroom projects, our librarian finding books that align with a certain class thematic lesson, PE teachers finding the mean and mode of fitness data, and music classrooms singing "period" songs which align with certain units of study in social studies.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

One of the beliefs in our school is that we want to be "tight" in what we expect our students to achieve and how we know they have achieved it, but "loose" in the variety of instructional approaches we use to help students achieve mastery of essential skills. Many of our teachers rely a great deal on technology, while some may use it less frequently. Some of our teachers focus on using "centers" to develop learning, while others believe in whole class instruction. Some teachers find cooperative learning effective, and some find it disruptive. Our teachers are professional educators and we provide them with a lot of autonomy.

Having said this, there are some things we expect to be a part of every classroom. High student engagement is imperative. We expect teachers to check for individual understanding frequently within a lesson. We expect to see differentiation within a lesson--whether it be content, product, or environmental differentiation. We expect to see questioning and activities requiring students to engage in higher order thinking skills and we expect to see some sort of assessment within the lesson to identify students who need remediation. We want teachers to experience autonomy within this framework.

Following instruction, we become "tight" on assessment. At the end of a unit students are given an assessment common to that grade level--assessing skills we believe to be essential. Student not displaying

mastery on that assessment will be assigned to a Tier-two group within the classroom for a short reteaching period. Teachers are asked to reteach the skill in a manner different than original instruction. Following this reteaching period, students are reassessed. If they still do not show mastery, they are noted on the data sheet for further instruction at a later date.

Students who are significantly behind are placed in a Tier-three group. This usually represents 2-3% of students. Instruction therein is very individualized and direct with a multiple of resources used--including technology and specialized remediation programs.

Those students scoring in the upper 2-3 percent also require specialized instruction--this is offered through the use of specialized staff trained in the education of gifted students.

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

Jim Collins said, "Anyone who doesn't keep score doesn't care." This may be a bit strong, but it does underscore the value of assessment. We believe that assessment is simply a part of the entire teaching and learning process. Assessment begins with frequent checks for understanding within a lesson. This is followed by some sort of formative activity to assess learning of the lesson. At the end of a unit of essential learning, students will be given a teacher-developed common assessment common to that grade level. This assesses the mastery of essential learning within that unit.

Throughout this process, instructional decisions are made concerning the need for whole-class reteaching, individual student reteaching, and the need for tiered instruction. A key feature of assessment is maintenance of data. We have developed assessment spreadsheets for each student in each grade level. Formative assessment data, through the use of common assessments; and summative data, including Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and DIBELS scores are maintained on this spreadsheet as long as the student is enrolled at CES. This allows us to take a look at the success of a particular student throughout their time here at CES; a particular class on a specific learning target; or our success on a specific strand of study as a student or class progresses. These data sheets are the lifeblood of our decision-making.

These sheets are also important as we share student progress with parents. Through them we are able to show parents exactly how well their child is performing on essential learning targets. This information--along with state assessment and MAP data is shared with parents during parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, or other conferences with parents.

Chanute Elementary School was one of only a few schools to receive multiple TARGET awards from the state of Kansas this year--and one of only two receiving 4 awards. The early response to data is one big reason for our success. That is not to say, however, that we are enjoying success in every subgroup. We are still not experiencing the success with ESOL students. Along with district staff, we are looking at what we need to do to help these students. One step we have taken is to ensure that our students are placed in a classroom with an ESOL trained teacher. We have discussed additional ESOL staff through the use of para-educators. We are also using counselors and "Community-in-Schools" personnel to help us engage the entire family by providing information in multiple languages and assisting these families in engaging community resources. This is a subgroup we will continue to look closely at.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Quantum Teaching maintains that "everything we do speaks." Sometimes that is to students and sometimes it is to staff. Nowhere is that more evident than school climate and culture. There are several tenets we hold "near and dear" and these tenets work together to make our school what it is for our students. The first of these is that we want every child to come to school feeling welcomed. We expect bus drivers to greet kids with a smile, cooks to greet children as they pick up breakfast, administrators to greet students as they come in a door of a morning, and the remainder of the staff to greet students cordially. We want every child to have multiple positive interactions with peers and adults before their instructional day begins.

The second tenet is that we want all students to believe they will be successful and their success will be celebrated. To accomplish this with 864 students, instruction is the key. We encourage innovative instruction using technology and/or project-based learning. We have a district grant program that provides teachers with hardware and software to try new ideas and new ways of doing things. We provide varied professional development resources for teachers to allow them to investigate new and unique ways to deliver engaging instruction. After our students are successful, we have monthly assemblies to recognize many of our students.

The third tenet is that we want to create a positive rather than a punitive environment. Each of our staff members receive training in the Well-Managed Schools positive behavior supports program developed by "Boystown." Many of us have said of a student, "They know better than to do that." The realization we came to is that many of our students did not "know better," and it was our job to teach them--just as it is our job to teach them how to read and add and subtract. We now spend time each day teaching one of 18 social skills. Some examples of these social skills would be, "how to take no for an answer. how to disagree appropriately, how to make an apology," etc. We also focus a great deal of time and effort training staff on how to provide appropriate praise to students.

These tenets are important components of a positive school climate as they help us to build relationships with our students. We believe that to be the key to a positive school culture--students need to know we care about them beyond the classroom. To do this, we believe it is our responsibility to build relationships with our students. Students remain engaged when they believe their teacher authentically likes them even outside the classroom.

The best way to build an environment in which teachers feel valued and supported is to actually value them and support them! Praise is just as important to teachers as it is to students. We commit part of our staff meeting to recognizing teachers. Our administrative team serves meals to our staff on various occasions. Our PTO provides meals and gifts throughout the year, and we work to get them recognized within our local paper, etc. We consistently tell our teachers that we cannot be successful as a school unless they are successful in their classroom!

2. Engaging Families and Community:

As described earlier, a great amount of emphasis is placed on building relationships in our school. We believe that it is just as important to build positive relationships within our community. Our staff also serve as rec coaches, sunday school teachers, volunteers within the community. Many times that parent or community member you are working with is also your next-door neighbor.

That is not to say that we do not put a concerted effort into directly building relationships, as well. The relationship building begins in Kindergarten at Chanute Elementary School. Each of our Kindergarten teachers visit the home of each Kindergarten student during the first week of school.

We also ask that each teacher in grades 1-5 make a positive contact with parents during the first month of school. Whenever possible, this contact should be either face-to-face or via phone. For many of the

parents new to our school, they are accustomed to only negative calls from the school--they certainly appreciate receiving a call saying good things about their child.

Parent-Teacher conferences are a tried and true way to communicate--We will usually average around 95% attendance at Parent/Teacher conferences. We use this time to not only discuss the strengths and areas for potential improvement for a child--but also share assessment data.

We provide multiple activities for the community to access our school. We have the usual Grandparents for Lunch, Muffins for Mom, and Donuts for Dad. We ask community members to come and speak at career days we encourage people to come eat lunch with children or grandchildren. Our PTO is very selective in their choice of fundraisers-- choosing only those things that engage the community--chili suppers, 5Kruns, bingo night, etc. The local community college partners with us to have a place for students to do observations, and many of the clubs help with PTO fundraisers.

Finally, we have fostered a good relationship with our local media outlets. Our public relations director puts information about our schools daily. We host a morning radio shot that spotlights various things about our school. Finally, even in an environment of a heightened sense of school safety, we want our community to feel comfortable visiting our school and try to be as welcoming as possible.

3. Professional Development:

This is an area of transition for our school. Traditionally, professional development has been district-wide, district-led, and mostly "sit-and-get" with little accountability for impact. The topics--although research-based and appropriate--have been determined by staff at the district office with very little input from the individual teacher.

We are transitioning from this district-led professional development to teacher-led professional development. Here is a synopsis of what that looks like. As a part of our evaluation process, each teacher is required to complete a self-assessment. From this self-assessment and a review of student growth summaries, the teacher and administrator will agree on an improvement goal for that specific teacher. This goal will then drive their professional development activities. To accommodate the variety of professional development needs of our teachers, our district has made some significant changes in our professional development planning.

We have moved away from the "sage-on-the-stage" type of professional development. Currently a staff development day might have as many as 10 or 15 various presenters providing session on multiple topics. Many of these presenters would be colleagues. Through the Professional Development Council, a teacher could then request to attend this/these sessions. A part of that request would be information on how it would impact their teaching or their classroom.

Administration would then review the request to ensure alignment with improvement goals, approve it, and forward to the Council for final approval.

Professional Days are not the only way for a teacher to receive professional development. We also provide dozens of one-hour afterschool opportunities. Teachers are paid to attend nine of these. Many times these focus on technology and/or some sort of book study and the process is the same as above.

The final and perhaps most exciting opportunity for our teachers is what we refer to as Summer Institute. For teachers who wish to participate (and nearly 85% do), the district will pay a 4-day stipend for teachers to attend and work on any project that grade level chooses over a week in the summer--provided it aligns with district academic standards and deals with improving student achievement.

Finally, any of our teachers can request to attend regional and national conferences that align with their improvement goal and attend as budget allows.

It is our belief that no one knows what training a teacher needs more than that teacher, so this transformation in professional development has been enjoyable to watch.

4. School Leadership:

As mentioned earlier in this application, Chanute Elementary School is a result of combining 4 elementary schools into one. A part of that process was determining how to handle administration without giving the impression of "demoting" anyone who had previously been a building principal. Because of this our building has a rather unique administrative structure with a lead principal, principal, and an assistant principal. In theory, it sounds complicated--in practice it has proven to be very effective.

The lead principal is responsible for the overall performance of the building and focuses many of his efforts on those areas that are building-wide areas. He oversees all aspects of the building including focusing on the budget, working with classified staff and, as a liaison with district staff, ensuring alignment of handbooks and policies, attending all special education professional learning group meetings, and working with various Parent organizations.

The principal focuses his efforts on working with grades 3-5. He attends professional learning group meetings for those levels. His primary responsibility is to provide leadership to those groups in the area of maintaining data, and working with teachers to ensure appropriate instruction for all students in grades 3-5. This person also leads the building testing program.

Finally, the assistant-principal focuses his efforts on working with grades K-2. H will attend professional learning group meeting for those levels. His primary responsibility is to focus on early literacy skills and working with the K-2 professional learning teams to ensure that appropriate instruction is provided to all students in grades K-2. He also assumes the role of preschool administrator.

Although the role of the three administrators looks fairly "neat" as outlined in the paragraphs above, it is actually very "scruffy" in the day-to-day workings of the school. Depending on the day and the needs of the day, any one of the three might be called upon to help in a role that one of the others might normally oversee. This is what makes it work for Chanute Elementary School.

Because our roles are not as clearly separated as in other schools, it is imperative that each of us know what our colleagues are focusing on. This requires a lot of meeting time and a lot of conversation. These meetings help to develop synergistic thinking-making the team much stronger than the sum of the three individuals. When multiple administrators face a question or a challenge, the conversation becomes much wider and much deeper-which can only be good for students.

A perfect example of this would be the selection of new staff. All three building administrators participate in this process which gives three times as much feedback during the interview process. When you are only as good as your next hire, this feedback becomes very important!

Potentially, the leadership structure in our school could be challenging--we believe we have developed it into a positive for our school.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

What a difficult question! Providing the necessary academic and social instruction is much like a puzzle with multiple pieces. Just like a puzzle, you don't really get to see a clear picture of what that student really is until those pieces start fitting together. To pull one piece out and say it is the most important is much like trying to find the most important piece of a puzzle.

As I am required to do so as a part of the application, however, I think perhaps the biggest key to our academic success has been the commitment from our professional learning teams to answering that all-important PLC question, "What are we going to do if they don't learn it?" The ability of our professional learning teams--under the tutelage of our principal and assistant principal--to intervene when students struggle or are unable to show mastery is the key to Chanute Elementary School being one of only two schools statewide to receive four challenge awards from the Confidence in Education Task Force in 2014-15.

Key to this is the appropriate use of student data. Through the use of spreadsheet data, we have a numerical snapshot of each of our students. We can not only determine a student's summative score, we can also look at that data and determine some of the errors they are making, and quickly offer additional help to correct those misunderstandings. As one learning goal is foundational for another, this quick response is essential and this earlier response has been critical to our academic success.

A second key would be our commitment to a positive behavior support system--Well Managed Schools in our case. Our staff now sees student misbehavior as an opportunity to teach social skills rather than an interruption to class time. In the end, the time we have saved dealing with inappropriate behaviors has far exceeded the time we spend teaching the social skills, and the climate this has helped us establish creates an enthusiasm in students we never want to lose.

These are two practices which have made a difference. Neither would be very beneficial without highly trained and extremely committed staff to implement them--fortunately we have that in place. Our district's commitment to a very competitive salary structure and putting "Student's First" makes USD 413 and Chanute Elementary School a great place to call home.