

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Terri Brooks

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

Official School Name Acacia Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 12955 East Colossal Cave Road

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

City Vail State AZ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 85641-9003

County Pima County

Telephone (520) 879-2200 Fax (520) 879-2201

Web site/URL http://aca.vail.k12.az.us E-mail brookst@vailschooldistrict.org

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Mr. Calvin Baker E-mail bakerc@vailschooldistrict.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Vail Unified School District Tel. (520) 879-2000

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

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

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

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

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

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2011 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
9. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
10. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
11. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

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

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	68	53	121
<b>1</b>	57	50	107
<b>2</b>	58	44	102
<b>3</b>	71	57	128
<b>4</b>	60	53	113
<b>5</b>	73	67	140
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	387	324	711

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 32 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 60 % White
  - 6 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2015 – 2016 school year: 18%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	59
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	60
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	119
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	647
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.184
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	18

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
12 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 31 %  
Total number students who qualify: 219

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
72 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>10</u> Autism               | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness              | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness        | <u>16</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>12</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment    | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Mental Retardation    | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>14</u> Developmentally Delayed              |

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

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	29
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	8

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 27:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	95%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**  
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2016.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
Yes  No   
If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

Acacia's mission is to achieve academic excellence in a safe, nurturing environment. We promote shared responsibility between home, school, and community that develops lifelong 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**

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Acacia Elementary School, “Home of the Cowboys,” was founded in 1991, the first elementary school built in our district. At the time of Acacia’s inception, Vail had just one building serving elementary and middle school students since 1906. Acacia has become cornerstone in Vail, where the population is 10,208. As our district has grown, our commitment to small class sizes, academic excellence, and our rural atmosphere continues to be the heart of our identity. School events are the hub of social gatherings for students and families. Our mission is to achieve academic excellence in a safe and nurturing environment. We promote a shared responsibility between the home, child, school, and community which develops caring children committed to lifelong learning.

Acacia has a diverse socioeconomic population with families that include ranchers, tradesmen, and members of the military. Military and foster families challenge us with a transient student population. As a school, we take pride in blending this diverse community into a successful school culture. We embrace this challenge by ensuring that our new students receive the academic support they need by assessing them immediately to identify students for interventions including the Title 1 Reading program, tutoring, and intersession. We value growth for all students and are diligent in maintaining a strong learning community. Our best practices have brought achievement and earned us the highest recognitions from our state as an Excelling or “A” school from 2006 to 2014, the most current label awarded. Acacia was also recognized as an Arizona Education Foundation A+ School of Excellence.

Acacia’s vision states, “As a community, Acacia Elementary school is committed to academic excellence, community partnership, and social responsibility.” Our focus is for all students to achieve academic excellence. Our students are provided highly proficient instruction, activities to develop leadership skills, and opportunities for social and emotional growth through extracurricular activities. Our curriculum programs include Arizona standards-based core content areas, inclusive special education, full day kindergarten, advanced math, gifted learning, Title 1 Reading, and instruction in music, art, physical education, library, and technology.

Recognizing students’ academic achievement builds a culture of success. Students are assessed quarterly on standards-based benchmarks. Before each benchmark, the student achievement teacher and the principal visit second through fifth grade classes to award “Acacia Dog Tags” to students who mastered the previous benchmark’s standards with eighty percent or above. It is not uncommon to see students with two to twenty dog tags attached to their backpacks! Students who demonstrate mastery on the state assessment, AzMERIT, are celebrated with an assembly to recognize achievement from the previous year and receive ribbons, plaques, and trophies for demonstrating mastery in English Language Arts and Math. The assembly is twofold — it recognizes achievement and motivates students to achieve on the current year’s assessment. Our theme this year is “Teach and Learn like Champions.” We anxiously await Olympic runner Bernard Lagat as our guest speaker for this year’s assembly to motivate us to “Test Like Champions.”

We have two programs that encourage social responsibility. The first is called “Caught in The Act” (CIA). Students who are caught “acting” and following the ACT statement (The ACT Statement is: “We Are respectful and trustworthy, Care about each other, and Take responsibility”) receive an Acacia Cowboy “Caught in the Act” sticker. Students proudly wear their sticker, and staff are encouraged to ask them what they were “caught” doing. Students are then entered to be selected for lunch with the principal and get a prize bag at the CIA Assembly.

Citizen of The Month is our second program to teach social responsibility. Teachers choose one student from their class each quarter who embodies good citizenship. Citizen of the Month lunches are held with the principal to recognize this achievement. Specialists support the program by assisting with the lunch and celebrating the good citizenship of our students.

Acacia understands that education is partnership between school and community and is supported by engaging families at school activities. Before each school year begins, we hold a Meet The Teacher Night. Families are invited to meet their students’ teacher and see their classroom. Teachers explain curriculum,

homework expectations, and communication methods. Strong relationships sprout here. We celebrated our 25th anniversary last year with our community inviting the school board, superintendent, previous administrators, staff, and students. Acacia is also known for its annual Fall Festival, a community event complete with haunted house, cake walks, jumping castles, and games. Former students and families are frequent guests at this event.

The Acacia learning community is thriving. We are passionate about finding ways for our students to learn more today than they did yesterday. We strive to improve, find ways to adapt, and reshape our techniques in order to develop lifelong learners. We work hard to make sure every minute of the day counts.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Acacia implements a concentrated mathematics block throughout the school day. The balanced math block is split into five main components: math review, mental math, problem of the week, targeted math instruction, and daily math skills (DMS). Math review consists of five review questions that allow students to show mastery of previously taught standards. Students work independently in notebooks and upon completion, the class reviews the answers together. Mental math is comprised of two teacher created questions and one student generated question that requires students to find solutions mentally. Problem of the week is a word problem that requires each student to decipher through multi-step processes, working out their answer, and justifying their thinking for how they solve the problem. The targeted math instruction follows the scheduled objective, and teachers plan lessons based on objective building toward highly proficient levels of learning. A daily lesson typically lasts between 45 - 60 minutes. DMS is a 20 to 25 minute block of time that allows students to focus on fluency of basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts.

Aligned with our REACH statement, (Reteach and enrich, Ensure every minute matters, Achieve success only when student learn, Come together as a team, Have high expectations) Acacia has a thirty minute, school wide reteach and enrich block. Based on the weekly formative assessment scores, students are grouped into either a reteach or enrich class. During reteach, teachers plan lessons to ensure that students who need more time to master a standard receive small group instruction. Students who fall into the enrich category participate in projects and assignments that promote taking their learning to the highly proficiency level.

We also provide an Advanced Math program for second through fifth graders. Students must qualify for this program based on several criteria including previous academic achievement. The advanced math teacher instructs these students on the next grade level's objectives. In addition to advanced math, students are given opportunities to practice grade level standards in the regular classroom and during REACH. Acacia also partners with the Vail Digital Learning Program, an online learning program, which provides instruction to students who are working two grade levels ahead in math.

Acacia's reading program has multiple components designed to reach all students. Our balanced literacy program employs the use of differentiated small group reading instruction to provide effective instruction to students regardless of their reading levels. Flexible ability grouping allows teachers to use literature that is geared toward individual reading ranges and promotes student confidence and fluency. Teachers also utilize literature circles to further skills including comprehension, fluency, building academic vocabulary, and summarization skills.

Along with our balanced literacy program, teachers continuously monitor student progress with numerous best practice assessments to identify all students who require intervention. Kindergarten and first grade teachers use monthly letter/sound and word identification fluency assessments and oral reading fluency assessment allowing teachers to identify students who need early targeted interventions. Classroom teachers also assess student learning and growth with formative assessments and quarterly Benchmark tests.

Acacia teachers further our students' knowledge of social studies by providing them with opportunities to engage in civic minded lessons that enhance their knowledge in world cultures, American history, geography, and economics. Our students participate in lessons that encourage celebration of cultural diversity and awareness. Third through fifth grade students receive Library enrichment as a special class. The enrichment teacher focuses on teaching students about their Natural Rights that are protected by the Constitution. Further, all students have the opportunity to participate in Student Council elections that mirror the Democratic process set forth by our government.

Acacia utilizes a hands-on science curriculum for kindergarten through fifth grade students. We make use of science programs offered by various public entities, which offer presentations about such topics as the

weather, animals, and electricity.

Further, students in grades three through five are required to complete a Science Fair project using the grade level standards and the scientific process. We provide Science Fair nights for families where parents ask questions and brainstorm ideas concerning their student's project. The evening events provide an opportunity for students to access computers for research and printers to build their display boards.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Specialist areas complement our core academic content and include art, music, physical education, technology, and library/enrichment for kindergarten through fifth grade students once a week on a rotating basis. Specials classes last 25 minutes for kindergarten and 40 minutes for first through fifth grades. All specials follow the same instructional practices as classroom teachers using the Essential Elements of Instruction method. Skill acquisition is taught and assessed in the same manner as academic content which allows consistency of expectations throughout the school day.

Our physical education program is a blend of physical education standards with health and nutrition. Students move for the majority of the 40 minutes. The physical education teacher finds creative ways to incorporate movement and activity in health and nutrition lessons as well as lessons encompassing physical education standards. Physical Education is supported by activities including the Mileage Club, Girls on the Run, Golf Club, and Tennis Club. Health and nutrition are supported by activities including Smoothie Fridays and the Ecology/Gardening Club. Students planted a garden and maintain flower pots around campus. Members of the club also encourage the campus to recycle and reduce waste.

In the computer lab students develop 21st century technology skills through hands on practices. They study typing, word processing, research, and presentation skills. Students have access to iPads and Chrome Books in classrooms to utilize their skills. After school clubs allow students to further develop real world skills including Coding Club, Virtual Reality Club, and Broadcast Club. Broadcast Club creates a student produced, filmed, and edited broadcast shown in classrooms each morning which gives students daily information about our school. Students are learning skills in the area of technology while developing confidence with public speaking. Broadcast club is open to fifth grade students and meets daily before and after school.

In music, students develop an appreciation for the world of music. Instruction includes singing, writing, and reading music, using instruments and giving students the opportunity to express themselves in creative ways. Students gain confidence and self esteem through hard work in preparation for formal grade level performances given for families at the Vail Theater of the Arts.

Our students learn ways of expressing themselves creatively through visual media in Art class. Students enjoy hands-on experience in painting, sketching, drawing, and sculpture and again gain confidence through the annual district-wide celebration where each student displays his/her work for families and community members to "ooohh and ahhhh" over.

Library/Enrichment is offered to third through fifth grade students, where they learn not only library, reading, and writing skills, but also interpersonal skills. Etiquette, cooperation, speaker courtesy, and effective communication are taught in engaging and fun ways. The enrichment teacher provides opportunities including critical thinking (solving mini mysteries), active listening, and character building role plays to take those content areas to a higher academic level. The focus for Kindergarten through second grade students is on library skills.

Character development is vital to the success and culture of Acacia. We work to ensure that our students will be successful citizens with strong character. To achieve this goal, we have various clubs and school activities that center around character development and being a positive impact on the community. One club, the Kind Kids Club, raised funds through a penny drive to earn our Be Kind mural that is proudly displayed on an exterior wall of our school. A program that we use every day to promote character development is Positive Behavior Intervention Supports. As a part of PBIS, we have Caught in the Act, a strategy we use to

identify students who are following our school, and district's guiding principles. When a student is Caught In the Act, he/she receives a card stating the specific behavior observed and a sticker to proudly display for peers, staff, and parents. We also recognize entire classes that were caught displaying the guiding principles. With a Class Act, each student receives a bookmark, and the class receives a framed certificate explaining why they were Caught in the Act and a trophy to display in the classroom. Students are further engaged in community causes including food and clothing drives, Autism Awareness, cancer research, and heart health.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Acacia maintains its highly performing status by ensuring that we meet the needs of all learners and expect success for all. As such, we apply consistent instructional practices in all content areas. Our teachers are trained in the methods of balanced literacy and balanced math. Additionally, new teachers are partnered with balanced literacy and math coaches. Balanced literacy consists of flexible ability level reading groups, close reading activities, literature circles, and read alouds. The components of balanced math include a spiral review, mental math, a conceptual lesson, and a word problem of the week. Teachers use whole and small group instruction, project based learning, and hands-on manipulative methods. We follow the Madeline Hunter format of the Essential Elements of Instruction when lesson planning. The consistency of instruction contributes to student success as they move from grade to grade. Our classrooms are equipped with technology that is supported by our site technology coordinator including Chrome Books, projectors, and Apple TVs. Technology gives us to access resources that allow us to create engaging, purposeful, effective lessons and activities in social studies and science.

Instruction is guided by data driven decisions. Grade level teams attend bi-monthly data meetings with our student achievement teacher and principal to analyze students' current assessment data and make instructional decisions. To plan effective instruction, we collect data from many assessments including formative assessments, benchmark tests, daily math skills, and teacher-created assessments. We identify the appropriate interventions to help struggling students, share successes, and identify what led to student growth.

Collaborative team planning allows teachers to use their expertise in specific subjects ensuring the strongest instruction is delivered across the grade level to improve academic success for all students. We analyze data and identify which teacher excelled in teaching a specific standard. That teacher is responsible for instructing the reteach group for that particular standard. The grade level team also plans the enrichment lesson that will take place for that specific standard.

Formative assessments are used to determine which students attend reteach or enrichment for a specific math standard. These assessments are given at the end of the calendar period for a specific standard. Students who do not meet the proficient level are retaught the standard for another week. These students are given instruction in a small group setting by a teacher in the same grade level. Students who demonstrate proficiency are enriched on that standard moving them to highly proficient.

Benchmark tests assess students on quarterly standards. The benchmark data guides decisions for intersession, tutoring, and the student solutions team. Students are retaught and retested on Benchmark standards, giving students multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency.

Interventions based on data outcomes can include tutoring, intersession courses, Title 1 Reading support, and referral to the student solution team for a child study. Special education testing can also be the outcome. Interventions are offered as early as first grade. Giving our students learning strategies at an early age will ensure their success as they progress.

Intersession is held over our fall and spring breaks. Students who are not yet proficient will attend intersession course where they are again retaught the standards with which they struggled.

Kindergarten through fifth grade teachers identify students performing in the bottom twenty-five percent of their classes each year and monitor their progress throughout the year. Free tutoring is offered to these students in each grade level. Extreme effort is exerted into enrolling struggling students in tutoring.

When our students consistently perform at levels where they exceed the standards, they are evaluated for our Extended Learning Program (gifted), advanced math, or accelerated online courses. In these programs students improve their level of proficiency and advance their acquisition of skills through project based instruction, use of higher order thinking skills, and a growth mindset.

Advanced Math Enrichment, offered to our first grade students, gives students the skills to think beyond the perimeters of a lesson. Students in second through fifth grade attend daily Advanced Math classes where students are taught at a grade level above their current grade. Exceptional math students are challenged further by completing advanced math course work two grade levels above their current grade through our district's online learning program.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Each morning, our principal sets the cultural bar for students and staff by greeting and welcoming families and students at the door. She is also the official high-fiver at the gate at the end of the day. Students anxiously await their chance to see our principal, share a high five, and tell her a quick story about their day. Positive staff relationships also build solid culture and encourage teacher collaboration in achieving academic goals. Goals are set based on weekly and quarterly assessment data. We have built a culture where students accept responsibility for their own learning. This culture fosters academic growth.

Additionally, our many clubs contribute to our positive school climate. The National Elementary Honor Society provides mentors for students needing a boost in confidence or academics, and sponsors fundraising activities. Student Council works to provide leadership during assemblies, fundraising, and implementing new ideas. The Kind Kids Club promotes kindness among students and staff, while the Environmental Club promotes a caring attitude toward our campus and our world. Each semester 3rd-5th grade girls can participate in Girls on the Run, which promotes leadership and healthy choices. Our staff cheers the girls on while they practice for their big race. Through our science and technology clubs: VR Club, Coding Club, and Wright Flight, students explore interests in a variety of challenging experiences. In Fine Arts, students have the opportunity to perform with the choir and band for special events and concerts.

In our professional learning community, collaboration is not only a value, but an expectation as well. Bonds are created when intermediate and primary classes pair up for Reading Buddies. Our Inclusive students have responsibilities including delivering bus passes and emptying recycling containers each week. Staff members participate in Angel Tree, holiday food baskets, and canned food drives to further support families in need.

Our teachers are valued in many ways. The Acacia PTA supports teachers by providing books, technology devices, class treasure boxes, and meals during Parent Teacher Conferences and Teacher Appreciation Week. At staff meetings teachers and paraprofessionals commend those who go above and beyond to support each other through recognition awards. Our principal supports teachers through encouraging notes for teachers during a classroom visit, and she provides lunches for professional development meetings. During testing periods, our principal and student achievement teacher encourage student and staff success with words, actions, and most importantly — treats.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Acacia maintains strong relationships with students, families, staff, and the surrounding Vail community. Communication is a strategy Acacia uses consistently to be successful. Students and families come to “Meet The Teacher Night” before the year begins and are given a classroom and school handbook outlining expectations. Throughout the year, families receive monthly classroom newsletters summarizing instructional sequences, a weekly In The Loop calendar of events, and a monthly Acacia Round Up newsletter with school information. These are sent home with students in communication folders, emailed, and posted on the website. We use the Acacia marquee, and Facebook page for further current and real time information. Parents can access Power School to view their child’s grades and attendance. They also meet twice a year for parent teacher conferences.

Families are always welcome on campus and can volunteer, go on field trips, or participate in Reading Heroes. Acacia has a wonderfully active PTA that holds fundraisers and events that unite the community including Spell-A-Thon, Family Movie Nights, Father Daughter Dance, Mudder Son Fun Run, Scholastic Book Fairs, and a Patriot Day Assembly that honors the military. The most prominent is the Fall Festival where Acacia is transformed into a night of games, a live DJ, food trucks, and a silent auction made up of donations from local businesses. Some of Acacia’s essential community partners that contribute to these events and more include Freddy’s, Walgreen’s, Papa John’s Pizza, Dairy Queen, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and Rincon Valley Fire Department. The Acacia Site Council meets monthly to make decisions that

impact the school and consists of the Principal, staff, and community members.

Acacia engages students in activities that promote responsibility and communication skills. Some of the clubs that encourage these leadership roles include Student Council, Broadcast, Kind Kids, National Elementary Honor Society, Girls On The Run, Virtual Reality, Coding, Choir, Band, Wright Flight, and Star Base. Acacia also helps families in need by partnering with St. Rita's Church and the Vail food bank to provide food baskets and bags, backpacks with supplies, and Angel gifts.

In 2016, the community united to celebrate Acacia's 25th Anniversary. We are a special school that is at the heart of the Vail School District, and we are proud to be the cornerstone, where everyone is valued and committed to lifelong learning.

### **3. Professional Development:**

At Acacia Elementary School we have a growth mindset. Our professional development approach is reflective in nature, using research based best practices and assessment results. Our professional development is embraced and owned by every teacher that we can and will see each student grow. We are a community of learners. By the end of the year, every teacher will have presented at least one time at a faculty meeting on the content of our yearly focus. One of our school's challenges is the economically disadvantaged students. Educating our teachers and our students to have a growth mindset has dramatically increased our motivation to overcome this challenge. It has positively influenced our attitudes about putting in extra time and effort gaining our achievement.

There are many sources of our professional development. Our curriculum department helps us cultivate strengths and talents by providing New Teacher Induction, Cognitive Coaching, Math Coaching, and Literacy Coaching. Our Principal and Student Achievement Teacher attend annual conferences to plan future inservice on research based best practices. For example, they have attended the last three Solution Tree Conferences and attended sessions on Text Complexity and Close Reading with Douglas Fisher, Essential Vocabulary Instruction with Robert Marzano, and the Growth Mindset research of Carol Dweck. All of these topics were brought back to Acacia and are fully implemented into our classrooms after providing inservice on each. We follow up on our implementation of best practices at bi-weekly data team meetings. In these professional learning communities, we reflect and make data driven decisions on our successes and goals.

At the beginning of our year, we have a "data dig" to break apart student performance on the previous AzMERIT assessment results. Each team writes S.M.A.R.T. goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely) for the upcoming year based on the data. These goals are revisited throughout the year so that we know we are on target.

Our Advanced Math teacher, Title One teachers, Enrichment/Gifted teacher, and instructional leader for our Special Education Department all attend national conferences that specialize in their field of expertise. Each returns and delivers a professional development inservice.

Acacia's growth mindset has become the foundation of our reflection and our shared professional growth. We share the responsibility because our vision is for our students to grow with us as lifelong learners.

### **4. School Leadership:**

The leadership team at Acacia consists of a principal, principal designee, grade level instructional team leaders, and highly qualified staff. Our goal is to provide children with a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment while giving them the best educational experience available. The Acacia staff is proud of its long standing tradition of being an academically excelling school and developing well-rounded students prepared to contribute to society in a meaningful and successful manner.

Our principal has been leading Acacia for three years. She defines herself as "the leader of many leaders." Leaders are selected, given tools, and empowered to lead and manage their area. By recognizing and

encouraging individual strengths, a culture is created that values each employee and student. In addition, the principal takes an active role in all responsibilities staff are asked to do - including the dreaded parking lot duty. Support shown by Acacia's principal inspires the entire team to follow her lead.

The principal bases her leadership style and philosophy on *Whale Done! The Power of Positive Relationships* by Kenneth Blanchard. The theme of this book is to acknowledge and recognize accomplishments. Much of it draws upon principles for getting along with others including building trust, emphasizing the positive, and redirecting undesired actions into more productive channels.

Yearly themes are selected for building positive leadership and relationships. *How Full Is Your Bucket* by Tom Rath and *The Energy Bus* by John Gordon have been themes. The adult version is read by all staff, and students are read the children's version. This promotes a common direction and language, reinforcing the importance of feeling valued, nurtured, and safe.

Student success is a result of team leaders, teachers, cognitive coaches, math coaches, literacy coaches, a student solutions team, and a curriculum team. Each is a leadership role and involves specific training to gain expertise to share with staff.

The Site Council serves in an advisory capacity to the principal. The principal will seek formal and informal advice from the Council. Council membership consists of two full time teachers, one classified staff member, and four parent or community members. Each representative is elected for a term of two years. All members of the Acacia Community are invited to attend Site Council meetings.

Acacia is empowered by a team of leaders working collaboratively for the highest levels of success with students, staff and professionals, parents, and the community.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Acacia's most valuable practice is data-driven decision making. We plan instruction around desired outcomes. The strategy, outlined by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in *Understanding by Design*, encourages backward design. By analyzing data, we develop academic plans and assessments that provide evidence of learning targets. Our planning, instruction, and assessments are data-driven and outcome-based.

Each year during our staff data dig, we analyze the previous year's state test results. We break down the data by specific learning standards at each grade and find areas to improve instruction. We set goals based on our desired outcomes and create action plans to achieve academic goals.

The first step is to use data to plan the instructional practices that will allow us reach our learning targets. Teachers plan while armed with state standards (learning targets), unwrapped documents, PLD's (Performance Level Descriptors), and many resources that guide the content and facilitate understanding. Teachers exercise autonomy in choosing and creating resources to aid students. Ongoing data collection provides the impetus for determining which students will attend Reteach or Enrich, and which students need academic interventions. Our data-driven decisions are as fluid as the data we collect. As we monitor student progress and their response to intervention (RTI) throughout the year, we revise instruction and planning to meet goals.

As a result of data-driven decisions, students have experienced significant growth on state AzMERIT testing. In 2015, 39% of third graders met or exceeded the standards in ELA. In 2016, 55% of our third graders met or exceeded. Our fourth grade students went from 48% to 64% in ELA, and our fifth grade students jumped from 41% in 2015 to 67% in 2016.

We experienced similar gains in math. In 2015, 62% of third graders met or exceeded the standards, and in 2016, 68% met or exceeded. And our fifth grade students grew from 55% in 2015 to 83% in 2016.

Teachers aren't the only ones making data-driven decisions. Students use their data to set their own quarterly "Reading Counts" reading goals where students can test on a book that they have read, earning points and entry into the RC party at the end of each quarter.

Data informs and drives every decision we make - academic, social, or otherwise. And, all of that data is used to remind us that everything we do today impacts the life of a child.