

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Jennifer Benjamin

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

Official School Name Palm Valley Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 272 E Sagebrush

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

City Litchfield Park State AZ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 85340-4934

County _____

Telephone (623) 535-6400 Fax (623) 935-0058

Web site/URL <http://www.lesd.k12.az.us/PVElem.cfm?subpage=95346> E-mail benjamin@lesd.k12.az.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. Jodi Gunning E-mail gunning@lesd.k12.az.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Litchfield Elementary School District Tel. (623) 535-6000

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

DISTRICT

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

15 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	10	12	22
K	66	54	120
1	70	55	125
2	71	71	142
3	80	64	144
4	78	74	152
5	70	72	142
6	1	0	1
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	446	402	848

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 5 % Asian
 - 6 % Black or African American
 - 36 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 46 % 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: 14%

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	67
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	51
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	118
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	820
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.144
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	14

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Farsi, Filipino, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Navajo, Polish, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Swahili, Urdu, Uzbek, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 28 %
Total number students who qualify: 235
8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
80 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.

- 14 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 2 Emotional Disturbance
- 1 Hearing Impairment
- 28 Mental Retardation
- 4 Multiple Disabilities
- 6 Orthopedic Impairment
- 9 Other Health Impaired
- 10 Specific Learning Disability
- 48 Speech or Language Impairment
- 1 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 5 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 14 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:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	34
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
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.	2

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 25:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

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

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes 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.

Palm Valley is an extraordinary school where all students are provided with dynamic opportunities to excel in academics, character, attitude, principles, and excellence.

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

Our school's home in the southwest valley of the Phoenix metropolitan area was first developed by Paul Litchfield, owner of the Goodyear Tire Company in 1916. The need for cotton fields to produce tires, and the availability of inexpensive land, brought Litchfield and his company to Goodyear, Arizona. The Litchfield Elementary District began with 11 students in its first class in 1917. Over the last twenty years, our expanding district has added 13 new schools and thousands of children.

Founded in 1997, Palm Valley Elementary, home of the Thunderbirds, is one of fifteen neighborhood schools within the 100 year-old Litchfield Elementary School District. With Luke Air Force Base in close proximity, naming our new school's mascot was based on our close association with military members and their children. Over the years, we have been privileged to educate many U.S. and foreign military children.

Since its inception, Palm Valley has demonstrated a strong desire to establish the school as the center of a vibrant and growing community. Goodyear has grown from a small suburb with a population of 12,000 in 1997, to a population of over 65,000 in 2017. The evolution over the past 20 years, from a "neighborhood school" to a 37% open enrollment school, has challenged us to refine and adapt to a diverse student population. School BBQs, Trunk or Treats, VIP Dances, and multiple volunteer opportunities are just a few of the ways we have welcomed families into our school. We continually seek to reflect and improve on instructional strategies and community engagement that foster a strong sense of family.

As a result, our school embraces our district's Mission Believe by serving both our students' social/emotional, and academic needs. Each day our staff reflects on the impact our school has on our collective community by asking: What would it look and feel like if everyone believed in each and every one of our students? What would it look and feel like if everyone believed in themselves? What would it look like and feel like if everyone believed in their colleagues and leaders? We believe it looks and feels like Palm Valley Elementary.

At Palm Valley, we feel an obligation to address and provide supports for the multitude of academic and social/emotional needs of our 848 students. School-wide implementations of PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) protocols and the introduction of Conscious Discipline have given both students and staff a common language when communicating with each other. Shifting the focus from a narrow consequence approach to teachable moments has redirected teachers to become more proactive rather than reactive to student behavior struggles.

To begin our 2015-2016 school year, our principal introduced Inclusion Revolution as a way to deepen the relationships between our students in self-contained classrooms and their peers in general education. Each quarter, students apply to become peer tutors to our special needs students. Whether in the self-contained or general education setting, peer tutors work closely with the 3 self-contained classrooms on our campus. Student peer tutor numbers average 175 yearly, and their impact is felt school-wide: in classrooms, at recess, in the cafe, and school events. Inclusion Revolution deepens respect for self and others and strengthens our school family.

Through community support, Palm Valley provides students a rich elective opportunity with quarterly selections. Tax credit donations from families and the local community drive the funding of these weekly elective which include: Yoga, Karate, Lego Robotics, Chess, Drama, and Mad Science. Led by our PTO, community and business members raised \$30,000 to fund the first year of the Traditional Academy at Palm Valley. While a majority of students participating in this program are designated gifted, the Traditional Academy is open to all students seeking a hands-on, Science and Social Studies driven curriculum.

The RTI (Response to Instruction) process drives our interventions for all students from remediation to enrichment. Daily WIN (What I Need) blocks are 30 minutes and focused on ELA and Math. Student groups are fluid, based on frequent formal and informal assessments. District benchmarks, teacher created Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) and exit tickets provide teachers and students with data in which to plan and reflect. This process not only raises student achievement, but also refines and develops effective

instructional practices.

Palm Valley's student population has changed over the past several years, open enrollment stands at 37%, free and reduced has increased to 28%, and our mobility rate is 19%. Despite the challenges we face in meeting all of our students' needs, we are the highest achieving elementary school, in the highest achieving public elementary school district, in the state of Arizona.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The foundation of our Core Curriculum is the rigorous academic standards adopted by the Arizona State Board of Education, Arizona College and Career Ready Standards (ACCRS). The standards are the framework that guides our curriculum and instruction in all academic areas.

At Palm Valley we follow a Balanced Literacy Model (BLM), which is essential to meeting students' needs in English Language Arts (ELA). Two hours a day is allocated to ELA instruction in all grades. We have adopted Foundations and Wilson Language Program for all students in K-3, Georgia ELA for K-2 and EngageNY for 3rd-5th.

The use of Foundations provides students a strong foundation in reading skills while laying the groundwork for life-long literacy. Students master skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, high frequency words, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, handwriting, and spelling. All 826 students, K-5, are provided rich resources for in-depth opportunities to read and respond to fiction and nonfiction. Strategies for reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and the integration of strong writing instruction are emphasized. Our BLM includes Guided Reading, Independent Reading, and Word Study as well as a daily 30 minute ELA block of WIN (What I Need). WIN time is our Response to Instruction (RTI) and how we enrich learning or reteach concepts as needed determined by exit tickets, common formative assessments, progress monitoring and district assessments.

Each day, students in all grades receive 90 minutes of math. The majority of math instruction utilizes EngageNY. Students develop a strong basis of mathematical understanding through scaffolded instruction and spiraling concepts. Daily routines strengthen students' number sense, computational practice, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. Our teachers have a child-centered approach to teaching math. Through engaging activities aligned to standards, students discuss and solve real world problems and support their thinking using meta-cognition strategies. TERC Investigations lessons are incorporated during our daily 30 minutes of Math WIN and provide a different approach to learning and mastering concepts. Differentiation for all learners - whether below, at, or above grade level, is systematic through whole group and small group instruction, WIN Time, and hands-on applications. Students practice these skills through station rotations, menu activities and collaborative work time.

A wide variety of instructional materials and technology are used to support Science and Social Studies. Beginning in kindergarten and building in complexity through 5th grade, the science curriculum develops strong foundational skills in scientific inquiry. Founded in the ACCRS, learning is supported with district created science kits that provide hands-on learning experiences. These resources, in conjunction with supporting ELA content, drive mastery of the science standards. Field trip opportunities engage students in inquiry based learning and include: 5th grade Math and Science Camp, the Phoenix Herpetological Society, the Wildlife World Zoo, Mesquite Wildlife Oasis, and Project Wet (an organization that provides interactive water education).

Our Social Studies curriculum is supported in ELA, and integrates research, writing, listening and speaking skills as students learn about our world. Many teachers incorporate interactive notebooks, encouraging students to summarize their learning and develop questioning techniques. Arizona Weekly Readers, Scholastic Readers, and CNN Student News provide students with rich print and text, while exploring local and worldwide content. Throughout their K-5 education, students work to expand their citizenship skills and their individual impact on communities. Kindergarten through 2nd grade lays the foundation for citizenship through student roles in class and local communities. Citizenship expands in 3rd - 5th grades, as students become active participants in community outreach through volunteer hours and collection of goods. This year, for example, 152 4th graders learned about their role in the government at the State Capital, while 142 - 5th graders developed citizenship through active participation in an economy setting at JA Biztown.

Palm Valley's Traditional Academy engages students in an accelerated program. One classroom per grade

level is dedicated to this hands-on, whole world approach to learning. Students are challenged by the curriculum, Core Knowledge and Singapore Math. ELA standards are mastered through science and social studies content. Math standards are presented through complex tasks and word problems. While participation in the Traditional Academy leans heavily toward our gifted learners, all students who are seeking an accelerated, more hands-on approach to learning are welcome.

The Early Childhood Education Program curriculum, developmental and hands-on, provides students opportunities to learn about self, family, and community. Grounded in the Arizona Early Childhood Education Standards, concepts are presented through multi-sensory activities including games, songs, and movement.

Teaching Strategies GOLD is used to monitor student growth. Teachers observe and document growth by analyzing skills in specific objectives and behaviors as indicators of learning. Frontline Phonics is implemented in all district preschool programs. Social emotional learning, supported by PATHS, emphasizes peaceful conflict resolution. Conscious Discipline structures are incorporated to build class community, model/coach conflict resolution, and teach mindfulness.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Palm Valley offers many exceptional opportunities for all students to continue their learning through health and wellness, the arts, language, and technology. We believe that well-rounded students think critically, creatively problem-solve, work collaboratively, and become lifelong learners.

Students in Kindergarten-5th grade participate in 40 minutes weekly in each of the following areas: Physical Education, Music, Art, Technology, and Media. These core 40-minute classes occur Monday through Thursday. Students also participate in self-selected electives for 40 minutes on Fridays. Opportunities change quarterly, offering all 826 students a diverse menu of activities. Electives classes offered at Palm Valley have included: Drama, Karate, Physical Fitness Boot-Camp, Lego Robotics, Computer Coding, Music & Movement, Healthy Habits, Yoga, and Tennis. We believe that providing students specialized classes and electives enhances their educational experience, providing access for all, and a variety of enrichment opportunities.

Our Physical Education classes teach students the importance of being physically active as well as health, nutrition, science, fine/gross motor skills, and movement. These elements directly impact their bodies' health and wellbeing now through adulthood. Palm Valley has a Fitness Center and Gymnasium that provides students and staff opportunities to become physically active in and out of the school day. Although, students attend PE for 40 minutes a week, the Fitness Center allows for daily physical activity. Our PE teacher also provides intervention courses, as an elective option, to students that may be behind their peers in motor movement. Twice a week students are able to participate in our Cardio Club (running club) before school. We also offer Girls on the Run for 3rd-5th grade, and Let Me Run for 4th-5th grade boys. Consistently, these self-esteem building running clubs operate at full capacity with a waiting list. Annually, our students also participate in the NFL Punt, Pass & Kick program as well as ELKS Hoop Shoot Tournaments.

In addition to developing mastery in the music standards, students practice a variety of skills including singing, composing music, learning and playing instruments. Students in 4th and 5th grade can also participate in Chorus, which meets twice a week. These students perform throughout the year at many different events such as VetFest, MLB Diamondbacks Games, NHL Coyote Hockey Games, the Arizona State Capital, as well as our monthly assemblies and other local events.

Keeping abreast of the ever-changing growth in technology applications in the real world, Palm Valley has worked diligently to teach students the skills necessary to prepare them for 21st century learning. Weekly, all students have a technology class where they practice keyboard skills, learn computer coding, and utilize programs that challenge their learning and expand their research needs. A second, open schedule computer lab is available for application of skills learned in technology. Grade levels (2nd - 5th) have access to laptop carts and K-1st have classroom computers to extend and enrich classroom learning.

Art, offered weekly, exposes students to not only a variety of media, but foundational skills for drawing and interpreting art. Students study historical pieces ranging from hieroglyphics to the renaissance era to post-modern expression, while practicing skills featuring mixed medias such as paint, watercolor, marker, colored pencils, pastels and charcoal.

Language opportunities are available through our Traditional Academy program. Spanish is offered twice a week, affording students exposure to a second language as well as an opportunity to communicate with each other in another language. This language strand builds upon itself over the K-5 program, developing from basic word recognition to conversational language.

In addition to specialized classes and electives, Palm Valley provides after school clubs for students which expand what they are learning in electives. After school options have included: Spanish, Chess, Yearbook, Garden Club, Character Club, Odyssey of the Mind, Math Challenge Team, Digital Story Writers Club, Yoga, Drama, and Golf lessons.

Students in all grades participate in our annual Showcase Night. This culminating event for our students allows them to share what they have learned throughout the year. Projects completed in art, science, social studies, history, writing, math and more are available for review by our school community during this much-anticipated event. Our Chorus performs as their end of the year finale' and our Spanish classes share the learning that has taken place.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

“Model, model, model” is the credo of Palm Valley’s leadership and instructional staff. All instruction is introduced through a think-aloud strategy that shares with students a cognitive approach to learning. Differentiated lessons are crafted with the outcome in mind and specific scaffolded strategies to ensure that all students are supported in their learning. From exit tickets in math, to short response citing evidence in written response, students continually demonstrate their thinking processes and justification of their answers.

All teachers work diligently to ensure high levels of learning for all students, whether at, above, or below grade level. To support teachers and students in this endeavor, two daily 30-minute periods are dedicated to student W.I.N. time (What I Need), one each in reading and math. In this tiered instructional approach to enrichment and remediation, students get dedicated time for learning tailored specifically for them. The lessons meet the needs of the students, whether they get enrichment lessons, extra practice, or re-teaching of material. These groups are fluid and are based on data collected during Tier 1 instruction, formative assessments, and benchmark results. Daily small group instruction includes: guided reading groups, Daily 5, math skill rotations and writer’s workshop.

Success of our students relies on a collaborative approach between classroom teachers and specialists. Four days a week, Tier 3 instruction is provided by a cadre of highly skilled certified and support staff. Students needing the most intervention to close the achievement gap have support from our specialists. ELL, reading specialist, special education, and trained support staff offer students multiple opportunities for practice leading to mastery. This model incorporates Foundations, Read Naturally, Wilson reading, Just Words, Rewards Vocabulary, Do the Math, Touch Math and Step Up to Writing. All interventions are designed with the individual learner in mind, and frequent assessment of their learning helps to keep intervention groups fluid.

Recognizing the need to challenge all learners to reach their full potential, Palm Valley’s Traditional Academy is an accelerated program offering students a more global and project based approach to learning. One classroom per grade level is dedicated to this learning environment. Utilizing Core Knowledge and Singapore Math, this program challenges students to not only master academic standards, but to synthesize their learning across the curriculum. The content is both rigorous and fast-paced, and has an emphasis in science, social studies and project based inquiry. This program includes a majority of our gifted students but is inclusive of all students seeking a challenging and compacted curriculum.

A key component for improving student achievement is our RTI (Response to Instruction) process. Teachers present student concerns at a monthly PLC meeting with grade level teams, principal, instructional coach, school psychologist, reading specialist and special education teacher. These meetings address both academic and social/emotional matters. Data for these meetings is based on a range of sources: district reading and math benchmarks, previous year's state assessment results, DIBELS benchmark and progress monitoring scores, WIST, Core Reading Assessments, behavior plan data, and CogAT gifted testing results. Data is analyzed, and a plan of action is developed. Within 4-6 weeks, we meet again to review student progress data and determine next steps to ensure academic and social/emotional success.

In all grades, K-5, student progress is monitored and planning is data driven. With many approaches to student learning, it is critical for grade level teams to design and implement common formative assessments to guide instruction. The development of these assessments focuses discussions on the high expectations of teachers for student mastery. Once the formative assessments are developed and given, teachers review student results and design instruction to maximize learning. WIN groups are formed, planning focuses on individual student needs, and additional instruction is given. A posttest is administered to determine student mastery and the process begins again continuing our RTI cycle. As a result, teachers are not only able to identify students' gaps in learning, but identify instructional strengths. In addition, all second graders are screened for formal gifted testing in the spring using the CogAT. Last year, 13 students were identified. This all-encompassing approach to provide students with what they need, improves student mastery while increasing instructional effectiveness of our teachers.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our motto, “Once a Thunderbird, Always a Thunderbird,” epitomizes our belief that a successful school functions as a family. Our Thunderbird Family is all-inclusive - from our students, to parents, teachers, administration, café, office, to support staff. The core values of family are embedded in all that we do at Palm Valley Elementary.

Each morning we start the day with the Pledge of Allegiance and Thunderbird Code of Character. Our code reminds students to wear their C.A.P.E. “Character, Attitude, Principles and Excellence” with pride in everything they do. Students participate in classroom rituals by sharing “Celebrations” and “Wish You Wells,” strengthening classroom families and fostering community.

We emphasize student excellence not only through achievement, but through our relationships and school/community involvement. Our PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) approach to discipline focuses on maximizing teachable moments, ensuring students and staff use the same language and have the same clear expectations. We highlight positive behaviors and students receive recognition through CAPE tickets reflecting outstanding character. These “shout-outs” are shared on morning announcements and postcards sent home! Teachers and staff are celebrated similarly with Rock-Its, which boost staff morale by providing specific praise and public celebration. Quarterly appreciation for our teachers and staff include, breakfast by administration, drink carts after breaks, and team building activities. In addition, teachers are designated a weekly, uninterrupted 80-minute collaborative planning block, deepening peer relationships while growing instructional practices and reflections.

The social/emotional development of all our students is paramount to our success. Teachers provide weekly Community Circle activities in their classrooms to cultivate their classroom families, while practicing and learning social skills. Students in 2nd through 5th grade also have the opportunity to participate in Inclusion Revolution, which allows students to peer tutor weekly in one of our three self-contained classrooms. Approximately 125 students participate quarterly in this program, allowing students in self-contained classrooms to experience unique opportunities to mainstream more effectively, and quickly, into general education by building friendships, empathy, and compassion.

We join together as a Thunderbird Family to celebrate our staff and student accomplishments at our monthly Patriotic Assembly. Students are honored as Students of the Month (academic/social growth), Super Powers of the Month (the six Pillars of Character), and the World Changer Award (students, staff, and/or community members who make a lasting difference in our world). Together, we make an infinite impact on those around us!

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Palm Valley has a rich history and culture of family and community involvement that is held by all stakeholders. We strive to create opportunities for all families to become active and involved in their child’s schooling through parent education and volunteer opportunities. Our Reading Specialist coordinates and trains volunteers. This face-to-face interaction is another facet of educating parents and helping them feel a part of our Thunderbird Family. Parents are trained with volunteer expectations and how to support teachers through running small groups and reading support.

Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is ingrained in the Thunderbird culture. Many of the events our PTO offers provide opportunities for positive relationships among students, staff, parents and community members. PTO hosts a number of events throughout the year such as our Curriculum Night Ice Cream Social, Harvest Festival, VIP Dance, Holiday Night, Campus Clean Up, and Book Fairs. Parent Universities provide parent education on different topics such as state assessments, homework support, anti-bullying initiatives, T-Off for Thunderbirds Golf Tournaments, and Parents’ Night Out opportunities.

Our Site Council is a group of staff, parents, community members and administration, assists in developing our school improvement plan and campus initiatives. An annual survey is provided to all staff and parents with the focus on successes and areas of improvement for our school. Using this information, along with data and assessments, provides a strong foundation for improvement and success.

Other opportunities for community involvement happen with our local community college nursing program, providing college students an opportunity to complete their pediatric rotation by teaching Healthy Habits classes to our students and supporting our nurse with annual physical exams. A local church has adopted our school and provides weekly support on our playground, helping to build an anti-bullying program, supporting campus clean up initiatives with man-power and financial support, sending notes to teachers along with supporting needy families with backpacks, clothing and school supplies.

Palm Valley effectively communicates with all stakeholders. With a strong military and foreign student representation, communication is key to community involvement. Our weekly Thunderbird Gazette shares our celebrations, successes, and important information and is emailed out to all parents and shared on Facebook. School and teacher websites provide extensive information for our families. Teachers and staff are involved in students' activities, going to ball games, plays, competitions and more. Additionally, the staff adopts families during the holiday season.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development in the Litchfield School District focuses on district and school wide needs. A cadre of 24 coaches, with concentrations ranging from elementary and middle school, to special education and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS), implement professional development tailored to the needs of campuses. Academic and instructional knowledge is based on our guaranteed and viable curriculum, the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards.

Palm Valley's professional development plan is guided by our teachers' needs to refine and enhance instructional practices based on observations during walkthroughs and areas identified by individual teachers for personal growth. While there are opportunities throughout the year to deliver staff-wide professional development, we customize implementation based on individual grade level and teacher needs. A critical component to our professional development is the opportunity to vertically align standards and instruction with grades above and below. This deepens standards progression knowledge, strengthens school-wide collaboration, and offers teachers the opportunity to hone foundational skills for their grade levels for deeper learning. Book studies, such as "Mindset" by Carol Dweck, are offered as optional professional development. In this case, 21 staff chose to participate in the after school book study and subsequently brought their learning back to the classroom to challenge students to develop a growth mindset.

School leadership recognized the need for teachers to have extended collaboration time embedded within the school day. Our administration attended DuFour's PLC workshop and then led discussions with teams on the concept of teamwork versus collaboration. This year long study of how to build collaboration among our peers moved discussions from planning practices to identifying student needs. Along with weekly PLC meetings attended by the principal, instructional coach, reading specialist, special education teacher, and our school psychologist, grade level teams have a scheduled, uninterrupted 80-minute block for collaboration. During this time, teams discuss data results, develop common formative assessments, and identify mastery levels for tiered intervention. These times are sacred to our teams and our administration will teach special area periods that would be impacted by absent staff.

Key to the successful implementation of professional development strategies is a variety of tools to support instructional practices. Technology based supports include Study Island, Edulastic, Reading Eggs and Reading Express, MobyMax, iXcel, Adapted Mind, XtraMath, Reading A-Z, and ReadWorks. These provide teachers with computer generated practice lessons as well as an additional data source to benchmark student growth and options for remediation and enrichment.

4. School Leadership:

Palm Valley's leadership philosophy embraces our district's Mission Believe with a clear focus on school communities as a place where all stakeholders actively support and believe in the growth and success of all members. Whether academic, or social/emotional in nature, we strive to build a dynamic school community of leaders.

Our principal models and exemplifies a servant leader with decisions founded on what is best for students. Her knowledgeable guidance ensures everyone has the resources to meet ambitious school objectives and initiatives. "You Know My Name, But Not My Story," a two-day professional development experience for staff, focused on learning about our students as children. Coupled with Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS), we promote peaceful conflict resolutions. These learning experiences positively impact our students' self-esteem and leadership opportunities.

A diverse range of leadership roles reflects the dedication of our students, staff, and families alike. Students at Palm Valley play a key role in school leadership. Student Council members drive several school/community initiatives, sponsoring and organizing food drives, and community outreach. National Elementary Honor Society provides after school tutors for struggling students, and CAPE Crusaders, (Character, Attitude, Principles, and Excellence), raised funds to provide a Buddy Bench on our playground to build friendships during recess times. Together, these student groups provide outreach and mentoring for community causes, opportunities for growing students' academic achievements, and promote strong student relationships.

Our monthly Thunderbird Council Leadership Team discusses topics affecting our students and school community. The team includes the principal, instructional coach, one teacher from each grade level, self-contained, and specialized classes who choose to serve on the team. Team members seek input from peers bringing a solutions oriented mindset to problem solving and growing our school leadership capacity.

Families and community support play a vital leadership role. Site Council consists of parents, certified, and classified staff working with our principal to review and evaluate school improvement programs, school budget decisions, and analysis of school-wide achievement data. P.T.O. plays a fundamental leadership role as it pertains to school initiatives focused on students and staff. In an era of budget cuts and doing more with less, our P.T.O. has fundraised to provide additional technology for our school as well as an upgrade of our wireless capabilities. Under our principal's leadership, our school embraces matching talents to leadership opportunities in order to create a community where everyone will be called upon to lead.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The understanding and application of data driven instruction is developed in our grade level Professional Learning Communities (PLC). The academic success of Palm Valley students is strengthened by collaborative discussions focused on forming tiered interventions for all students and all abilities. Our PLCs are not "weekly meetings," we do not "do" PLCs, rather we "are" PLCs in everything we do together. PLCs occur whenever we come together purposefully to discuss students, data, and curriculum.

Formal PLCs happen in weekly 80-minute collaboration, Professional Development (PD) days, and weekly scheduled meetings with administration and specialized interventionists. During these times, teachers focus on DuFour's Four Essential questions: What do we expect our students to learn? How will we know they are learning? How will we respond if they do not learn? How will we respond if they already know it?

Collaborative conversations focus on what we expect students to learn. In response, PD is designed for all teacher skill levels and focused on building strong foundations in Common Formative Assessment (CFAs) development. Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels for content standards are studied to ensure that assessment development is at the correct DOK level, is focused on specific task demands within the standard, and is a valid and reliable test of student learning.

The next step is determining what the students have learned as a result of our instruction. Once CFAs are written and administered, data analysis begins. Assessment questions are designed to test each level of learning. For example, if a task demand is at a DOK level 2, questions will address both DOK 1 and DOK 2. This systematic approach to assessment allows teachers to drill down to identify the gaps in student learning and scaffold instruction accordingly.

Response to Instruction (RTI) is designed for all students: re-teach, additional practice, and enrichment. WIN groupings are formed, based on student mastery of skills and concepts on the post-assessment. WIN groups are fluid and constantly changing depending on students' skill mastery and informal assessments guide teacher instruction. Vertical alignment drives collaboration among the grade levels as teachers seek out expertise and resources to support their WIN enrichment and remediation instruction.

This cycle of instruction, assessment, scaffolded instruction, and post assessment relies on strong collaborative skills among teams. With the guidance of administration and teacher leaders, our staff has embraced the collaborative process and has become true PLCs.