

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 [X] Choice

Name of Principal Dr. Scott B.G.P. Blackwell

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

Official School Name Leffingwell Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 10625 Santa Gertrudes Avenue

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

City Whittier State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 90603-2441

County Los Angeles County

Telephone (562) 907-6300 Fax (562) 943-2445

Web site/URL http://www.leffingwellschool.com E-mail sblackwell@ewcsd.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. Marc Patterson E-mail mpatterson@ewcsd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name East Whittier City School District Tel. (562) 907-5900

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. Paul Gardiner
(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):
- 10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 13 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	46	45	91
1	55	44	99
2	42	54	96
3	48	65	113
4	50	46	96
5	56	70	126
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	297	324	621

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 68 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 26 % White
 - 3 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2015 – 2016 school year: 8%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	40
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	55
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	654
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.084
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

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):
Filipino, French, Korean, Russian, Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 28 %
Total number students who qualify: 172

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
97 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>21</u> Autism | <u>6</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>22</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>12</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>20</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 26:1
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	97%	96%	96%	96%	97%
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 X

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.

We are committed to knowing our students as unique/special individuals in order to challenge them at current levels and help them reach their potential.

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

Students attend Leffingwell based upon their home address. Students that do not reside within the Leffingwell attendance boundary can enroll if they have an approved permit. Permits are approved if spots are available based upon the order received according to school board policy. Currently, 67% of our students are residents, and 33% attend on permits.

PART III – SUMMARY

Walking onto the Leffingwell campus, Home of the Leopards, a visitor would recognize the Paw Pride in the leopard print clothing the students are wearing. From the parking lot, a guest might hear school songs playing and discover children of all ages, races, and physical abilities dancing together.

Leffingwell is a child-centered school that prides itself on working closely with families to create an exceptional learning environment for our students. As a result, the state selected Leffingwell as a California Distinguished School, and California Business for Education Excellence named Leffingwell as an Honor Roll Scholar School five times. In addition, Leffingwell is one of the highest performing elementary schools in our surrounding area according to recent state test results.

Leffingwell was once a Developmental Center for students with disabilities. However, with increased District enrollment and the state's thrust to eliminate segregated school sites, Leffingwell reopened to include general education students in 1990. Our school has derived inspiration from a common purpose, charting new paths, developing new traditions, and creating a model for the integration of children with special needs. Leffingwell quickly established a reputation of openness to the community, of having an extremely positive staff dedicated to academic success, and as a school that treasured the uniqueness of its diversified student body. We are very diverse on many levels (different ethnicities, different socio-economic levels, different ability levels) yet it is those differences that serve to unify our school.

Leffingwell Elementary School is located in "Ye Friendly Towne" of Whittier, California within Los Angeles County. The student body is made up of 68% Hispanic, 26% White, 3% Asian, and 3% multiple races. Leffingwell is part of a very family-oriented community with parents that are invested in their children's education. Leffingwell has become one of the most sought after schools in the area. Under consistent and steady leadership, the enrollment has grown by 250 students (371 to 621) since 2008 during a period of time when most local schools were in declining enrollment. Leffingwell is part of the East Whittier City School District, which has 10 elementary schools and 3 middle schools. Presently, Leffingwell is comprised of an Infant-Family Program that services approximately 70 students with various disabilities (birth until 3 years of age), 23 general education classrooms (K-5th), a Learning Center for students with mild to moderate disabilities, and two classrooms for students with moderate to severe disabilities. Our general education and special education students are integrated for many activities and special education students mainstream into general education classrooms for portions of the day. Leffingwell is a spirited, fun-loving place for children to learn and wonder, a place where each child is respected, loved, and valued. This unique environment creates a one-of-a-kind school where students learn compassion in their day-to-day activities and are comfortable helping other students that may not look or act exactly like they do.

Leffingwell is committed to helping each child achieve academic success. Our teachers care deeply about their students, and it shows! Teachers work together to provide engaging and stimulating lessons that bring textbooks to life! Our teachers frequently assess their students so they can provide targeted support as needed. Students that need additional support in reading or math receive small group instruction during the day. We have an intervention specialist to support the teachers and students as needed, as well as a counselor to provide behavioral support. After school enrichment classes (Spanish, Art, Drama, Piano, Guitar, Chess, and Comic Creators) are available throughout the year. Our GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) students are challenged both in the classroom through differentiated instruction and at weekly GATE enrichment classes.

Staff members work together strategically to create a network of support for our students. Program Implementation Days provide time each Tuesday to support our instructional program through staff development and planning. On these days, students are dismissed an hour early. Teacher Training Days provide time for in depth training on best practices or new curriculum.

In addition, we have Collaboration Days twice a month where each grade level teacher is freed up so that grade level teams can work and plan together during the school day. During this time, students receive

enriching instruction in the visual and performing arts (VAPA). The goals of our collaboration time are to get stronger as grade level teams at supporting our students, to regularly monitor student progress at meeting grade level standards, and to develop a consistent filter for struggling students to go through to get additional support during the school day as needed.

Leffingwell Paw Pride is alive on our campus and within our community. Our extremely positive, student-centered climate can be felt from the moment you walk onto the campus. We are a cohesive staff that cares deeply about kids and works tirelessly to help each student achieve their potential.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The California standards provide the foundation for our core curriculum. Our goal is to provide a balanced, comprehensive, standards-aligned curriculum using research-based instructional/engagement strategies in order to ensure student success. Technology is utilized across the grades/subjects to enhance our core curriculum. Monthly teacher collaboration time is used to plan lessons, analyze assessment results, plan re-teaching/intervention activities, and develop hands-on enriching activities that bring lessons to life.

Our District adopted the McGraw-Hill Wonders Language Arts curriculum recently. This curriculum gives teachers the resources to provide students with a balanced literacy program that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, spelling, grammar, and writing. The program also contains a wealth of online components that teachers use for skills practice and mapping progress, as well as extra resources tailored to meet the needs of English learners and gifted students. Our teachers utilize Fry sight words to help students master high frequency words, National Vocabulary Lists to increase word recognition and understanding, and Accelerated Reader to track comprehension levels while ensuring students are selecting books that are both appropriate and challenging. Writing is emphasized in all grades. Students begin in kindergarten learning to write in a variety of genres (narratives, opinions, informational) and each grade sequentially builds/spirals upon the previous one. Students learn the analytical technique of Close Reading to facilitate critically thinking and comprehension. Grade level teams work closely together to ensure curriculum is implemented consistently from class to class so students learn the foundational skills that are sequentially needed from one grade to the next.

Our PTA helps support literacy skills and encourages a love for reading through our monthly Leopard Spot program. Students that complete monthly reading logs earn a ticket to shop at our Leopard Spot Store. In addition, teachers set individual trimester reading goals for students through our Accelerated Reader program. The principal has a reward party for students that meet their goals.

Our District invested in Scott Foresman enVision Math curriculum. An emphasis is placed on developing mathematical reasoning skills. We want our students to be able to compute with accuracy, but also to understand the how/why behind problems and that there are often multiple ways to arrive at a solution. Our teachers received training in the 8 mathematical practices that proficient students possess. We want our students to be able to reason mathematically and apply mathematics to solve real-world problems. Concepts strategically build upon each other from grade to grade so that students become proficient in algebraic thinking, numbers/operations in base ten, measurement/data, and geometry. Teachers initiate programs with incentives to encourage proficiency in basic math facts as they form the foundation for solving most math problems. Teachers frequently use manipulatives, small group re-teaching, and educational websites to enhance skills and help students master standards.

Following the California standards, our History-Social Studies curriculum is published by Harcourt School Publishers. The curriculum is designed to instill civic values and an appreciation of our rights and responsibilities as American citizens. Along with reading and direct instruction of the various grade level topics, our students also complete projects and participate in simulations in order to bring the material to life. For example, our students participate in Farm Day (K), Habitat Day (1st), Community Day (2nd), Ancestor Day (2nd), Patriotic Day (3rd), Native American Day (4th and 5th), Square Dancing (4th), and Gold Rush Week (4th). Gold Rush Week is an extra special event as part of our campus is transformed into a Gold Rush town, students dress in authentic clothing, pan for gold, and experience what life was like during this era. These activities serve to develop an understanding of our heritage and a sense of national identity. In addition, most of our field trips are planned to compliment the Social Studies and Science curriculum.

We are currently transitioning to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Many of the Science concepts are currently embedded within our Language Arts program or taught through hands-on units of study to facilitate the retention of ideas and further enrich students' understanding of new skills. Our new

Language Arts curriculum has many NGSS materials, articles, videos, and experiments that are available online for teachers. This year all our teachers attended training by West Ed on the new standards. Several teachers have served on District-level committees that designed Science units for each grade level to use that target the new standards. Each grade level covers specific life science, earth/space science, and physical science topics. Learning investigation and experimentation skills are key foundational concepts that our teachers seek to instill within our students. Students participate in Science-based field trips, such as the Downey Space Center, nature walks, and Aquarium of the Pacific. Our 5th grade students will pioneer a field examination of the new online state Science test.

Our solid core curriculum combined with visionary teachers dedicated to helping students succeed has led to consistent growth in all academic arenas.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

It is our desire to provide a well-balanced, comprehensive education for our students in an engaging and stimulating learning environment. Beyond our core courses, we offer a robust curriculum in a variety of other subjects.

Our District has helped support bringing more visual and performing arts into our classrooms. Multiple times per month a team of VAPA teachers come and work with our students. The dance teacher exposes our students to a variety of cultural routines. The art teacher instructs our students on different art techniques, and students produce artwork based on the styles of famous artists. The music teacher introduces our students to a variety of musical genres, and they enjoy making melodies and memories together. The P.E. teacher familiarizes our students with sports/activities that promote a healthy and active lifestyle. We also have P.E. coaches and assistants that are at Leffingwell daily helping teachers provide quality physical education instruction.

The arts have always played a big role at Leffingwell. Dance is a natural and effective “mixer” for general and special education students. For the past ten years we have held the Leffingwell School Musical. Each grade level learns a dance routine based on the theme of the show. The annual show is widely attended by the community and always fills up the local high school’s 2500 seat auditorium. Students can earn 10 extra minutes of recess on “Fun Friday”. During this time, the sound system is brought out to the playground and students, teachers, and instructional assistants enjoy dancing to the songs of some of our recent musicals led by a teacher/DJ. Likewise, several of our grade levels perform plays/musicals during the school year that our student body and community enjoy.

Our teachers consistently integrate art across the curriculum. From art projects to reader’s theater to grade level plays/musicals, the arts are used to reinforce student learning at all grade levels. Our District started an arts foundation, which helps provide teachers with mini-grants to creatively bring the arts into their classrooms. Each year at Open House we transform our cafeteria into an art gallery and a piece of artwork from every student within the school is on display for our parents and community. This year all our 5th grade students have been participating in a piano class where they learn the basics of reading music and proper keyboard fingering.

A kindness campaign was launched with our students this year in order to promote a culture of caring and respect for each other. It is called “Dude Be Nice”! Our PTA purchased “Dude Be Nice” t-shirts for all our students/staff, and we wear them every Wednesday (We Care Wednesday). We have encouraged our students to look for ways to show kindness throughout the day, challenged classrooms to complete a kindness project, and we will be doing a school-wide project as well.

High achieving students can qualify for our GATE program beginning in 3rd grade. Students that qualify are challenged within their classrooms through differentiated instruction. They are pulled out in the afternoons for our GATE enrichment classes. We have a GATE teacher that provides mini-classes throughout the year. Each one is focused on a different topic/subject area and meant to challenge those specific students. Recent classes have included: Brain Power (students learn about the science of the brain), Be Your Own Boss (students develop their own business/business plan), Architecture and Structural Design,

and CSI-An Introduction to Forensic Science. We also have special field trips for our GATE students that tie in with an enrichment class topic. English Learner (EL) students receive support within their classrooms through supplemental resources that are embedded within the curriculum. In addition, we have an EL instructional assistant that provides extra support for students as needed with phonics, sight words, fluency, and comprehension.

Technology is another crucial component of a successful 21st century school. We have worked hard to get technology into our classrooms with the help of our District and PTA. We currently have over 450 Chromebooks on campus for a better than 2:1 student to Chromebook ratio. We have over 125 iPads. Our principal has taken the lead to ensure teachers are well trained and supported. Problems are quickly resolved so that technology can help to support/enhance our already robust curriculum. Our technology curriculum has focused on developing internet skills, word processing skills, and proficiency with Google Apps for Education. A core group of teachers have pioneered Google Classroom as well. In 2015, our District developed a scope and sequence for technology standards, and we are beginning the process of ensuring students' technology skills sequentially build from one grade to the next so they become proficient and confident 21st century learners.

Finally, we offer a diverse selection of after school classes on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday that students can attend.

We believe that having a well-rounded curriculum has increased levels of success and helped keep student engagement high. Students are excited to come to Leffingwell each day due in large part to an intentional effort to provide the best curriculum and culture in a vibrant environment!

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Leffingwell teachers are committed to meeting the diverse needs of each student. They are an extremely dedicated group of teachers with strong instructional skills. We believe each student deserves high quality classroom instruction combined with classroom support/enrichment as needed. From early release Tuesdays to twice a month VAPA days, each grade level has time built into the schedule to collaborate, lesson plan, analyze data, brainstorm, and problem-solve together.

Through the years our instructional focus has always been on keeping it simple. First, we want each teacher to be a master of grade level content. They need to know exactly what they expect their students to learn so they can keep them focused and engaged. Next, we want to be extremely strategic in how we teach the material. Each student learns in different ways and at different rates. We start with strong first instruction, and then our teachers use research-based strategies to support/enrich learning as needed. Some common best practices used by our teachers include: small group instruction, cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, allowing wait time for cognitive processing, graphic organizers, higher level depth of knowledge questions, and frequent checking for understanding. Then, we monitor progress with formal/informal assessments. Finally, support or enrichment is provided as needed for students based on progress.

Our staff has benefitted from the support of our District that frequently provides relevant workshops, high quality teacher training opportunities, and TOSAs (Teachers on Special Assignment) that provide effective coaching in a variety of content areas. Recent trainings have focused on the new state standards in Language Arts and Mathematics, the instructional shifts required for success with Common Core standards, the eight mathematical practices that are important for students to develop, and technology. In addition, most teachers have been trained in GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) strategies and the Nancy Fetzer writing process. These have all contributed to helping teachers gain a variety of instructional strategies to utilize within their classrooms.

We use a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support model to provide interventions. Tier 1 consists of high quality classroom instruction combined with classroom interventions/modifications. We have an intervention specialist that is able to assist teachers with intervention ideas at this level if needed. Our intervention specialist then looks at data from common assessments and confers with teachers to determine which students are not making progress and need to move to tier 2 strategic intensive intervention. Our

intervention specialist (along with two part-time certificated teachers and one instructional assistant) creates and runs an intervention program that allows students to be pulled out and receive extra intensive small group instruction depending on the student needs. The grouping is flexible and students can be added or dropped at any time. Students that continue to struggle (despite Tier 1 & Tier 2 interventions) and show signs of a possible learning disability can be referred for a Student Study Team (SST) meeting.

Teachers use a variety of formal/informal assessments throughout the school year. Our Language Arts and Math programs have multiple assessments built into them. Teachers constantly assess informally to check for understanding through whiteboards, questioning strategies, and exit tickets. We use STAR Reading within the Accelerated Reader program to gauge reading levels along with the Scholastic Reading Inventory. We have multiple checkpoints throughout the year where students take District-wide common assessments. Third-fifth graders take the assessments online on Chromebooks to simulate the online state testing they will take in the spring. Third-fifth graders also participate in the interim assessments on the same testing system that is used for official state testing. After common assessments, each grade level participates in a data reflection meeting where the teachers analyze strengths/weaknesses, discuss areas for re-teaching, and look ahead to what standards/units are coming up so they can share lesson ideas/strategies for the next unit. A powerful strategy used through the years to help close achievement gaps is simply making sure teachers know which students belong to which subgroups (e.g., Socio-Economic Disadvantaged and Special Education). When we analyze data, we list each student and his/her subgroup(s). This allows us to quickly see if certain groups are not making expected progress and agree as a grade level to implement specific strategies to reverse the trend. Our teachers' use of research-based instructional strategies, frequent monitoring of progress, and timely interventions all work together to create a successful learning environment that our students deserve.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Leffingwell has made it a priority to create a school climate/culture that engages, motivates, and inspires students to work hard and reach for their potential. We have an extremely positive, student-centered climate with a cohesive staff that loves and cares deeply about kids. Teachers are comfortable with a diverse student body and possess strong instructional skills that allow them to meet the individual needs of students.

We affectionately refer to our way of doing things as “The Leffingwell Way.” We strive to provide a good mix of high academic expectations, parent involvement, and fun. We believe that when students are excited to come to school and parents are invested that success tends to follow.

Leffingwell is known for having lots of school-wide and grade level activities that reinforce what is learned within classrooms. Students look forward to the many different traditions they get to experience as they move through the grade levels. One activity that contributes to promoting a caring culture is our Big Buddy/Little Buddy program. Each primary class is buddied up with an upper grade class. Big buddies read with little buddies, help with projects, and celebrate class parties together. Little buddies get so excited to see their big buddies and always look forward to working with them.

Each year a new school-wide theme is developed. Teachers incorporate the theme into their classrooms, and it generates excitement as the theme/theme song are introduced at our kick-off assembly. Tuesday is college day where students wear college t-shirts and think about what their future might hold if they work hard. Wednesday is “We Care Wednesday” and students wear “Dude Be Nice” t-shirts purchased by PTA. We started a kindness campaign this year where we encourage students and classrooms to find simple ways to show kindness. Every Friday is a spirit day where students proudly wear their various Leffingwell t-shirts. We call it Fun Friday, and students that completed work/behaved all week earn 10 extra minutes of recess.

On Monday and Friday morning our principal leads an all school assembly on the blacktop. He leads the school in the flag salute, National Anthem, and uses the time to recognize student successes/reinforce student expectations. Many parents look forward to this time and make it a priority to attend.

The 4th/5th grade students are given an opportunity to participate in our Leopard Leadership program. These student leaders organize spirit days and plan charitable activities that foster a sense of community. We are fortunate to have a counselor that comes each week to assist teachers and students that need a little extra support.

We have a very positive climate for teachers. Our principal makes it a priority to support teachers and swiftly provide resources that are needed to successfully run their classrooms. Teachers take great pride in working at Leffingwell, form a cohesive team, and teacher turn over is very rare as a result.

It is no wonder that Leffingwell is one of the most sought after schools in the area by parents and homebuyers.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Leffingwell truly is like one big family! In fact, you often hear people refer to our school as their “Leffingwell Family.” We pride ourselves on connecting with families and partnering with them to create the best school possible. It is our goal for parents to be informed about what is going on and to get as involved as their schedules allow. One of the things we do for new incoming kindergarten families is plan monthly activities from the time enrollment begins until their first day of school as a Leffingwell Leopard. We want parents to start connecting and students to start making friends in order to feel comfortable and excited before the year even begins. Some of those kindergarten activities for new parents/students

include: Meet the Principal, School Tour, Kindergarten Preview Day, invitation to our Open House and Family Fun Night, Lunch at Leffingwell, and a Story Time/Learn the Playground Rules with the Principal.

Throughout the year our many school activities help to create a bond and foster a strong sense of community. There are constantly school-wide and grade level activities going on to enhance the curriculum and excite/engage students and families in the learning process while building school spirit. From our many curriculum-based grade level events to our School Musical to our family-based PTA events, Leffingwell is a thriving community! One activity that demonstrates this community, sponsored by PTA, is our Leopard Hugs program. Leopard Hugs is a team of parents that come alongside families in need to provide meals, rides to school, and other supports.

Opportunities for parent involvement are plentiful. Teachers recruit volunteers to help within classrooms, and PTA mobilizes parent teams to plan events. In addition, we seek to keep students/families engaged during vacation through our Summer Reading Challenge and Leffingwell T-Shirt Challenge, where families send pictures wearing Leffingwell t-shirts on fun summer adventures for our back to school office bulletin board. Leffingwell is known for having high parent involvement and a strong parent presence on campus.

Frequent communication keeps our Leffingwell community aware of activities and upcoming functions. We utilize an interactive website, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to push out weekly news. We use Blackboard Connect to send out all-school phone calls and emails as needed. Each month we publish a newsletter that goes home with students and is available digitally on social media feeds. We want every parent to always know what is going on and feel proud to send their child to Leffingwell. As a result, families get very connected within our Leffingwell community and often continue to volunteer even after their children have moved on to middle school and beyond!

3. Professional Development:

Continual professional development and scheduling time for teachers to collaborate on teaching have become keys to our instructional success. Establishing and maintaining a culture of ongoing learning has elevated Leffingwell from a successful school to an extremely successful, high achieving, gap closing school that was nominated to become a National Blue Ribbon School.

Our principal and teacher leaders attended training on professional learning communities (PLCs) by Richard DuFour. What he shared resonated due to its simple and clear focus. The four essential questions of PLCs became our guiding questions as a staff. The questions focus on knowing exactly what students are expected to learn, utilizing assessments to gauge learning, interventions when students are not learning, and enrichment when information is already mastered.

Instead of getting distracted by the many fads that move through education, we have maintained our focus on getting better at these four things. As a result, professional development in recent years has kept these at the center.

Key areas of focus for professional development recently have included: transitioning to the new California State Standards in Language Arts and Math (Common Core), small group instruction, differentiated instruction, technology, new Language Arts curriculum, and transitioning to the Next Generation Science Standards.

Our District and Educational Support Services (ESS) Department have provided the support and structure needed to implement a successful professional learning community. Our District sends a VAPA team of teachers twice a month. This frees up time for teachers to meet as a grade level during the day for collaboration.

Tuesday is an early release day for students, which provides additional time for grade level partnership or targeted staff development. This year our ESS Department provided three District-wide professional development opportunities on early release Tuesdays where teachers picked a workshop to attend based on

their area of interest. We have three full Teacher Training Days throughout the year, which has provided our staff with high quality professional development and the ability to collaborate with teachers across the District. In addition, we have several highly skilled TOSAs available through our ESS Department (Language Arts, Math, Technology) that have helped with staff trainings and go into classrooms to co-teach/coach our teachers as they try out new strategies. Our various District departments offer leadership training throughout the year combined with multiple opportunities per month for our principal to collaborate and learn with administrators from other sites.

All these different opportunities for staff development have greatly increased the collective knowledge among staff members and have inspired us to keep learning and growing, thus our students receive the best education possible!

4. School Leadership:

The principal is responsible for the leadership, vision, and direction of our school. However, we utilize a shared leadership model where all stakeholders contribute and work together to create a positive/successful environment. Our principal has an open door and gathers input from teachers, staff, and parents before making decisions. As a result, everyone feels invested and works in unison to help students reach their potential.

Before each year begins, the principal, teachers, and PTA develop a theme/theme song for the upcoming year. A new logo is designed and used on our school t-shirt and materials throughout the year. Teachers incorporate the theme into their classrooms, and it generates excitement as the theme/song are unveiled. Recent themes have included: Leffingwell Speedway - Revvin' Up for Success and Camp Leffingwell - An Adventure in Education.

Each year begins with a Teacher Training Day where the principal/staff review test results, and the principal sets the vision/instructional goals for the year. In the fall, teachers meet individually with the principal to go over specific teacher goals based on overall school goals.

We have collaboration/reflection meetings twice per month where the principal is able to meet with each grade level to review upcoming lessons, analyze assessment results, discuss individual student needs, and plan upcoming events. During this time students receive VAPA lessons. Tuesday is an early release day, which frees up teachers to have common planning time or staff development on areas of need.

Our School Site Council (SSC) is another team (comprised of the principal, teachers, staff, and parents) that provides leadership. SSC reviews data, updates our school plan/safety plan, and looks for ways to make Leffingwell the best place possible for students.

Our Leopard Leadership program provides students with a chance to develop leadership skills as they work with school mentors to plan activities that build school spirit.

Our active PTA meets monthly and works tirelessly throughout the year to provide a variety of essential instructional resources. PTA leaders and the principal develop an annual budget aligned with school goals. Funds are used to support our nightly reading program, buy technology/technology programs, purchase books for classroom libraries, provide support for grade level activities, field trips, assemblies, ensure safety supplies are up-to-date, and provide many other classroom materials/supplies.

It is our principal's top priority to provide students with a safe and effective learning environment at a school they love coming to each day! Our principal ensures that the hard work by students, staff, and parents does not go unnoticed. Students are recognized at awards ceremonies and staff/parents at various luncheons during the year. Our principal models collaborative decision-making and involves stakeholders in decisions. He is highly accessible, approachable, can be found helping out in classrooms, fixing technology problems, interacting with students at recess, greeting students/parents in the morning, and offering words of encouragement throughout the day.

Shared leadership, a clear vision, supportive relationships built on trust, and a strong focus on student success all help make Leffingwell the amazing school it is!

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Collaboration time combined with a solid intervention program has played a major role in our overall academic success. This process has strengthened first instruction, improved teachers' ability to provide tier 1 intervention, built capacity among teachers, and allowed students to quickly receive needed supports in order to continue making strides. During collaboration, teachers creatively plan units together, ensure specific standards for units are appropriately taught, administer common assessments, analyze data for strengths/weaknesses, and commit as a grade level to utilizing specific instructional strategies during future lessons.

Under the direction of our intervention specialist, we have been able to provide tiers of intervention for students struggling academically and/or behaviorally. Our tiered approach seeks to prevent failure through early intervention, frequent progress monitoring, and increasingly intensive research-based interventions. Students who do not show a response to effective interventions are more likely to be in need of additional services. This year over 60 students have filtered through our intervention program with nearly 100% showing growth on pre- and post-tests in phonics, fluency, and reading assessments. For example, our 3rd grade intervention group grew on average from a 2.1 to 2.8 reading level (7 months) over a 5-month period.

Our intervention specialist, principal, and teachers review data and early assessments in the fall and create a prioritized list of students not making adequate progress despite interventions received within classrooms. Our intervention team creates/runs a program that allows students to receive extra intensive small group instruction based on need. The grouping is flexible and students can be added/dropped at any time. Students that continue to struggle and show signs of learning disabilities can be referred for an SST.

Students that require extra behavioral support to be successful are referred to our counselor. She is then able to check on them weekly, help teachers implement reward systems/behavior contracts, and hold weekly individual/small group counseling sessions to help students acquire skills for success. Our District offers a behavior support team for more involved cases if needed.

This process has proven highly effective. Our intervention program has streamlined the special education testing process. Nearly 100% of the students we elect to test qualify for services. As a result, our specialists are not bogged down with unnecessary testing. Overall academic performance as a school and within subgroups has risen annually using these strategies.

Under the previous accountability system, our Academic Performance Index score increased beyond 900. With new state testing, Leffingwell is one of the highest performing schools in our area. Proficiency levels have grown in all subject areas, grade levels, and within all subgroups during the two years of the new test. In Language Arts, we scored 26% above the county average and 23% above the state average. In Mathematics, we scored 30% above the county average and 28% above the state average. The results are clear that these educational elements are successfully working and making a tangible difference for students!