

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 Ms. Maureen Curtiss

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

Official School Name Dennison Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 401 Independence Street

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

City Lakewood State CO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 80226-1082

County Colorado (CO)

Telephone (303) 982-6382 Fax (303) 982-6383

Web site/URL http://www.dennisonblueribbon.com/ E-mail pamela.yoder@jeffco.k12.co.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. Jason Glass E-mail Jason.Glass@jeffco.k12.co.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Jefferson County School District No. R-1 Tel. (303) 982-6500

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. Ron Mitchell
(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):
 - 105 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 23 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 27 High schools
 - 4 K-12 schools

159 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	44	44	88
1	40	48	88
2	52	37	89
3	50	40	90
4	51	39	90
5	48	42	90
6	38	52	90
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	323	302	625

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 6 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 13 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 73 % 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: 0%

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	2
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	624
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.003
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	0

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7 %
50 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Russian, Lithuanian, Vietnamese, Czech, Chinese-Mandarin, German-Swiss, Swahili, Indonesian, Korean, Chinese-Yue, Greek, French, Malayalam, Nepali, Hungarian, Hindi,

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 5 %
Total number students who qualify: 32
8. Students receiving special education services: 2 %
12 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.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 7 Specific Learning Disability
- 4 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 1 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 24:1
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	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
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 X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2010

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

To provide a rigorous academic education that prepares all Dennison students for a successful future.

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

Families who wish to enroll their student in a school other than their assigned neighborhood school must complete a Choice Enrollment Application, available at schools or from the menu online, and submit it to their school of choice. Applications for First Round Choice Enrollment are accepted in January for the following school year. Students are accepted on a space available basis. Round one applications are prioritized through a lottery process. Waiting lists, which are prioritized, are created if applicants exceed space available at the school. A separate application must be completed and submitted for each child.

PART III – SUMMARY

Dennison Elementary in Lakewood, Colorado is an option/choice school within the Jefferson County School District. The 625 students attending Dennison are selected through a choice enrollment process utilizing a digital random selection process. No testing, prerequisites, or qualifications are considered in the process. Once students are enrolled, they most frequently remain at Dennison through 6th grade, which supports our low student mobility rate. As you might expect, families that go to the trouble of engaging in a choice enrollment process, are typically highly invested in their children's education and demonstrate support for their students. This is typically the case at Dennison, and parents, for the most part, support their children with studying and homework. They also support the mission of the school through involvement in leadership opportunities, volunteering, and fund raising.

The Dennison mission is to provide a rigorous academic education that prepares all Dennison students for a successful future. Originally named the Dennison Fundamental Alternative School when established in 1974, the school's model emphasized a "back-to-basics" approach. Through the years, Dennison has maintained the basic tenets of this philosophy, while continually enhancing this content rich, academically rigorous educational model for its students. Dennison has been honored with Blue Ribbon recognition twice before.

Dennison Elementary's curriculum is aligned with Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) and Jefferson County School District's Curriculum Alignment Project (C-CAP). Students' progress is formally assessed by the Colorado Measure of Academic Standards (CMAS) and the PARCC. The staff continually analyze formal and informal student data to drive instruction and ensure that students achieve, at a minimum, grade-level proficiency in all content areas. Highlights of the instructional model include: systematic and systemic content alignment and instruction; single grade, self-contained classrooms with an emphasis on whole group instruction; Open Court Reading Program emphasizing phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension; an emphasis on basic skills as well as critical thinking skills; problem-solving skill development across content areas; art, music, technology/library science, and physical education on a rotating schedule; extensive and varied opportunities for before and after school enrichment activities; high-level academic and behavioral expectations and support for all students; and highly aligned, scaffolded, and spiraling writing instruction.

All staff members participate in meaningful staff development that is aligned with the school's achievement goals. We collectively formulate school goals, grade level team goals, and differentiated teacher goals to facilitate professional growth and refine best practices to increase instructional effectiveness. The staff is tenaciously dedicated to the responsibility of supporting children to reach their academic and behavioral potential.

Additional strategies that contribute to encourage and support students are the robust Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI) that a part of the founding program and continue today. With such a rigorous instructional program, it is prudent and necessary to provide support for students, who may not be identified with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 status. All students have areas of strength and areas of challenge. Dennison is proactive in identifying and providing specific, targeted intervention in a tiered protocol early on to ensure students do not "fall through the cracks". The teaching staff utilize effective instructional strategies to support differences in learning styles during core instruction. The intervention team, consisting of a special education interventionist, highly trained educational assistants, and ESL support, provide research-based, targeted interventions in addition to the core curriculum.

The successes we are most proud of are: the number of students who achieve at high levels despite the fact that students do not submit cognitive testing data to enroll. The sustained high achievement over time and the student growth data are also accomplishments that correlate with opportunities for successful futures, thus, sources of pride.

Dennison has been previously recognized twice with this distinguished honor. The Blue Ribbon certification is a rare accolade and difficult to achieve. Ultimately it means we are doing our job for kids.

We want children to have no limits on their choices in life.

From a balcony perspective, families look at performance data and see the Blue Ribbon recognition, and are interested in Dennison. For Dennison students, the families want to be a part of a first-rate school. They are motivated to engage, volunteer, and support. For others, they are motivated to visit, ask questions, and network with us, which helps us improve as well. As a Blue Ribbon recipient, our commitment is to expand our efforts to share with others and further develop our expertise. We are dedicated to continually refining, improving, and networking with others to advance opportunities for children.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

A key characteristic of Dennison Elementary’s core program is the highly aligned, systemic, and systematic instruction. Additionally, a laser-like focus on data analysis and professional learning drives continuous improvement by honing content and practice. Our curriculum includes reading, language arts, mathematics, spelling, penmanship, science, and social studies. Teachers, administrators, and District personnel utilize a rigorous selection process to vet textbooks to ensure instructional resources address Colorado Academic Standards. All resources and assessments across content areas are aligned within grade levels, and vertical articulation in professional learning communities facilitates seamless spiraling across subject areas.

Colorado Academic Standards and the Jefferson County Content Standards (C-CAP) provide overarching content guidelines. With the advent of recent changes to educational standards, e.g., a focus on critical thinking, real world applications, and required skills in responding to what’s read, Dennison has employed informal and formal assessment data to refine instruction to address these career and college readiness skills. Instructional techniques to ensure student engagement and learning have also been fostered.

Strategies to ensure learning are varied and support differences in students’ skills, strengths, and preferred modalities for engagement. Each classroom employs the use of interactive white boards, sound systems, document cameras, and rotating use of individual student technology devices. Use of these technological resources is specifically incorporated into instruction as tools to support students in their learning goals. Although technology is engaging, it is one of many tools to facilitate learning and student academic achievement. Research based instructional strategies and techniques including: focus on conceptual lesson goals with specific and explicit identification of essential learnings, modeling, guided practice, independent practice, collaborative work, and assessment of and for learning are utilized. In all areas of study, critical thinking skills are emphasized. Student goal setting, and cross-content, real world connections are all strategies employed to support both engagement and student achievement. For example, students may read a nonfiction article, as well as, an excerpt from a novel and subsequently be asked to draft a multi-paragraph response with specific details supporting connections and/or differences identified within the two texts.

The Open Court Reading Program has been utilized for reading instruction at Dennison since the school was established in 1974. Reading instruction at Dennison, from 1974 through the present, has included five components necessary for strong readers, i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. This is foundational to the Dennison model. In writing, students’ skills are supported by: formalized vocabulary and spelling instruction, Daily Language Instruction (D.L.I), Step-Up-To Writing, Every Child a Writer, 6 Traits Writing, and Elk Grove rubrics. Dennison staff engaged in a three-year process employing a cycle of instruction, assessment, observation, and refinement within grades and vertically K-6 and saw a significant increase in student achievement.

Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley 2004 has been used to teach math for all but this 2016-2017 school year, in which we utilized Pearson/Scott Foreman 2015 enVision Math. The advent of new Colorado Academic Standards engendered instructional changes requiring more opportunity for students to understand math concepts at a deeper level. School staff and administration followed a similar cycle of instruction, assessment, observation, and refinement while incorporating practice with critical thinking and problem solving, real world application to demonstrate deep understanding of mathematical concepts, and opportunity to explain one’s thinking.

Pearson/Scott Foresman 2006 is the text used to teach science, and a variety of additional publications for both science and social studies are employed to address standards K-6. Data analysis of student performance along with detailed examination of standards and Jefferson County School District’s C-CAP underpinned the drafting of a spiraling scope and sequence in science and social studies. A laser-like focus was directed to ensure that all essential learnings were addressed within grades as well as K-6. In science, instruction was adapted to provide increased opportunity for hands-on experimentation, critical thinking, and scientific investigation.

Foundational tenets from Dennison's beginning in 1974 highlight civic responsibilities and pride in school and country. To that end, Dennison utilizes Positive Behavior Support (PBS) and bully-proofing strategies to foster a respectful and responsible school community. Civics instruction is achieved through both formal instruction and student activities. Civics is addressed as a component of Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) and thus spirals throughout the K-6 experience. Comprehensively civics content incorporates rights and responsibilities of citizens including, e.g. justice and education. Students also explore forms of community and government in primary grades, beginning with an exploration of cultures and holidays both formally and experientially. Utilizing CAS, intermediate grades students extend formal instruction with activities like constitutional debates, Young Ameritowne (city government simulation), outdoor lab school week, environmental biome studies, and Day in Lakewood (town hall experience). Although the majority of students and families identify themselves as white/Caucasian, our entire enrollment population choice enrolls through random selection, so we are fortunate to have a diverse, culturally mixed student body.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

One of the foundational components of Dennison's high achievement is curricular alignment within grade levels and K-6. Art, music, physical education/health/nutrition (PE), and technology/library instruction support this tenet. These subjects provide additional opportunities for students to apply skills learned in isolation with real world, critical thinking applications. Additionally, in school and out of school experiences further extend students' depth of knowledge.

Art, music, PE, and technology/library, known as "Specials" are taught for kindergarten on a weekly basis and on a four-day rotation for grades 1-6. Research shows that experiential applications of learning employing critical thinking builds connections to long term memory. An example of instructional alignment with Specials occurred when students were reading about the early 1900's. The Specials team collaborated to provide instructional opportunities focusing on art, music, and dance from this time period.

In art students learn about various artists as well as produce their own art. They used several media and have opportunities to think critically as they compare and contrast artists and their works.

In music students explore both instruments and music. Instruction spirals over time and students' skills and opportunities increase in complexity along with their skills. Students explore both vocal and instrumental music and each grade level has opportunities to perform each year. Fifth and sixth grade students have performed, "Pirates of Penzance" and "The Nutcracker".

State Standards in P.E. instruction incorporates physical activity, health, and nutrition. Students engage in specific physical skill experiences and competitions as use math skills to track their own personal skills and health over time. They have opportunities to write in response to what they have read and experienced and build connections with healthy diet and activities at home.

Technology and library curriculum supports Twenty-first Century learning for students. State Standards spiral through-out grades K-6 and facilitate instruction in student safety while providing students with skills to be career and college ready in this area. Technology easily lends itself across contents as students need skills to access resources and information and also to show what they know. Technology is also a highly engaging content area. Students learn fundamental keyboarding skills, word processing, and presentation software. They begin learning in kindergarten and are required to prepare and present by 2nd grade. Using State Standards, students build skills over time to research topics, draft theses, and present findings using interactive software resources.

Various additional extra-curricular experiences are provided to students throughout the school year. In the Specials content areas, students attend the Colorado Symphony, Denver Art Museum, Denver Museum of Nature and Science as well as other venues to extend learning. We also participate in various cultural experiences and activities to foster connections and extend learning. Examples are Dennison Evening of the Arts, in which students perform to showcase their talents in art, music, drama, and literature. We also have a yearly Science Fair, 5K Eagle Bolt race, craft fair, and Field Day competitions. Some of the other extending activities in which students can also participate are chess club, band, orchestra, choir, ukulele,

Destination Imagination, Math Olympiad, spelling and geography bees, Dennison Morning News (TV Production), and Spanish. These extra-curricular opportunities are important in providing a wide variety of opportunities in which students can engage with other students and use skills to think critically. They have opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively to create, solve problems, and have fun.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

The Dennison approach is founded on textbook based explicit, systematic, and systemic instruction. Core instruction at Dennison is standards driven, rigorous, and highly aligned within grade levels and vertically K-6. Whole group, grade level, direct instruction is a foundational tenet of our model. Instructional strategies employing modeling, collaborative learning, guided practice with gradual release, independent practice, and technology support differentiated instruction. Technology instruction and application facilitates acquisition of twenty-first century skills, student engagement, and instructional efficacy and efficiency.

last seven years on incorporating critical thinking skills across content areas has proved engaging for students and instructionally rigorous.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Dennison fosters a school-wide tradition of high expectations and standards for behavior as well as academics. A structured atmosphere employing Positive Behavior Support (PBS) guidelines is fostered and reinforced school-wide to provide a predictable, respectful, and kind environment. In this positive atmosphere, children thrive and have opportunity to feel successful and maximize learning. Our staff emphasizes building relationships with students as a foundation for all learning.

Recently we've observed challenges with student engagement. Students use tech-based and fast-paced games with continuous auditory and visual stimulation. Additionally, the adoption of CCSS has increased the demands on students with respect to depth and breadth of skills necessary for career and college ready achievement. Both of these challenges have engendered professional learning for staff. The work to develop a broader complement of instructional strategies to support differences in learning styles and skills has also fostered increased engagement on the part of students. The use of technical devices and software, e.g., interactive white boards, sound systems, document cameras, individual student tablets, and the Google suite of apps, has also facilitated increased student engagement. The devices and software alone are engaging, but they also help to increase the pace of instruction, which can be positive.

The rigor and fast pace of instruction can be challenging for many of our students. When students struggle, they can disengage from learning and adopt a negative perception of school and/or themselves. With this in mind, we embarked on learning about growth mindset and how to help students learn from the challenges. In monthly book study groups, staff learned best practice methods to focus on growth. We also studied books to build executive function skills in students. In all the book study opportunities (over three years), teachers collaborated in their learning, conducted action research, and then reported back to the book group after they tried out strategies on growth mindset and executive function skills with students. The conversations and growth producing feedback that teachers shared were very powerful and increased teacher capacity across the school.

All Dennison staff members are tenaciously dedicated and focused on providing students with life opportunities through success in academics. The same culture of kindness and respect is foundational and prevalent in all areas of school life. We recognize acts of kindness, giving back, responsibility, support of others, and achievement at each staff meeting with "Super Hero" and "Shining Star" awards. We have a supportive parent community, who are engaged in their students' learning and, for the most part, demonstrate their value and support of school staff.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Dennison Elementary School is an option/choice school within the Jefferson County School District, and all students choice enroll through a digitized random selection process. Once students enroll in the school, they rarely leave, so mobility is low. When asked, families shared that they wanted to come to Dennison, a common reply expressed their value of an academically rigorous education to provide a foundation for life opportunities. Expectations for a school environment that supported safe, respectful, and responsible behavior were important. Not surprisingly, a key factor that contributes to the consistent, high achievement at Dennison is the supportive and involved parents. Families volunteer their time and talents to help their children be successful by helping children with homework, volunteering in classrooms, raising funds, participating in PTA, the School Accountability Committee, and before and after extra-curricular activities.

Since Dennison is not a neighborhood school, it is important that we have a wide range of extra-curricular activities and events to foster friendships and a strong sense of community. We call this the Dennison Family, and we really think of ourselves (students, staff, and families) as a family. The Dennison PTA sponsors most of the, over 30, activities that take place throughout the school year and some over the summer months. Examples of before and after school activities are: chess, Lego, jump rope, track, choir, ukulele, cup stacking, Destination Imagination, Spanish, Chinese-Mandarin, Spelling, Geography, and

Dennison Morning News (video production). Most of these activities are led by parent volunteers and/or staff.

Student success at Dennison is described as a three-legged stool-students, staff, and families. All three legs must be present for the chair to stand. Parent communication is key and is accomplished through a variety of resources. Thursday folders with graded student work and progress reports are sent home weekly. Starting in 3rd grade student agendas are sent home on a daily basis. In addition to academic information, teachers are proactive in communication positive information and concerns to parents via phone or digital means. Report cards and mid-term reports are sent home by trimester and parent/student/teacher conferences are held at least twice per year. Additionally, RtI, IEP, and 504 meeting and reviews are held with ongoing communication to support students.

Although we are a public school, fundraising is extremely important for Dennison, and the parent community works hard to support the school financially. Through parent leadership, they created a nonprofit called Dennison Community Support Fund (DCSF), through which they plan and execute ongoing fundraising. They hold a family fun event at a local recreation center each year, which is another opportunity to bring families together to build relationships and also earn money for the school. They also sponsor a yearly silent auction, which offers both student created items and donations from families and businesses.

3. Professional Development:

Our school's professional development approach is as follows: Twice a month we set aside our staff meeting time for whole staff professional learning. We have team/coach/principal PLC meetings once a month to build capacity in teams. Dennison has a once a month book study group of approximately twenty teachers who meet after school to discuss the implementation of strategies in classrooms aligned with our book study choice for the year. Our district sets aside one afternoon each month for an early release, which we use for vertical articulation meetings where teams collaborate with the grade level above and below. Finally, teachers attend district professional learning with the coach and/or principal for Leading Student Achievement Days opportunities provided by Jeffco throughout the year.

Our school goal is to increase capacity of our teachers and administrators to better meet student needs. Over the past four years, we have focused on two main goals: writing and math alignment. We worked to align writing with Colorado Academic Standards (CCSS). With new standards, we realized the importance of having school-wide writes in the genres of informative, opinion and narrative writing. Much of our work has been focused on trends and aligning grade level writing with common core rubrics. This work drove staff development on early release days. Vertical teams met to analyze and score writing samples from each grade level. They determined 'critical attributes' for genres. The work in writing continued in staff meetings (twice a month) as we incorporated growth mindset strategies to help our students learn from the mistakes made in writing (and other content areas). In our monthly book study groups, teachers learned about growth mindset and executive functioning strategies. Conversations and growth producing feedback that teachers shared were powerful and increased teacher capacity across the school. Our math alignment has followed a similar path this year.

Finally, Jeffco District provides opportunities for learning. Jeffco provides monthly classes which the principal, instructional coach, and teachers attend and then share with staff. One opportunity was based on Jim Knight's work, "Focus on Teaching". Participants engaged in video reflection with filming, feedback, and goal setting. Teachers who participated, shared with staff the benefits and growth they attributed to this process.

4. School Leadership:

The principal has facilitated a model of shared leadership over the past four years. This work, led by a formal Leadership Team, has been instrumental in increasing instructional alignment with CCSS, within grade levels and vertically K-6. This alignment has been a foundational factor in students' high achievement and high growth across the general enrollment population as well as across gender and

subgroup performance.

The Leadership Team consists of a representative from each grade level, special education/intervention, Specials (digital teacher librarian), the instructional coach, assistant principal, and principal. We utilized training from the Adaptive Schools model of shared leadership to build structure, identify goals, and draft working agreements. Goals for the team and overall school goals are driven by student data--both achievement and behavioral based. Although the principal makes the final decision regarding budget and other fiscal concerns, dialogue is instrumental for sound decision-making in support of student achievement and welfare. Consensual decisions are then brought forward to the instructional staff for voting.

Leadership Team representatives serve as leaders with their own grade level or department and also as liaisons for the Leadership Team as a whole and administration. The dedication and overarching leadership they bring to the team is instrumental in achieving school goals. An example of this work is the success we've had in student achievement in writing. With the new CCSS, we knew we had significant work to do and brought a laser-like focus to accomplish student data driven goals. The instructional coach brought forward writing rubrics aligned to CCSS from Elk Grove and facilitated multiple full day study sessions with grade level teams. Over three years, this work, which comprised learning cycle protocol of prepare, teach, assess, reflect and revise, was paired with school-wide writes and further grade level and vertical team reflection. Formal observational rounds in which all teachers were given opportunities to observe writing instruction K-6 occurred 2-3 times during the school years. From this the Leadership Team drafted "non-negotiable must haves" for each grade level and writing genre. Writing scores improved significantly after this process.

The administration at Dennison continues to strive toward creating a system of interdependence among the staff through building a structure of shared leadership, valuing teamwork, welcoming environment, kindness and respect of self and others, exemplary performance, and commitment to the integrity of the school's model. She monitors and supervises instructional practices, serves as a resource provider with respect to both materials and professional learning, is a visible presence in classrooms and community, is an instructional leader, and general manager for matters of business and all parts related to human resources and hiring.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Dennison’s mission statement is, “to provide a rigorous academic education that prepares all students for a successful future”, and the staff takes this very seriously. It is truly a concerted effort on the part of the staff to ensure textbooks and all other resources, instructional practices, assessment, intervention, and student support are specific, targeted, effective, and efficient. They are individually and collaboratively dedicated to ensuring students “do not fall through the cracks”. They continually reflect and evaluate these components to maintain and grow opportunities for children through academic achievement.

The establishment of shared leadership was initiated as a tool to ensure staying true to the 43 years of the model and the tradition of excellence while aligning to CCSS. The unpinning belief was that goals are more effectively and comprehensively accomplished through a model of shared leadership. All aspects of student achievement, e.g., textbooks/resources, assessment, student engagement, student resiliency/growth mindset, and professional learning are addressed through the Leadership Team and then brought forward to the entire staff for approval and or refinement.

An example of our success in writing is described above in Professional Development. Over the three years we engaged in this action research, staff employed a learning cycle process to hone in on specific attributes and essential learnings necessary for students to attain mastery over CCSS. They also analyzed student data at both the micro and macro levels to establish appropriate pacing and comprehensive spiraling throughout the school year and across grade levels. The instructional rounds process was vital to this process as teachers were able to observe their grade level colleagues teach each genre of writing but also the grade level below and above. Thus, providing a framework of where students “need to be” academically to be successful in the subsequent grades. The sixth-grade teachers also observed at the middle school to which the students would matriculate. Vertical scoring conferences of school-wide writes were utilized to identify “non-negotiable must haves” for each grade level and writing genre. Writing scores improved significantly after this process.