

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. Jessica Buckley

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

Official School Name Valdez Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2525 West 29th Avenue

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

City Denver State CO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 80211-3711

County Denver

Telephone (720) 424-3310 Fax (720) 424-3335

Web site/URL http://www.escuelavaldez.org/ E-mail jessica_buckley@dpsk12.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. Tom Boasberg E-mail Thomas_Boasberg@dpsk12.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Denver Public Schools District Tel. (720) 423-3300

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 Ms. Anne Rowe
(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

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
 - 113 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 51 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 59 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

223 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

- 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
- 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	57	38	95
K	34	28	62
1	23	29	52
2	24	26	50
3	25	26	51
4	16	18	34
5	17	24	41
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	196	189	385

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 63 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 33 % White
 - 2 % 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: 4%

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	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	369
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.041
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 34 %
130 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 51 %
Total number students who qualify: 195

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
43 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.

- 9 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 2 Other Health Impaired
- 14 Specific Learning Disability
- 15 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 5 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
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	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	17
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 22:1
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	94%	95%	94%	94%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

The Power of Together: Committing to equity through Dual Language immersion and culturally relevant, individualized education for all learners.

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

We are a choice school within the Denver Public School system. Our Dual Language school model is based on 50% Native English speakers and 50% Native Spanish speakers. We require families to enroll based on Native language. On each language enrollment list, we have priority preferences: full time faculty, sibling status, and area of Denver. Once students are placed in a priority category, their enrollment spot is determined by lottery through the DPS choice system.

PART III – SUMMARY

Escuela Valdez is located in Northwest Denver, in the Highlands Neighborhood. The history of the neighborhood is interesting and parallel to today's changing demographic in Denver. Originally, The Highlands was its own incorporated town of Denver's wealthy and elite citizens. Through the years large waves of immigrants came into the neighborhood, and the wealthy moved away. Our current school is on the site of the old Ashland building, which would have been the primary school of the early affluent neighborhood. In 1974, the district removed the old Ashland building, and constructed Valdez to serve a more diverse student body than ever before.

The current programming at Escuela Valdez started with our initial application to become an innovation Dual Language school, back in 2009. Almost 30 years after being constructed, Valdez began facing yet another change in demographic. This time the largely Hispanic neighborhood began populating with affluent white families. In the early 2000s, our school community identified our unique positioning to create a Dual Language Program where we could support all of our students in becoming biliterate, bilingual, and bicultural. Since 2009, we have rolled out a full Dual Language Program from ECE 3-years-old through 5th grade.

The nature of our program is to host 50% Native English and 50% Native Spanish speaking families. This has helped to stabilize our demographics during the current years of gentrification in the neighborhood. Currently, we serve 51% Free and Reduced lunch students, which is greater than the 13% of families living in poverty in the Highlands neighborhood. We also serve about 67% minority students, and about 40% students learning English as a Second Language. The Highlands neighborhood is currently closer to 90% white.

Our community thrives on cultural traditions and in the 10 years since our founding, we have built many longstanding cultural anchors. Yearly, we gather to celebrate many traditionally Latino cultural events as an entire community, and recognize the various traditions of all the students in our school.

In our years as Escuela Valdez, we have also celebrated many academic achievements. We have been Green (effective) on the district's School Performance Framework several times, including this academic year, where we showed some of the highest growth scores in the district and the state.

The key strategies which have enabled our strong growth and support of all students' social, academic, and emotional achievements, include our use of the Positive Behaviors Interventions and Support (PBIS) structures, our data-driven and research based content instruction, and our strong language model.

The PBIS structure includes many "macro structures" to celebrate our students' strong socio-emotional choices and growth, and strategies to teach our desired outcomes for the same. We use the acronym POWER (Perseverance, Optimism, Wise Decision, Excellence and Respect) to describe our expected outcomes for students. We also teach specifically every year what that looks like in various school settings, and how to achieve it (for example, respect in the lunchroom includes cleaning up after yourself, but respect in the classroom includes raising our hands and listening to the speaker). We also have structures in place to recognize and reward excellent behavior (POWER stickers mark brief instances of a specific POWER trait and POWER Surges mark behavior that goes beyond the expectations).

Our data-driven and research-based instructional strategies include a focus on conceptually based mathematics instruction, drive from the Standards for Mathematical Practice along with Cognitively Guided Instruction, and supported with research-based strategies. Our literacy work is based in every teacher's exploration and understanding of the foundations of early literacy, including strong Guided Reading and standards-based instruction. Our weekly data-cycles ensure that every child is getting the support they need to succeed, and our integrated intervention program offers both push-in and pullout models of extra support for students who are not making growth.

Finally, and the strategy most unique to Valdez, our Dual Language program model ensures that not only

every child succeeds, but that every child leaves our school bi-literate, bilingual, and bicultural. We begin our instruction in Early Childhood with each student spending 45 minutes a day of dedicated second language practice. All students Preschool-1st grade also study math, Montessori, and Science/Social Studies in both their first and second language (on a rotating schedule). All students Preschool-1st begin to learn to read in their home or dominant language. By 2nd grade, students begin their complete school day in 50% English and 50% Spanish, including their second language. In 4th and 5th grades, the teachers are bilingual and platoon their academic subjects to specialize in one content area.

Our school is grounded in our history, and continues to strive to support our entire community through various cultural and community celebrations, as well as social-emotional and academic supports of our students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Escuela Valdez uses rigorous content and language-based curricula to prepare students for academic and civic success. We believe that all students can succeed with data-driven and standards-based instruction across content areas. We use the Common Core State Standards to plan our instruction with backwards-design.

Bi-Literacy provides a path to academic achievement and civic engagement for both native Spanish and native English speakers. Oral language development in both languages is a foundation in preschool and is included through all grades. Students receive initial literacy instruction in their first language, building from their first oral language. Formal second language literacy begins in 1st grade and most students in 2nd grade begin participating in half Spanish literacy and half English Literacy.

Our literacy focus is on communicating or gaining meaning in tasks that are authentic reading and writing. Needed skills, such as phonics or grammar, are taught explicitly and applied to the authentic work. In K-2 the daily literacy block consists of a reading workshop, writing workshop, and a skills time. Each block utilizes a workshop format composed of whole-group instruction through mini-lessons; small-group such as Guided Reading (GR) or individual conferences; independent work including student self-selected reading; and peer collaboration (such as buddy reading and literature circles). Units are genre based, including informational and narrative. In grades 3-5, there is an hour using the Expeditionary Learning curriculum. This integrates both reading and writing around a civic engagement theme, such as access to reading in various parts of the world, issues of Race in the Women's Suffrage movement, and Human Rights for Migrant workers. There is about an hour for independent reading, GR and other small group instruction, and other writing instruction and practice. Independent and Guided Reading in all grades focus on leveled text and incorporate student choice for enjoyment of reading. Integration of Reading and Writing is incorporated in all grades. Student learning in one can support and enhance student learning in the other.

Our standards-based mathematics instruction is rigorous and balanced. Our curriculum emphasizes conceptual understanding, while building on mastery of basic skills. A rich hands-on, problem-solving approach is implemented across all grade levels. In Preschool/Kindergarten, students use Montessori methods along with a balanced, standards-based workshop approach including cognitively guided resources for small-group work, independent work, and whole-group mini-lessons. These resources are also used to design interview-style assessments which give teachers a clear picture of student academic assets and next steps. In grades 1st-5th, teachers use resources with a strong cognitively-guided approach including the Investigations Curriculum. Teachers use the balanced workshop-model, backwards planned from the Common Core State Standards in all grades. Teachers instruct in whole group, small group, and provide one on one support. Teachers frequently assess to understand which skills and concepts students fully understand, partially understand and do not understand to specifically re-teach necessary concepts.

An inquiry-based search for knowledge, understanding, and application of the standards remains at the heart of our Science curriculum. Authentic tasks include scientific thinking, scientific tools and technologies, and communication. The three standards of earth, life, and physical science are explored from Preschool to 5th grade with a constructivist, hands-on approach. Students pose questions derived from everyday experiences and discover the answers to their questions. Each year the first through fifth grade students explore three Tracks Curriculum units in physical, earth, life, and/or an application unit.

In our Dual Language school, students build a community with children who have a different language than them and come from a wide range of economic backgrounds. From the early grades, students learn about their own identity and diversity of other people, two of the standards strands for anti-bias from Teaching Tolerance resources. In upper grades, students learn about the two other strands, justice and action. Fourth and Fifth grade students participate in action committees such as Service, Leadership, and Social Justice. These year-long weekly committees culminate in a project such as serving at a Nursing home or visiting our State Capitol to observe legislative sessions and meet with our representatives. Students also engage in 3

units a year from the curriculum, Social Studies Alive. Activities include problem-solving and authentic tasks that are relevant to learners.

The Valdez preschool program utilizes the Montessori model for Early Childhood (ECE) and kindergarten students. Student work focuses on five main areas, grounded in TS Gold and Common Core standards: practical life, sensorial, math, language, and sciences. Students choose work that matches their abilities and interests. Teachers deliver individual instruction, making it highly differentiated. In the afternoon, students work in a more traditional setting for literacy and math instruction to prepare them for this structure in first through fifth grade. ECE data collection at Valdez centers on the TS Gold developmental rubric and indicates that most students enter kindergarten prepared.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All K-5 students participate in Physical Education, Music or Art on a rotating daily basis. All of the specials are standards-based and offer hands-on opportunities for students to extend their content knowledge. We continue to connect with community partners across our specials classes. Valdez maintains a staffed library and computer lab, as well as laptop or Chromebook carts for each grade level 2nd -5th.

Our visual and cultural arts are the backbone of connecting our school's mission of supporting all students in not only becoming bilingual and biliterate, but bicultural. We recognize that art and culture cannot be separated from one another, and the arts vividly support students to recognize and celebrate the similarities and differences each individual brings to our community. Our artists contribute to our community celebrations by decorating and supporting not only our building (our fifth graders have historically created a permanent art installation to make their mark on the physical space) but our ongoing cultural celebrations. Yearly we recognize the Dia de los Muertos, Las Posadas, Dia del Nino, and other community events by decorating our classrooms and learning about how our celebrations in the United States are the same and different from those in Spanish-speaking countries. By grounding our visual and cultural arts in the state standards, we ensure that each student is also learning how to create and present their own identity visually with high artistic value and content exploration. Our dedicated and skilled art teacher ensures also that students see artists of multiple backgrounds—ethnic, racial, and socio-economic—presented throughout the year as experts and models to all students.

Our music program similarly works to ensure students an excellent and content-based music education, while celebrating and supporting individual students' cultures and the dual community we embody at Escuela Valdez. Students hear and sing music in English and in Spanish. They learn to compose, read, and perform music styles from Blues to Mariachi, to classic children's songs and modern pop art. The music teacher ensures that they have the skills needed to pursue secondary education focusing on music and the arts through our instrumental and standards-based instruction. We are lucky enough to have sets of guitars, a full set of hand-percussion instruments, and a full keyboard lab for students to experience and use as learning tools. Our musicians perform at the school Day of the Dead parade, at our Posadas Winter celebration, during Dia de las Madres (Mothers' Day), and of course at our end-of-year showcase; the talent show. We also collaborate with community music organizations such as Aplausos Bilingual Choir and offer music enrichment courses throughout the year.

Our physical education program is also rigorous and standards-based. Our PE teacher works to create an environment where all students can learn and explore movement and health education. She collaborates with programs such as Jump Rope for Heart and local sports teams to help students understand the importance of physical exercise and good health. Students engage with multiple modalities of movement to support all learners. The PE teacher works to integrate technology to inform her practice. Students often film themselves doing a learned skill, and engage in giving each other feedback on how to meet their goals more consistently. Students also track their physical health, and work to grow at eating better and exercising more regularly. Most importantly, students learn about how fun it can be to lead a healthy lifestyle. Our PE teacher also formed the staff Wellness Committee, which brings fun and educational experiences about food, exercise, and lifestyle choices to the staff on a regular basis. This includes cardiovascular exercise classes, cooking classes, and mediation practice.

Our goal for technology use is to build authentic 21st century skills for students and staff that are beneficial for life skills beyond school. Technology is not taught in isolation; rather focuses on the integration of technology into the core curriculum standards. Technology is accessible both in the classroom and lab settings. The use of technology for authentic tasks enables students to be engaged in learning, use higher-order thinking skills, problem-solve, and retrieve current information. Teachers infuse lessons with effective use of technology, while continuing to pursue professional development that will enrich their practice.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Escuela Valdez has strong practices around instructional methods, interventions and assessments. These include developing strong oral language (in first and second language) for all students, differentiating in the classroom and through specialist support, and utilizing data to best target and reteach the learning gaps we encounter.

assign students who are not responding to strong classroom interventions to specialists, who increase time, intensity, or student: teacher ratio and reassess progress in continuing cycles of data collection.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

As a Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) school, Valdez works to clearly articulate, teach, and support ongoing positive behaviors from students. We work with the DPS Personal Success Factors initiative (PSF) to help all staff and students build a growth mindset, and focus on how we can get better not only at academics but at character traits. These systems, in addition with rigorous and student-centered teaching, help engage students and motivate them to try their best at learning.

Our student-centered instruction includes small-group and differentiated learning in the classroom, based in ongoing data collection, to target each student at their personal next-step. It also includes bringing whole-child supports—from meaningful student leadership opportunities during the school week, to accessible and exciting enrichment programming, to a focus on socio-emotional learning in classrooms—into our everyday Valdez experience.

Our work with growth-mindset builds upon the DPS PSF initiative to have students examine the eight character traits (grit, zest, social intelligence, curiosity, gratitude, optimism, enthusiasm and self-control) and track their personal growth in these areas. Students learn that everyone can improve in any area with effort.

Our PBIS work not only supports students in reflection and a restorative approach in the event of making a poor decision, but celebrates and honors the excellence most students demonstrate daily. Our PBIS key phrase is, “POWER” (Perseverance, Optimism, Wise decisions, Excellence, and Respect). When students are found demonstrating these key values, they are given POWER stickers or POWER surges. Monthly we hold POWER community meetings and celebrate the grade level with the highest attendance and all the students who were noticed showing POWER. These “macro-structures” (the systems with which we teach specific behaviors and character traits) allow us to foster the skills students need to apply themselves to their rigorous instruction.

Finally, to ensure that staff members feel valued and supported, we actively engage them in building and maintaining these systems and structures. We have a Culture and Climate Committee composed of teachers, leaders, and parents. We meet monthly to reflect on our systems, check in on our culture and climate, examine equity throughout the school, and make any necessary changes. This committee is our compass in making sure we are headed in a positive direction for engaging and supporting both staff and students.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We believe that family and community engagement is essential to our students’ achievement. We value our school partners and our families and strive to empower them to become active supporters of our school vision.

We believe that family members do want to support their students and our school, and we endeavor to give them all the tools necessary to do so. We work to get parents involved in preschool parent groups, parenting classes, ESL classes, Spanish classes, Volunteer opportunities, Leadership team, School events, PTO, CSC, Parent teacher conferences, and classrooms. We hold various forums to communicate about academic successes and challenges and strengthen the bond between school and home. These include our regularly scheduled Coffee with the Principal, Academic Nights, Music and Holiday programming, Spanish Night, and State of the School. We work to build leaders among our parent volunteers, offering them opportunities to plan and organize, create fundraising opportunities, and support these events.

We also communicate through our Valdez monthly newsletters, conferences, notes home, family nights, website, and social media. We currently survey our families to help our progress assessment and to create needed adjustments in the school. We will continue to do so to foster an environment supportive of our

students and families and to grow our student achievement.

We want our community partners to feel welcome and become a part of our Valdez extended learning community. We have strong partnerships with local organizations and neighborhood associations. Our immediate community business partners include locally owned businesses and non-profits. We feel strongly that these community relationships have helped us serve the needs of the students at Valdez and have cultivated a symbiotic bond between the community and the students at Valdez school.

For Valdez School, it is essential to build these quality parent and community relationships to present our students with options for the future. Our students see the non-teacher adults in the building as role models. These outside role models build self-esteem, ignite imagination, and reward student achievements and efforts. We depend on these community assets to bring in skills and expertise to further enrich the Valdez experience. We support our community assets and family members in working together to develop and monitor student academic, language, and behavioral goals. The community helps us raise thriving students to grow to become successful and educated adults.

3. Professional Development:

Valdez works hard to ensure professional development (PD) meets the needs of each individual at the school. The Leadership Team (LT) uses a variety of approaches to support teacher learning and development. This includes individualized coaching, data-teams, as well as group PD. Each teacher at Valdez has an instructional coach from LT who may support him or her with planning, analyzing student data, and reflecting on their teaching practice. Teachers work with their coach on their own individualized growth goals. Over the past 3 years with the program, teachers have reported feeling supported by their coach and that they are improving their practice.

Coaches also work with teams of teachers to plan and analyze student data in a weekly data team structure. This contributes to teacher development because teachers are able to collaborate on ideas and utilize one another's expertise as they plan for instruction. It allows teachers and leaders to keep a close eye on student achievement, and make adjustments where needed. Coaches also facilitate and support teacher learning around topics that need development at that grade level. These have included guided reading, shared reading, model writing, oral language development, and math talk.

Additionally, Valdez offers bi-weekly group PD. The LT plans topics for group PD based on teacher and whole school needs. These decisions come from analyzing trends in teacher observations, student data, recent or upcoming assessments, and/or teacher voice. Topics have included supporting student language acquisition, community building, and understanding equity in our community.

In addition to PD offered at Valdez, Denver Public Schools (DPS) offers a variety of PD opportunities for teachers both within and outside of the school. A major focus for DPS has been on early literacy, and much of the offered PD has focused around this need. Teachers can take courses to help with classroom management, improve their guided reading instruction, dive deeper into district curriculum, or collaborate with teachers in other schools. DPS also provides PD to be customized and delivered at Valdez. The calendar for the district includes nine planning and professional development days that used to administer these PD sessions and analyze recent assessments.

4. School Leadership:

All faculty members at Valdez work as instructional leaders to share decision-making responsibilities in order to provide professional leadership, expertise, and the experience needed to ensure high student growth and achievement. All decisions are based on the needs of the students. We share a commitment to involve and consider appropriate stakeholders in our decision-making processes and agree to be transparent about how different types of decisions will be made. We share a commitment to participatory leadership, especially in regards to curricula, instruction, assessment, professional development, and teacher planning time. Finally, we include parent and community leaders in decision-making relevant to their interests.

The principal's responsibilities are to the students, faculty, and families. The principal serves as the primary instructional leader. In order to be a true instructional leader, the principal, with the advice of the Leadership Team (LT), must be able to make full use of time, money and resources to meet the needs of the school. The principal works in close collaboration with the Collaborative School Committee (CSC) and the leadership team in order to implement the mission, vision, and goals of the school.

Valdez forms and maintains a CSC each year consisting of: principal, at least three teachers, one support staff member, up to four parent representatives, and up to three other representatives. The responsibilities of the CSC include oversight of the school budget, approval of the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), consideration of community concerns, change or reductions in staffing, and approval of the calendar.

We currently have two Teacher Leader roles and will add an additional Teacher Leader in the upcoming two years. Teacher Leaders teach students 50% of the time and coach and evaluate teachers 50% of the time. These roles give teachers an opportunity to grow their leadership within our school, provide all teachers the opportunity to receive peer feedback, and overall support the growth and development of the staff which in turn leads to stronger student outcomes.

The principal has a core group of leaders, including teacher leaders, to make decisions on a weekly or monthly basis. This team monitors student progress systems and data in order to adjust intervention and schedules. They also design professional development to meet the needs of teachers based on student data and classroom observations as well as staff input.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one strategy that has greatly contributed to our academic success is our consistent, focused, and targeted use of data. We have formal systems for data collection, analysis, and planning, which are directly linked to positive student outcomes. We are constantly using frequent data to adjust instruction and target student misconceptions. We do this formally as a school in two ways.

The first way is every week, every grade level has a planned, facilitated meeting lead by a school leader. Teachers and leaders plan side by side what the teaching targets are for the week and what data the teachers will collect to demonstrate student understanding. Teachers bring the agreed upon data to the weekly meeting and teachers and leaders sort and analyze the data together. The team determines which students fully understand the concept assessed, which students have misconceptions, and which students did not understand the concepts. During the meeting, the team plans how and when to re-teach the misconceptions and the gaps in learning uncovered in the data. Student by student, the team determines whether the re-teach will occur in whole group, small group, or with an interventionist. The re-teach is specific and targeted to the exact concept that the student misunderstood. The team then determines which data to collect for the upcoming week and the cycle starts again. By frequently examining real time data, we are able to make progress at closing our achievement gap over time.

As a school, we are also very thoughtful about when to administer larger assessments and which assessments to use. Our primary grades use unit assessments to check student understanding on larger concepts. Our intermediate grades use both unit and interim assessments every nine weeks. We closely examine what assessments we use for interims, choosing specific questions, re-writing questions, and using actual practice items from the state assessments. We ensure that all of our assessment questions are aligned to the standards and are concepts that we have taught. Across the school, with both unit assessments and interims, we examine the results question by question by individual student to know what students understand and what misconceptions students have, both as individuals and as a larger group. We then look forward and plan into our instruction where and when we are going to re-teach the concepts that students did not fully understand.

By being intentional about our use of data, carefully planning our assessments, thoroughly examining the results, and planning next steps in instruction linked to the data, we improve student outcomes.