

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Wendy T Godwin

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

Official School Name Wildflower Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1160 Keith Drive

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

City Colorado Springs State CO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 80916-2114

County El Paso

Telephone (719) 579-2115 Fax (719) 579-3757

Web site/URL http://wildflower.hsd2.org E-mail wgodwin@hsd2.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*Dr. Andre Spencer E-mail aspencer@hsd2.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Harrison School District 2 Tel. (719) 579-2310

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. Eileen Gonzalez
(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):
- 14 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 19 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	45	47	92
1	45	29	74
2	48	26	74
3	40	42	82
4	42	34	76
5	50	33	83
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	270	211	481

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 17 % Black or African American
 - 40 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 29 % White
 - 11 % 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: 27%

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	40
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	92
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	132
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	493
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.268
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	27

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 10 %
48 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: 70 %
Total number students who qualify: 411

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
56 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>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>22</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>23</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>4</u> 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	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
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 21:1
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	95%	93%	95%	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
If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2011
15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Increase Learning For All

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

PART III – SUMMARY

“Wildflower Elementary is a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence that engineers a safe environment of rigor, eagerness to excel, and community investment, while providing a learning experience tailored to meet the potential of our students.”

Welcome to Wildflower Elementary School, located in the southeast side of Colorado Springs and home to 472 students, grades kindergarten through fifth. We are a Title I School whereby 69% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch. We take pride in the diverse enrollment of our school that includes 69% of our population coming from a minority heritage. Wildflower Elementary School serves its surrounding community and their families who reside in low socioeconomic status homes. Many of our south Colorado Springs residents have limited educational backgrounds with only 14.7% of community members holding a Bachelor’s Degree or higher.

Established in 1983, Wildflower has cultivated a safe environment of high expectations that fosters learning for all students. Our school has been the recipient of prestigious awards such as The National Blue Ribbon Award in 2011, the National Title I Distinguished School for Closing the Achievement Gap in 2016, and the John Irwin Award of Excellence in 2016 for closing the achievement gap for two consecutive years. We incorporate a school wide behavioral management system that emphasizes positive reinforcement for our students. This behavioral management system centers around our core beliefs of Respect, Organization, Achievement, and Responsibility (ROAR). ROAR behavior is expected and reinforced in all classrooms and throughout the school. Individual students are recognized on a monthly basis for demonstrating these skills with a school wide announcement, award, a positive phone call home, and lunch with administrators.

We continue to build a strong relationship with our Wildflower community and stakeholders by informing families about upcoming events using our newsletter, flyers, marquee, Twitter, and Facebook. Some of the well-established traditions that occur during the school year are the Thanksgiving family lunch, fall carnival, field day, grade level concerts, awards assemblies, student Skate City nights, book fairs and the Million Father March. Throughout the year, parents are invited to partake in literacy, math, and science family nights. On these nights, parents and students enjoy learning new strategies so that they can incorporate literacy and math skills at home. Each student that participates in the literacy or math night receives a free book and make and take activities. Our staff also offers tutoring in literacy and math to help our struggling students. In addition, students are given leadership opportunities through our student council, honor choir, computer coding club, cheerleading, art club, creative writing club, and science club. Heart-healthy activities such as 100-mile club, intramurals, and Jump Rope for Heart are also promoted throughout the year. Furthermore, we have formed many community partnerships with companies such as Harris Corporation, Annual Literacy Festival hosted by University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Bank of Colorado, the STAR Base Program through Peterson Air Force Base, and the World Class Athletes from our local army post Fort Carson.

The commitment and dedication of our staff has helped develop a positive culture of excellence at Wildflower. Our staff continually ensures our students grow academically. Each grade level has developed a method for tracking student data. Teachers use progress monitoring tools regularly to track achievement and growth, and all students participate in daily intervention or enrichment groups. We also have weekly grade level meetings to discuss student data and behavior concerns. During these meetings we review interventions and resources for students that are not making sufficient academic or behavioral progress. We then discuss and evaluate what changes are needed to ensure that our Response to Intervention (RtI) process is meeting the needs of each individual student. Each member of our staff also meets with their colleagues on a regular basis. Through this vertical articulation, kindergarten through fifth grade teachers are able to share strategies, problem solve, and establish next steps so that gaps in instruction are resolved and all students are demonstrating growth. In addition, we have comprehensive staff meetings every Monday as a Professional Learning Community (PLC). These meetings allow our staff to share their abundant knowledge and resources with one another, and facilitate best practices to benefit the academic growth and positive culture of our school. These initiatives, that our staff regularly and selflessly take part in, lead to increased student achievement, school wide.

Wildflower also strives to continue to incorporate technology into our classrooms. All K-5 classrooms, including Special Education (SPED), Culturally Linguistic Diverse Education (CLDE), Art, Music, and Physical Education have Smart Boards and document cameras. Additionally, each classroom teacher is provided with an iPad. Three sets of classroom laptops are available for student use. Students attend technology class on a weekly basis in order to keep up with the growing demand for increased technological skills.

Since initially receiving the National Blue Ribbon Award in 2011, Wildflower continues to serve our community by promoting a positive culture of excellence for our students. In the past five years, numerous families have opted to come to Wildflower through choice enrollment. We continue to welcome staff from other schools around Colorado to model highly effective instruction and collaboration. Many of our staff have mentored teachers outside of our building and have generously shared ideas, plans, resources, and teacher created materials. We realize that our job is never complete and strive to better ourselves, our instruction, and our school to always give students the best education possible. We know their futures depend on it!

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

English Language Arts teachers have utilized the Harrison School District Two-created curriculum map, which addresses the Common Core Standards of language, reading, and writing. In order to practice foundational language skills, primary grades use Saxon Phonics lessons daily, while the intermediate grades use Evan Moor Daily Language Review and Language Fundamentals. Reading lessons are comprised of modeled think-alouds using complex texts, guided practice, as well as independent practice. Online resources such as Reading A-Z, Newsela, and ReadWorks are used to supplement reading material in all grade levels, in addition to district provided anchor texts. During the independent practice portion of the lesson, students read rigorous texts at their differentiated instructional reading level using both informational and literary texts. Primary grades also incorporate daily reading stations, which consist of guided reading groups with classroom teachers and para-professionals, as well as engaging activities to reinforce phonics and foundational reading skills.

The writing process is taught using The Write Tools in primary grades and Write Steps in intermediate grades. Students in kindergarten through second grade learn foundational writing skills, such as capitalization, punctuation, and how to construct complete sentences, later transitioning into writing full paragraphs. Students in third through fifth grade focus on multi-paragraph essays and narrative stories, incorporating the 6+1 traits of writing. These traits include ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Students at all grade levels create Thinking Maps to organize their ideas within writing plans, learning how to construct differentiated plans for each genre of writing. Teachers incorporate writing into their reading lessons by utilizing methods such as responding to text in written form. This includes narrative, opinion-based, and informative responses, which enhances comprehension in all genres of writing.

During the 2016-2017 school year, our district adopted Eureka Math as our primary mathematics curriculum. This rigorous program was designed to achieve Common Core Standards at each grade level and challenge students to develop a full understanding of mathematics at an application level. It emphasizes vertical alignment, as it builds upon the prior grade and continually reviews previously taught concepts within each module. This teaches students to attend to precision, which is one of the standards of mathematical practice. The structure of math lessons at Wildflower remains consistent across grade levels. Teachers ensure that all students have opportunities for daily fluency practice, an application problem, which builds on prior learning and requires students to explain and show their thinking, collaborative work, and independent practice. Math stations using manipulatives and teacher-created activities are used to reinforce concepts and promote student engagement. Our math teachers also integrate supplementary materials such as Common Core Coach (Triumph Learning, 2015) and Motivation Math (Mentoring Minds, 2015) to facilitate practice with multiple choice questions. Motivation Math encourages student self-assessment, as students can track their growth according to each Common Core Standard. Singapore Math Strategies are implemented as an additional resource to allow for frequent inclusion of manipulatives, which solidifies learning.

Science instruction is structured from district-developed curriculum maps, which separate Colorado State Standards into various units. Wildflower recently adopted Science: A Closer Look (McGraw Hill, 2011) as our core science curriculum. This program promotes interdisciplinary learning, specific strategies for differentiated instruction, as well as support for English Language Learners. Our teachers seamlessly incorporate reading and writing into science instruction using resources such as Science Weekly (Scholastic), and provide students with opportunities for research projects and engaging writing activities written in both expository and narrative form. Furthermore, interactive websites and videos such as Brain Pop, Brain Pop Jr., Bill Nye, and Discovery Education reinforce scientific concepts. Students are also provided with opportunities to conduct and observe science experiments in order to facilitate engagement and maximize learning through hands-on interaction.

Social Studies is taught using the district-adopted text, The Colorado Story (Gibbs Smith Education, 2011),

which teaches content through stories of place, people, land, objects, photographs, and real life experiences. Teachers also use supplemental materials such as Spotlight on Colorado: Pathway to Statehood (PowerKids Press, 2016), Social Studies Weekly (America's New Textbook), Scholastic News, as well as Brain Pop and Brain Pop Jr. to ensure all standards are mastered. History, geography, economics, and civics are embedded into reading lessons at all grade levels using complex nonfiction texts. In the primary grades, students learn about essential map skills, citizenship, their community, and long and short term financial goals, while intermediate students study topics such as Colorado history, geographic regions within their state, the three branches of government, and the American Revolution.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students at Wildflower Elementary receive visual arts, performing arts, physical education, and technology classes on a 4-day rotation. Staff members are proactive in ensuring their curriculum supports interdisciplinary learning through a variety of media in order to reinforce Common Core Standards. All specials teachers are committed to helping the school and district achieve academic goals, and incorporate instructional strategies such as sentence stems, higher-level thinking questions, Talk Read Talk Write (Motley, 2016), anchor charts, and Thinking Maps on a daily basis. The specials teachers also support and enhance the school culture through additional push-in interventions, after-school clubs, and tutoring.

At Wildflower, we believe in the power of the arts as a means of supporting child development and acknowledging all learning styles. When students explore performing arts, they adhere to state and district standards and initiatives in a modernized way. Performances for the school and community include a focus on 21st century popular music to reinforce student background knowledge and deepen student understanding and appreciation for both American and world culture. In addition to using instruments, listening and vocal skills, students are expected to use language-rich vocabulary during their peer conversations. Furthermore, students engage in writing activities to deepen their musical understanding by incorporating analysis and their learning into life outside of school. Students are expected to integrate various dance and cultural characteristics in their singing or instrumental practice in an appropriate and respectful way, which highlights the importance of cultural appreciation. Recently, Wildflower Elementary was awarded a \$5,000 instrument replenishment grant that will support students' kinesthetic and musical learning styles.

Visual Arts are based on the Colorado State Visual Arts Standards. Art units focus on the connections between history, culture, and media as a way to motivate students to relate the arts to their environment. Students have the opportunity to explore the arts from many different perspectives to create a rigorous, interdisciplinary program that promotes a well-rounded experience. A wide variety of media is utilized to further develop fine motor skills and differentiate for students with different learning styles. During the 2016-2017 school year, there has been a strong emphasis on ceramics within many facets of the curriculum at all grade levels. The utilization of the kiln has sparked students' curiosity, which has increased motivation and engagement dramatically. Students also have multiple opportunities to display art in a professional setting. Collaborative art created by art club students is displayed at the Broadmoor World Arena from April through September, and at the Sand Creek Library for a month during the school year. Furthermore, music, art, and technology are incorporated across all grade levels to create cross curricular portfolios of students' achievement throughout the school year.

Our Physical Education program follows Harrison School District Two's curriculum map, which is based up on the Colorado Department of Education's Academic Standards for Physical Education and National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) Standards. Resources such as Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids (S.P.A.R.K.) and The Exemplary Physical Education Curriculum (EPEC) provide supplementary support to ensure students learn to take responsibility of their own health and well-being outside of the school environment. Cross-curricular learning is promoted through daily incorporation of writing journals, in which students record key vocabulary and discoveries made while practicing physical skills. Demonstration of Learning (DOL) activities are created in conjunction with appropriate grade level reading, writing, and mathematical benchmarks.

The use of technology is thoroughly embedded in every aspect of student learning: through SMART Board lessons, formal and informal assessments using various online programs such as Google Forms, teacher-

created data organization, and consistent student access to laptops and iPads. During technology class, students work toward mastery of International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards, as well as technological competencies developed by Harrison School District Two. Students learn to create, problem solve, think critically, and collaborate using various technologies. The goal of the technology curriculum is not merely proficiency in using a computer, but rather for students to use various tools in order to innovatively impact their world. Technology is embedded into morning tutoring to enhance reading fluency and math proficiency, as well as after-school enrichment, which allows students to explore computer coding, robotics, and game creation.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Wildflower has several instructional approaches that are key to our success. We are unique instructionally because we departmentalize. Each teacher specializes in content areas such as math, science, reading, or writing. This structure allows our teachers to devote their time toward lesson planning for two subjects, increasing understanding of that content, while still promoting collaboration between team members, as all students rotate through classes throughout the day. Students are ability-grouped based on data and analysis of reading, writing, and math scores. Ability grouping our students enables teachers to focus on strengths and needs of each student, promoting differentiation in all content areas. Teachers are then able to scaffold instruction and push students to their maximum potential. Grouping in this manner also facilitates additional teacher support for the students that need the most help. Students move fluidly through groups throughout the year based on their growth and academic performance to ensure that their individual needs are met.

Interventions and support programs are essential to Wildflower's success. To ensure high levels of student learning, Wildflower uses many researched-based instructional strategies such as Kagan, collaborative groups, multiple response strategies, anchor charts, and goal setting. Each grade has an intervention block, which supports the individual learning needs of every student, including our Gifted and Talented, English Language Learners, and Special Education students. We also offer before and after school tutoring. Our enrichment classes allow the use of technology based programs such as Scootpad, Accelerated Reader, i-Ready, Lyrics to Learn, and Keyboarding Without Tears. To improve the skills of students performing below grade level, Wildflower invested in intervention programs including Read Naturally, Souday System, Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS), and Burst: Reading. These programs are utilized during daily intervention blocks provided to all students. Grade levels have a designated time each day to bridge gaps in student learning and provide targeted support. Special Education teachers, English Language Development (ELD) staff, para-professionals, and classroom teachers instruct small groups, tailoring reading and math concepts specific to individual students' needs.

Wildflower uses a variety of assessments to gather accurate data in order to drive instruction. Students and families are provided with assessment results and consistently monitor and analyze their own data. We use many data points to monitor our students, including Star Math, AIMSweb, Star Reading, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Harrison District Two's Curriculum Based Measures (CBM), Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS Readiness), the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers assessment (PARCC), District-created Common Formative Writing Assessments, and ACCESS (an English Language proficiency exam).

Assessment data is used to adapt instruction for diverse learners. Each grade level has a data binder, which is submitted to administration. Binders are comprised of common assessments, data trackers, and district, state, and nationally normed assessments. We analyze these data points weekly, identify strengths and weaknesses, modify instruction, and create learning goals. Wildflower's RtI coordinators collaborate with teachers and administration to identify students with achievement gaps so that proper interventions are in place. Students are put into instructional groups for six weeks to monitor their progress, reevaluate, and make changes as needed. Teachers ensure students fully comprehend assessments, create measurable goals based on their scores, and track progress throughout the year.

We close the achievement gap with our English Language Learners (ELL students) by grouping them according to language level. We use Teacher Toolbox Lessons aligned to Common Core Standards, WIDA consortium guidelines, and district objectives. Instruction addresses students' needs in all four domains:

listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The ELD team and classroom teachers collaborate on lesson planning, interventions, and Reading to Ensure Academic Development Plans (READ). Non-English Proficient (NEP) students use the online intervention program, i-Ready, which has an adaptive diagnostic assessment and differentiates reading lessons for each student based on their language needs. As students work through lessons and purposeful practice, they are progress-monitored, and lessons are adapted to the level and skill needed by each student.

The Special Education team collaborates with the general education staff to provide support through the RtI process, as well as providing tailored instruction to students that have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The support is provided with small group pull-out or, at times, on a one to one basis students requiring additional supports. This facilitates a seamless development of differentiated instruction across all grade levels. The groups are flexible, and students often move from one group to another for instructional purposes. For example, a first grade student reading at the second grade level may go to second grade for two hours of literacy instruction and subsequently return to first grade for phonics instruction to ensure skill deficits are closed. This differentiation allows for targeted instruction and meets the students at their individual level.

Our Gifted and Talented students enjoy access to project-based learning in which students learn to research, analyze, and construct learning that encompasses each of the academic content areas. Founded on classroom data and anecdotal notes, teachers recommend students for gifted and talented testing each year. All kindergarten students are also tested to ensure every child is being challenged at their individual level. These students take control of their learning in order to capitalize on their unique strengths in areas of their giftedness. Students learn how to utilize 21st Century Skills in their application of learning.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Wildflower Elementary School, we provide an encouraging, supportive school climate and culture by promoting respect for all at every turn, and consistently affirming positive behavior and effort. Wildflower's core values are central to our mission and success. Though we use ROAR to set behavior expectations for our students, it is much more than an acronym; it is a belief system to which all stakeholders adhere that drives the Wildflower community. Promoting respect, organization, achievement, and responsibility in all aspects of life offers staff a common language to communicate rules and expectations to students in all grade levels. One student from each class is recognized monthly for displaying ROAR behavior. Families are invited to school for the announcement of this sought-after award, and students have the exciting opportunity to eat lunch with administrators. Photographs of Students of the Month are displayed by the front office as a way to inspire others to achieve ROAR behavior. The staff at Wildflower also promotes honorable character traits throughout the school year. Each week, the selected character trait is shared on the morning announcements to remind students of its significance in everyday life.

To support students' social and emotional needs, Wildflower provides monthly counseling tailored to fit the needs of each grade level. Our counselor also offers guidance to small groups within each grade level to support individual needs, utilizing discussion and role playing to help students learn how to form healthy friendships. She is the liaison between families and the school, by donating supplies to students in need and holding them accountable for having exceptional attendance throughout the school year. We have also partnered with Panorama Middle School to implement the national "Dude. Be Nice." anti-bullying program. This program helps students feel valued and understand the importance of not bullying others, as well as ways to recognize when others are being bullied, so that they are able to stick up for those students.

We believe in a "no excuses" approach to education. The level of shared responsibility is accomplished in a loving, caring manner with respect to our students. Regular, honest communication between staff and parents nurtures a culture of responsibility among our students. Because the Wildflower staff has low attrition, many teachers have taught multiple siblings from the same families. As a result, strong relationships in the community have formed that promote self-determination and responsibility.

Our supportive environment extends to staff members, as well. There has always been a high level of trust between administrators and teachers, resulting in instructional autonomy in the classroom. A coaching model is utilized for sharing feedback, which is comprised of positive comments and challenging questions to assist staff members in self-reflection. Furthermore, teachers welcome annual peer observations as a way to celebrate successes and learn new instructional strategies. The extra effort put forth by teachers is acknowledged and praised through announcements, handwritten notes, and gestures of appreciation.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Wildflower strives to foster a strong relationship between the school and our families. We hold numerous events throughout the year that encourage parent involvement. There is a Very Involved Parent (VIP) program, in which family members can volunteer to help within the school. Our VIP volunteers assist in preparing resources for teachers and work with students daily. We also host several academic family nights throughout the year. Literacy nights include BINGO for books and a camping night in which families wear pajamas to school, "camp out" in the gymnasium, and read books with their children. Math nights involve interactive activities, technology resources, and games to support learning in the classroom. Our science fair is a school-wide event, and all students are encouraged to participate. This includes whole-class projects at the kindergarten and first grade level, partner or small group experiments in second and third grade, and individual ventures in fourth and fifth grade. These events aim to provide parents with additional resources to support their child's education at home, as well as build relationships between school staff and the community.

In order to involve parents, we sponsor a “Meet and Greet” every year on the last day of Summer Break, giving all families an opportunity to get to know the Wildflower staff in a casual, informal manner. We also host parent-teacher conferences once per semester. During this time, teachers and administrators meet with families to discuss each child’s academics in a one-on-one setting. All staff members have an open-door policy between parents and teachers, and encourage strong lines of communication. This includes phone calls home, informal conferences, e-mail, and electronic messages via our behavioral reward system, Class Dojo. We also hold quarterly awards ceremonies to celebrate achievements with students and their parents. Academic excellence, most improved, outstanding behavior, honor roll, and perfect attendance are all awarded at these ceremonies. As each year concludes, kindergarten and fifth grade students celebrate reaching an important milestone of completing their first year of school and moving on to middle school with promotion ceremonies.

In addition, Wildflower hosts several social events throughout the year. Each fall, there is a school carnival, complete with games, obstacle courses, and concessions. We also celebrate holidays throughout the year by offering special lunches in which parents are invited to eat with their children. We have a Thanksgiving lunch, Christmas lunch, and a Valentine’s Day “I Love You” lunch. Wildflower families also have the opportunity to see the progress their children have made during music class, with grade-level music concerts each quarter. As a result, Wildflower families are consistently involved in school activities, as well as their children’s educations.

While we understand the importance of involving parents, we also value our school’s relationship with the community. Our school reaches out to the local community in many different ways, including performances by our talented honor choir and cheerleading squad. Honor choir recitals have taken place on various stages around the city, including Hotel Elegante, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, the Literacy Festival, City Hall, the Sand Creek Library, the Urbanites, and many other school, district, and community events. The Wildcat cheerleaders have performed at Sierra High School, also located in Harrison School District Two, and in the community. Students participate in the Stamp Out Hunger campaign with our local post office and the American Heart Association’s Jump Rope for Heart program each year. Wildflower also has a strong relationship with the local military community. Soldiers from Fort Carson volunteer in our classrooms weekly, spending time with our students, working with them in small groups, or reading to them. They also help students emotionally, by supporting those students with military parents.

3. Professional Development:

The staff at Wildflower Elementary school are committed, lifelong learners. As our students are expected to have a positive mindset when it comes to learning and overcoming challenges, we believe that our teachers and administrators should also strive for professional growth through consistent and meaningful educational opportunities. Our school district offers professional development courses on a weekly basis, including trainings such as developing a deeper understanding of Eureka Math, application of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP model), creating a language-rich environment in classrooms, close reading, and classroom management. Our school administration encourages all teachers to attend these professional development classes and subsequently share new strategies with other staff members.

At Wildflower, we offer many opportunities within the school for professional growth, as well. Our students are released early every Monday, and during this time, teachers meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLC). These weekly meetings are led by administrators and staff, who demonstrate leadership by educating their colleagues through engaging, interactive presentations, in which staff members are able to put new instructional strategies into practice prior to implementing them in their classrooms. For example, three of our English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers attended a training on a new technique called Talk Read Talk Write (Motley, 2016). After utilizing this method in their classrooms to deepen students’ understanding of the text that they read, these teachers taught all staff members how to incorporate this strategy into various content areas.

We also participate in whole-staff book studies. Recently, our teachers have read books such as *What Great Teachers Do Differently: 17 Things That Matter Most* (Whitaker, 2012), *Make Just One Change: Teach*

Students to Ask Their Own Questions (Rothstein & Santana, 2015), and Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain (Ratey & Hagerman, 2008) in order to improve our instructional practices. After all staff has read each book in full, each grade level leads a presentation on a designated chapter. The book is discussed in detail so we are able to understand various interpretations of what was read, as well as determine how to implement what we have learned in our classrooms.

Since our school departmentalizes, and most teachers only teach two subjects, we have monthly ELA and mathematics team meetings to discuss current instructional strengths, weaknesses, and how we can best educate our students to reach their greatest potential. Our principal attends the ELA meetings, promoting vertical articulation and support when needed, while our assistant principal is present at the math meetings to help teachers delve into our new math curriculum. Decisions such as adopting our newest writing curriculum, The Write Steps, for intermediate grades, and utilizing The Write Tools to teach primary students the writing process are discussed at these meetings.

4. School Leadership:

At Wildflower, we believe in the leadership potential of all staff and students. Our administrators encourage professional autonomy with instructional practices and classroom management, as well as inspire all teachers and para-professionals to take on leadership roles within the school and district. Each grade level has a team lead, and this teacher participates in monthly Building Leadership Team (BLT) meetings, along with our administration team. The BLT organizes school events and supports administration in school-wide decisions, including budget allocations, and also participates in the hiring process.

In order to build leadership density at various levels, our staff participates in numerous committees to best meet the needs of our students and implement district initiatives. School committees include the Health Team, Hospitality, Yearbook, Social Media, and our annual Jump Rope for Heart fundraiser. All teachers at Wildflower participate in at least one committee, and many contribute their time and effort to multiple teams. Numerous teachers are also involved in district committees. ELA teachers have taken on the role of rewriting the district's curriculum maps through the Reading and Writing Collaborators (RWC), and one math teacher from each grade level participates in the Math Collaborators. Teachers also have been involved in updating the elementary report cards to fully align with the Common Core State Standards, taken on mentorship roles outside of Wildflower, and contributed to committees involving the community such as the District Advisory Council (DAC) and School Accountability. Furthermore, staff at Wildflower have participated in Harrison School District's Collaborative Decision Making Team, which researches issues that will have a direct impact on students, such as the effect of a financial literacy curriculum at all grade levels, and subsequently makes recommendations to the School Board. We also have staff members who volunteer within the community. Two of our teachers coach track and field at Sierra High School, while others offer their time to support children at the neighborhood YMCA.

The majority of Wildflower's staff is made up of veteran teachers, 15 of which have been deemed Distinguished Teachers through Harrison School District Two's challenging evaluation process. Wildflower has the highest number of Distinguished Teachers of all elementary schools in the district, and it is evident that our teachers' dedication, professionalism, and expertise in their field not only promotes the success of students, but allows for new staff to have mentors within the building. We take pride in the fact that we have the highest staff retention rate of all schools in the district, which is a direct result of our administration. Several of our teachers are currently working toward a Master's Degree in School Administration, and take on leadership roles within the building by volunteering for school and district committees, leading PLC meetings, and acting as the point of contact when administrators are out of the building.

Student leadership is promoted through after-school clubs such as Student Council, in which students take on roles such as collecting and counting Box Tops for Education, changing weekly messages on the school's marquee, acting in skits at assemblies, and running for office. Students involved with Wildflower's Honor Choir consistently demonstrate honorable behavior throughout the school year, as they

are also considered leaders within the building. In addition, students are given leadership roles within the classroom on a daily basis through classroom jobs and academic projects.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Like all schools, increasing student achievement is our primary goal. We believe departmentalization at an elementary level has directly resulted in our growth throughout the years, and has helped us maintain high levels of academic performance. To further set our school apart from other schools in the state, Wildflower earned the National Title I Distinguished School Award this year. We were the only recipient out of 750 Title I schools in the state of Colorado, and one of only 54 nationally. This was accomplished in part due to our dedicated staff, hard-working students, and the support of their families, but also because we consider departmentalization to have a substantial impact on our students' academic growth.

2010 marked the beginning of Wildflower's transition to departmentalization. Teachers at all grade levels except kindergarten began to specialize in one specific subject, enabling them to gain a comprehensive understanding of content standards, plan detailed and engaging lessons, and differentiate according to students' individual needs. All students attended leveled reading class in the morning, with para-professionals and specials teachers flooding classrooms as push-in support. They then rotated through each teacher's classroom throughout the remainder of the day for writing, math, and science classes. After seeing a rapid increase in student performance within the classroom, on district CBM assessments, and state standardized tests, kindergarten teachers adopted this educational structure, as well to build a strong foundation of all core curriculum areas beginning at the earliest age.

In the years that followed, our system of departmentalization has evolved to best meet students' needs, and effectively incorporate the rigorous Common Core Standards. Currently, our teachers specialize in two subjects, and either teach ELA or math and science. Reading and writing are taught in conjunction with one another so that students understand how to read text with purpose and write about what they have read. Teachers focusing on mathematics and science consistently collaborate with ELA teammates within the same grade level to ensure that interdisciplinary learning occurs on a daily basis. This system also allows for students to rotate through fewer classes throughout the day, promoting stronger relationships with their teachers. Data analysis is incorporated on a regular basis, enabling teachers to guide instruction where it is needed most. Teachers work closely with their content area teammate to identify strengths and weaknesses based on common assessments, which helps drive future instruction and small group interventions. We have seen substantial improvement in academic performance at all grade levels since we made the transition to departmentalization, and consistently perform higher than Harrison School District Two on district exams and Colorado State assessments.

Departmentalization also facilitates teachers to attend professional development trainings more often, as they do not have to distribute their time as frequently between numerous content areas. We understand that elementary educators are highly qualified to instruct all subjects, so we greatly appreciate the opportunity to remain current in best practices in our specific subject areas. Staff members are also able to focus on a subject about which they are passionate, which has even resulted in teachers obtaining graduate degrees in the same content area in which they specialize.

Wildflower Elementary School's effective implementation of departmentalization has led us to becoming a positive example of what can be done in public schools. Though we take great pride in our accomplishments to date, we know we've got more to do. We are dedicated to the prospects of further growth.