

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

Official School Name Ruth Clark Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1900 W. 55th Street South
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Wichita State KS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 67217-5160

County Sedgwick

Telephone (316) 554-2333 Fax (316) 554-2340

Web site/URL http://www.usd261.com/RuthClark/ E-mail cawulf@usd261.com

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. John Burke E-mail jburke@usd261.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Unified School District 261 Haysville Tel. (316) 554-2200

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. Pat Lemmons
(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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools

11 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	33	35	68
K	31	27	58
1	26	26	52
2	23	33	56
3	24	25	49
4	24	20	44
5	25	28	53
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	186	194	380

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 79 % White
 - 8 % 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	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	12
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	332
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.036
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 10 %
37 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Vietnamese, Khamer Central, Lao, Mon-Khamer, Chinese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 58 %
Total number students who qualify: 219

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %
63 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>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>13</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>21</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>24</u> 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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	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 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	96%	96%	96%	95%	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.

"One team, one goal focused on what is best for students" is our school's vision statement.

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

Haysville is a small suburban town just south of Wichita, Kansas, population 11,137. The median age of the population is 33 years old. The average household income is approximately \$53, 996. Ruth Clark Elementary is one of six Haysville elementary schools. It opened in 2000 to accommodate the growing community. Ruth Clark and its students have Wichita, Kansas addresses, but are members of the Haysville school system. The school serves approximately 380 pre-kindergarteners through fifth grade students. It is a Title I School serving a population of about sixty percent free and reduced priced meals. We serve students with special needs as well as English Speakers of other Languages (ESOL), represented by six different languages.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Ruth Clark Elementary, we utilize a rigorous, integrated curriculum for all of our learners. We truly believe that “no one rises to low expectations.” To this end, the staff work together to provide opportunities for each child to reach his full potential.

Ruth Clark’s reading and language arts curriculum begins with data. We test every child individually in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, spelling and comprehension. These data drive our daily instruction. We spend two hours and twenty minutes of our day in English language arts education. We employ the Literacy First Framework from Catapult Learning. Within this framework, there is one hour dedicated to whole group instruction. However, at Ruth Clark, we take differentiation beyond the requirements of this program. At each level, we use data to determine which students need more repetition to master concepts, which students can progress at the average rate, and which students are ready to move beyond the general curriculum. Students move between classrooms and even grade levels to see needs met to the fullest. During this hour of whole group teaching, teachers use the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards (KCCRS) to design instruction in the areas of vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, word study and oral language. Time is set aside every day in every classroom for the National Reading Panel’s Big Five.

Another hour each day is devoted to flexible, skills-based small group instruction. During this hour, grouping students into even smaller clusters enables teachers to pinpoint curriculum to students’ exact needs. At the primary level, teachers assess in the areas of phonological awareness and phonics and use the data from these assessments to build highly engaging lessons. At the intermediate level, the key instruction in small groups shifts to reading to learn from learning to read. Using word study assessments and comprehension diagnostics to isolate student needs and instruct at their zone of proximal development is key. We built our schedule to dedicate an additional twenty minutes of each day to monitored independent reading practice. This breadth of data allows teachers to design English language arts curriculum around student need within the KCCRS.

Each day, we reserve 60 minutes minimum for instruction in mathematics. Through the utilization of Everyday Mathematics, our students make connections to real world applications. With early introduction, multiple exposures with increasing sophistication, and practice spaced throughout their mathematics career, students develop a rich understanding of the why along with the how. Differentiation also permeates our mathematics instruction. We give primary students the Early Childhood Assessment in Mathematics. Teachers form groups based on these results and use prepared hands-on activities to enable students to grow in identified areas. Staff utilizes this same assessment for intermediate students who need additional support. Again, this data enables us to meet the needs of all students.

Project-based learning is key in our educational experience at Ruth Clark in order to help meet the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards for Science upon which we base our curriculum in this area. Various grade levels host invention fairs, 3-dimensional design challenges, and Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) activities. Our media specialist has written several grants to promote further science education through Ozobots and Snap Circuits and developed curriculum utilizing these. Further science integration occurs in English language arts through the purposeful study of non-fiction text and a daily research center.

The teachers at Ruth Clark make social studies curriculum come to life for students. Our fourth graders hold an annual “Wax Museum.” Students research and write about people from history, create display boards, dress as the selected person and then present to an audience. Other grades help students research states by creating “States in a Bag.” Our school holds a mock election each year. Students research the candidates. Following elections, we display results and allow for discussion. Each year the students of Ruth Clark honor the Constitution of the United States on Constitution Day through various events and activities. Our fifth graders take an annual trip to the state capitol building to learn firsthand about the history of our state. Fifth graders also have an active student council. In addition, teachers invite guest speakers to come and share

with students on Law Day every May. Teachers design all of these around the Kansas Standards for History, Government, Social Studies. Like science, we embed social studies in our English language arts program through informational text and research centers.

Preschool

Ruth Clark offers half-day preschool programs for three and four year olds. The curriculum, based upon the Kansas Early Learning Standards, includes physical health and development, social-emotional development, communication and literacy, science, mathematical knowledge, social studies, and fine arts. These tie directly to the KCCRS and provides for seamless progression. The preschool teachers follow the Literacy First Framework. This allows students to move into kindergarten knowing the day's structure. Having our preschoolers housed in our building allows preschool and primary teachers to share strategies and resources. The design of our preschool curriculum aligns with the Kansas State Department of Education and prepares our students to come to kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at Ruth Clark Elementary have many opportunities to learn and demonstrate the Kansas State standards for the arts. Every child in kindergarten through fifth grade goes to music class two or three times per week. Our fifth grade students select to participate in either band or orchestra. Certified teachers work with them every day to improve these skills. Our proximity to the high school affords our students several opportunities. One of these is that high school teachers come over to work with smaller groups of students. Another is that our students go to the high school to sing the National Anthem for their teams. Each year, one grade level holds a full production including, singing, acting and sets. A different grade level gets to perform a song on recorders for our annual all-school talent show. In December, we invite parents to a holiday sing-a-long. Our fourth graders walk to the high school each spring and perform during our district-wide art fair. At the art fair, each Ruth Clark student has a piece of visual art on display. Our students get to visit the art fair each year.

At Ruth Clark, health and wellness is one of our three pillars: the other two being social/emotional and academic. We have numerous opportunities to build health and physical education into our day. Each student, kindergarten through fifth grade goes to physical education class two or three times every week. Here students grow using the Kansas Physical Education Standards. An objective is posted each day and Literacy First's Anatomy of a Lesson is utilized to ensure students are not only physically fit, they are engaged and learning. All students have outdoor recess times and Noon Fitness. This is a time, just before lunch, when students are outside, tracking miles walked or run. In the mornings, students participate in 360 Power Walk. This is a time when we pair older and younger students as buddies. They walk around inside to get prepared for our day and build relationships with students in other grade levels. Our school is part of Mighty Milers. Teachers keep track of miles walked and students get tangible rewards for staying active. We also participate in Girls on the Run. This teaches female empowerment and the importance of physical fitness to third through fifth grade girls after school. At the end of both semesters, these girls run a 5K. In addition, we host The Ruth Clark Fun Run. We invite parents to come and watch as their children run. This is something our students look forward to each semester.

Every other day, students go to technology class. Our primary students learn keyboarding, parts of a computer, Microsoft Word, internet safety, Windows and PowerPoint. Our intermediate students continue to expand on each of these and work with search engines and basic coding. In addition, we embed technology in every classroom. Students are using laptops, tablets, and several other technological devices. Teachers utilize smart boards or Mimeo in nearly every lesson.

Once each month, beginning in preschool, students have a class with our guidance counselor. Lessons for primary students teach peace-making skills based on curriculum from the PeaceWorks Foundation. It empowers children to find creative and non-destructive ways to settle conflicts and to live in harmony with themselves and others. Intermediate students have lessons utilizing the Committee for Children "Steps to Respect" Curriculum. Through this curriculum, students help establish a safe, caring and respectful school climate. The students practice friendship making skills, learn to recognize bullying, utilize "I statements", reach out to others in the community and develop reporting skills to maintain a safe environment. Twice a

year, intermediate students receive instruction through the “Here’s Looking at You” Drug Education Program. In the month of April, fourth grade students dedicate an entire day to “Kids Against Tobacco” education.

At Ruth Clark, every staff member invests in the success of every child. Everyone from our foster grandmothers to our physical education teacher spends time doing everything possible to see our students achieve excellence. We believe our curriculum choices foster this drive for excellence and going above and beyond for each student.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Ruth Clark’s guiding question “what is best for students” drives our daily instructional practices. This means differentiating instruction as much as possible to meet individual needs. Data is a key factor in this process. A diagnostic assessment for phonological awareness and phonics target reading skills for all prekindergarten through fifth grade students. This tool also allows us to progress monitor students. A two-hour tier one reading block is a part of daily instruction kindergarten through fifth. All students, regular education, ESOL and special education students are flex grouped within their grade level for instruction based on where they are on the continuum. In some cases, what is best for the student, dictates the need to group across grade levels as well, moving above or below the specified curriculum. We distribute support staff based on the needs of students. These groups are fluid, allowing the students to move at their own pace. Small group centers and teacher tables allow for individualized differentiation and progress monitoring that is vital to academic success.

a month but may meet more frequently based on the needs of our students. The members of this team are representative of our staff. They monitor behavior and academic data closely, adjusting interventions when necessary.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Ruth Clark Elementary has a very positive culture. One comment we hear quite often from our families and visitors is, “There is a noticeable difference at Ruth Clark from other schools when you walk in the doors.” A strong, caring, structured environment that is safe, engaging and inviting is the foundation of our school. A Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program is in place. We utilize the principles of Capturing Kids’ Hearts (win their heart – win their mind). We identify expected and agreed upon behaviors with social contracts and are consistent with follow through. We help students learn to accept responsibility for their behaviors, affirming positive behaviors and offering alternatives for behaviors that do not align with expectations. We teach self-managing social skills and provide students opportunities to encourage and affirm others. Elementary students have little control over attendance. If students miss instruction, it impacts academic success. We motivate with positive incentives. We have “Perfect Attendance - One Month at a Time.” Through this program, students receive certificates signed by the principal each month they have perfect attendance. We also have class wide “Sputacular Attendance.” When a class has perfect attendance enough times to complete Mr. Potato Head, they earn crazy sock day, or hat in the class day, or some other silly simple incentive of their choice that is meaningful to them. We have implemented Positive Office Referrals to recognize and affirm those wonderful behaviors of kindness, thoughtfulness, respect, integrity, grit etc. Students and staff can receive a positive referral from any staff member. The referred student or staff then visit with the principal for affirmation. The principal calls parents (yes, even staff) and praises the student to the parent asking if they also have time to affirm their child’s behavior. The referred person signs their name to the “Positive Behavior Wall” and the principal writes a brief note about the person’s behavior. This simple, inexpensive acknowledgement of positive behaviors has had a phenomenal impact on our culture. With this implementation, we have seen our office discipline referrals decline from sixty-two per year in 2013 to six this year. Because we no longer focus on discipline issues, we free up our staff and students to focus on academic excellence. We truly look for the positive in each other and find it. Teachers and staff feel welcomed and valued with our culture of positive affirmation. Written affirmations from student to student, student to staff, staff to student and staff to staff add to our positivity.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Ruth Clark teachers are in communication with parents or guardians on a daily basis. Our prekindergarten and kindergarten utilize daily communication folders to discuss skills on which they are working, upcoming events, daily behavior and ways parents can assist their children. First through fifth grade students and teachers use daily agendas to communicate the same information. Parents look at these each night and sign off to acknowledge the communication. Ruth Clark has a PTO and Site Council. Parents are encouraged to join to provide feedback and be involved in school activities. Open House, at the start of the year, is a time of sharing information and expectations. PTO actively welcomes membership to their organization. During parent teacher conferences, parents sign a compact with agreed upon expectations and responsibilities of the teacher, student and parent. This helps create a united team effort and we refer back to this contract as needed. The Fun Run, which occurs in the fall and spring, encourages kindergarten and first graders to run a half mile. They set a goal and compete only against their personal best. Teachers and parents are welcome to run alongside them in support, encouragement and just plain enjoyment. Second through fifth graders and parent supporters run one mile during their event. We have used this activity to pay it forward and raise money for those in need. Our students have developed grit and perseverance, which transfers to academic efforts as well, and a stronger sense of worth. They take pride in their accomplishments.

Ruth Clark forms partnerships with several local businesses to support our efforts to educate children. These include but are not limited to Pizza Hut, Sonic, The Early Childhood Center, the fire department, Wal-Mart, Target and Walgreens. We work closely with the high school asking young adults to provide positive role models. Our students participate in activities that share their learning with families and the community through wax museums, invention fairs, art fairs etc. Parents and families attend these events to watch their students present their work. Throughout the year, we invite families to pastries with parents,

lunch with grandparents, field days, music concerts, talent shows etc. We try to showcase student achievements as much as possible.

A student council allows students to have a voice in decisions made for the school. This active group participates in charitable fundraisers, helps share student ideas with the administrator, and fulfill leadership roles during school-wide activities.

3. Professional Development:

The leadership of USD 261 Haysville firmly believes in the necessity of a strong staff development program, so much so that our school system has its own Learning Center for our staff and invites surrounding districts to participate as well. The leadership at the district and building levels continually analyze data to identify areas of strengths and needs to plan staff development accordingly. The Learning Center brings in a diverse range of presenters to offer workshops on specific topics aligned with our standards and curriculum. The Learning Center also offers a two week “Summer Tech Camp” that draws a large attendance. During this camp, staff members from throughout the district share their knowledge and expertise with different types of technology.

The staff and leadership at Ruth Clark understand the relationship between effective staff development and student success. Staff development is ongoing for both paraprofessionals and certified staff alike and is standards and curriculum aligned. Data and data analysis play a critical role in our staff development decision-making process, looking for areas of need and intervening or enriching as quickly and effectively as possible. This is essential to our academic success.

Our Learning Facilitators are one of our master keys to the professional development at Ruth Clark. There is a district math facilitator shared between three elementaries and a learning facilitator assigned specifically to Ruth Clark. These people provide staff development where needed, be it in a one-on-one situation with a staff member that is struggling with a strategy or technique, meeting with teams in a professional learning community or training the entire staff on new instructional practices. The Learning Facilitators and administrator closely monitor the data to adjust trainings as necessary.

The staff at Ruth Clark possesses a plethora of knowledge and invests time to share this knowledge with their colleagues in both the building and district. Because of the excellence of staff in our building, one challenge we face is acclimating new employees to our relentless pursuit of excellence. Through a mentoring program, team collaboration and intensive, ongoing training, these staff members can soon meet the high level of instructional performance seen from the returning staff. The staff at Ruth Clark are definitely lifelong learners with a passion and focus dedicated to doing whatever is best for our students.

4. School Leadership:

The Ruth Clark principal is committed to empowering staff and students to become the best they can be. A focus on the development and practice of leadership skills means that certified and classified staff members are encouraged to participate in leadership academies sponsored by the school district. One question staff members hear often from Ruth Clark’s principal is “How will this benefit students?” This question limits negativity and keeps the focus on the students served. The daily pledge recited by students and staff is, “If it is to be it is up to me, ten two letter words to live by!” Everyone is responsible to do his or her part. The principal leads by example and is willing to get down in the trenches and do whatever it takes to help all students succeed whether it is teach a class, empty the trash, delegate responsibilities, or provide the necessary resources.

The leadership teams in the building work like a well-oiled machine. The staff is the epitome of professionalism in work ethic and effort. These important skills are modeled and expected of students as well. Words like “it is not my job,” or “I don’t want to do this” are unheard. What you do hear a great deal is “how can I help this happen? What do you need from me?”

Our CKH Process Champions team keeps affirmations in the forefront, finding new ways to let each individual know they are valued and appreciated. Our assessment leadership team prepares and informs the staff for upcoming assessments. Our Student Intervention Team helps facilitate our academic and functional behavior efforts which guides our staff development needs. These teams collaborate to ensure student success in all three of our designated areas: social/emotional, health/wellness and academic.

The principal and learning facilitator are the core leadership team for the building. They conduct regular walk-throughs to set goals and provide feedback to staff. They work closely to ensure the fidelity and successful implementation of district initiatives and policies. They provide a caring support system and the necessary resources to enable everyone to perform their role to the best of their abilities.

All of these people and committees collaborate to coordinate their efforts with one goal in mind “What is best for students!” Our high achievement is the result of great instruction, leadership, collaboration and high expectations balanced with the dedication and commitment of all stakeholders to give their best through determination, perseverance and hard work.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The unwavering focus and commitment of the Ruth Clark staff to do what is best for students is the one practice that impacts our student academic success the most. This student-focused approach provides support and resources for individual success through collaboration not just among our staff but also with the community and local businesses. Ruth Clark staff is committed to the task of giving kids all of the tools they need to be successful.

This united focus by all stakeholders allows us to most effectively meet the unique individual needs of each student. This may mean focusing on the socio-emotional needs of one student, the health and well-being needs of another while focusing on the academic needs of yet another. We recognize that we can no longer use the cookie cutter approach of one size fits all students in order to see our students grow into contributing members of society.

We know that there is more to successful children than reading and math. Collectively we create a positive culture to build relationships based on the Capturing Kids' Heart philosophy "If you have a child's heart, you have a child's mind." We then surround each child with the support of the entire staff, each staff member accepting responsibility for all students, maximizing our resource pool.

Once we have their hearts, high academic expectations are set and modeled. We provide best practice instruction at the students' level, coupled with a rigorous standards-based curriculum to all students. Data are continuously gathered, analyzed, and if necessary, brought to our Student Intervention Team (SIT). This team again asks the question "what is best for this student?" and "what can we do to meet the needs?" The answer differs from student to student, but the question never vacillates.

At staff meetings and professional learning communities (PLCs), we make decisions based around that singular question, "what's best for students." When we look at the school budget, the question that is always there is, "what is best for our students." In discussions with parents, school board members and our Site Council, everyone leaves knowing we are doing what is best for students. We know that when we keep this idea in mind, we cannot go wrong. This singularity of focus truly enables Ruth Clark to find not only academic success, but to develop our students into all around successful citizens.