

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. Stephanie Sullivan

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

Official School Name Graves County Central Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2262 State Route 121 North

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

City Mayfield State KY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 42066-6760

County Graves County

Telephone (270) 328-4900 Fax (270) 247-4626

Web site/URL http://www.graves.kyschools.us E-mail tiffany.williams@graves.kyschools.us

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mrs. Kim Dublin E-mail kim.dublin@graves.kyschools.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Graves County School District Tel. (270) 328-1554

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. Ronnie Holmes
(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):
- 7 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 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	34	30	64
K	31	28	59
1	27	41	68
2	36	36	72
3	30	31	61
4	43	35	78
5	31	21	52
6	23	26	49
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	255	248	503

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 83 % White
 - 5 % 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: 23%

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	41
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	64
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	105
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	449
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.234
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	23

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 89 %
Total number students who qualify: 447

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
74 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.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>6</u> Autism <u>0</u> Deafness <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment <u>3</u> Mental Retardation <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired <u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability <u>38</u> Speech or Language Impairment <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness <u>16</u> Developmentally Delayed |
|---|--|

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 13
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	24
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.	18
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2016.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No

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 district's mission statement is "Striving for Excellence; No Exemptions, No excuses." Additionally, the school adopted the following mission statement: We will provide students with a rigorous, comprehensive core curriculum with extended opportunities for students to engage in the arts and enriching activities. We will develop positive relationships with the students, families, and community to help students reach their highest potential. We will teach life skills and character education and instill high expectations to prepare students to be college and career ready and contributing member of the community.

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

Graves County Central Elementary School is located in the heart of rural, far western Kentucky and serves a diverse population of approximately 500 students enrolled in preschool through grade 6. The home of the Knights opened in 2004 and is one of seven elementary schools in the district. Our mission statement, “Striving for Excellence: No Exceptions, No Excuses”, emphasizes educating all children to their greatest potential. Students experience positive and encouraging relationships, while excelling in the rigorous academic atmosphere our dedicated staff provides. In our quest for excellence, we are proud that we have attained academic success by earning the designation of a “School of Distinction” for the past three years. We continually seek ways to enhance student learning, and confidently look forward to even greater achievements of our Central Knights!

Our goal is to instill the belief that “All students can learn and rise to our expectations”. The school is composed of 15% minority population, 89% eligible for free/reduced price lunches, and 15% eligible for special education services. One particular barrier to learning is the high mobility rate of 23%, which creates a constant struggle to lead all students to perform at benchmark levels considering so many new students enroll throughout the year. To overcome this challenge, we monitor student progress on a weekly basis and provide supports through Response to Intervention (RTI), such as the Read to Achieve and Math Achievement Fund, to assist the students in the primary grades who struggle most. Meanwhile, we accelerate learning for those who have mastered standards through an enriched curriculum by increasing exposure to content appropriate to their individual performance levels. We make numerous resources available to support student learning and to assist families, including Title I, Head Start, English as a Second Language, Extended School Services, AmeriCorp, Read to Achieve, Math Achievement Fund, and Family Resource.

The school established a unique program, KinderQuest, designed for students who are kindergarten age, but are identified by their preschool teacher as needing additional supports for a strong academic foundation before entering kindergarten. This program began eight years ago and emphasizes prevention, rather than retention. In the first nine weeks of school, we identify students enrolled in kindergarten who struggle to meet standards and refer them to the program. Additionally, many parents opt for this program if their child has a late birthday and they believe their child would benefit from gaining a year of maturity before entering kindergarten. All students in this program advance to kindergarten the following year. By emphasizing prevention over retention, we eliminate the stigma of holding a child back for a year.

Beyond the academic life of a child, Central instills high expectations for student behavior and the standards to live by as a knight. Each morning, the school puts on the “ARMOR” of a knight emphasizing Attitude, Responsibility, Manners, Order, and Respect. This Positive Behavior Instructional System (PBIS) is at work throughout the day as we reward Armor Up tickets to students for outstanding behavior. Monthly assemblies, led by our 6th grade gifted and talented “Loyal Leaders”, are a great way we recognize students’ successes, academically and behaviorally. Recognitions include Armor Up behavior, Students of the Month, Shining Shields for Accelerated Reader goals, and other special accomplishments each month. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) supports the academic growth of our students by recognizing the top reading and math students, according to STAR assessments, and presents each recognized child a medallion. The culminating awards program for our school is the STARry Knight Awards Program, where students in grades K-6 receive a certificate for top-rated academic performance, Accelerated Reader points, and growth.

Central Elementary encourages student engagement through programs such as drama, chess, sign language, 4-H, and multiple athletic teams. Drama Club has been a springboard to performing arts in high school for numerous Central students. The Drama Club showcases a musical production each year, in which students perform on the performing arts center’s stage, located at the district’s high school. Students are encouraged to participate in the orchestral strings or band programs, as well as the school’s annual talent show. The arts are a focus at Central, and we invite families to participate in the arts with their children on a special evening - Family Fun Fine Arts Night.

In addition to the multitude of opportunities for student engagement in the school, we also offer many ways

to build overall pride in being a knight. These occasions include the first grade Fairy Tale Ball, where every girl and boy dress like a princess/prince, while being announced like royalty before singing and ballroom dancing. Another special tradition is that each kindergarten child sings The World's Greatest, and then as a 6th grade student, the same song is sung at the Knight to Remember banquet. When students leave our school, we hope they leave equipped with knowledge to achieve continued academic success, courage to fulfill their dreams, and the heart of a Knight.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Central Elementary’s core curriculum utilizes Common Core standards for English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Teachers formatively assess and adjust instruction to students’ needs. They daily align reading and math labs to each student’s learning level.

English Language Arts standards include phonics, word recognition, fluency, literature, structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, key ideas and details, and comprehending reading and text complexity. Numerous resources ease implementing the five reading components and teaching comprehension using the basal reading series “Journeys.” Teachers utilize Think Central to engage students in comprehension. Besides weekly stories and connection text, leveled readers allow teachers to monitor and reteach comprehension at each student’s reading ability. The Accelerated Reader program supplements comprehension and encourages daily reading at the student’s Zone of Proximal Development. We emphasize new vocabulary words included in weekly stories, create high frequency word walls, and use computer programs such as A-Z’s Reading Headsprout, Reading Eggs, MobyMax Vocabulary, and Flocabulary. Phonics instruction focuses on letters and sounds, moves to formation of words and culminates with dictation of words in sentences. This multisensory approach uses sand, shaving cream, screens, crayons, mystery boxes, and literacy text connection. The Heggerty instructional manual helps to envelop our students in phonemic awareness. Writing is taught through the Journey series with each grade level covering three to four writing styles. Student respond to the variety of text used throughout the grade levels. Strategies to teach capitalization, organization, punctuation, and spelling encourage students to self-check and peer-edit writings. Additional resources include the Read-to-Achieve grant and AmeriCorp via research-based programs such as Reading Recovery and Sound Partners.

Math curriculum standards relate to operations and algebraic thinking, number and operations in base ten, operations with multi-digit whole numbers and decimals, number operations including fractions, measurement and data, geometry, ratios and proportional relationships, expressions and equations, and statistics and probability. The Math in Focus Singapore series emphasizes its three-step learning process: concrete, pictorial, and abstract. Renaissance Learning’s online Accelerated Math programs reinforce core concepts and provide differentiated instruction to each student’s learning level. Other instructional resources include Calendar Math, SuperSpeed Math fact fluency practice, and Simple Solutions, which regularly provide spiral review.

Science teaching standards include physical, life, earth and space, engineering, technology, and applications. Teachers prepare learning experiences intentionally to sharpen STEM skills. Through project-based learning and scenarios written by Kentucky science teachers (Through Course Tasks), students engage in real-life assignments incorporating cross-curriculum content, especially mathematics and language arts. In making lesson decisions, educators consider both in-school and community resources. This agricultural region offers experts to enhance instruction through Provider Pals, Fish & Wildlife, the Mobile Ag Bus, etc. Field trips offer students hands-on science context at the Memphis Zoo, River Discovery, Wickliffe Mounds, Mammoth Cave, LBL, Reelfoot Lake, Discovery Park, etc. Central Elementary’s campus features outdoor learning stations, including a fishpond, weather station, garden, and composting area to experience science. Each is student-centered and focused intentionally to increase students’ understanding level of the Next Generation Science Standards and life beyond the school walls.

Social studies standards include government and civics, cultures and societies, economics, geography, and historic perspective. The curriculum uses multiple strategies to engage students actively. Research shows strategies like personal relevance, real-life application, mental models, and technology link to all learning styles. These strategies form the foundation of daily instruction. Even though the curriculum is more broad and complex than ever, students can master new, abstract concepts easily through videos, news articles, movie trailers, and field trips to make relevant, real life connections. Civic learning occurs through Friday community presentations. Students support philanthropic organizations through the Jump Rope for Heart, St. Jude’s Hospital, canned-food and coat drives and the American Cancer Society.

Teachers foster student engagement through Kagan strategies and Whole Brain teaching techniques at each grade level. Students encounter strong core curriculum and tier instruction for remediation and acceleration. Grades K and 1 are self-contained classrooms. Central departmentalizes grades 2 through 6. In addition to core curriculum, students participate in arts and physical education twice weekly and in computers and world language once weekly.

Administering the Brigance determines students' school readiness. Preschool and kindergarten teachers collaboratively to ensure a smooth transition. Teachers welcome incoming kindergarteners and their families for school tours. The transitional KinderQuest helps students whose parents want the benefit of an additional year of instruction before entering kindergarten.

The Head Start preschool program for three- and/or four-year-old students is within the elementary school setting, which allows for collaboration between the preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers. Central's Preschool focuses on school readiness, through multi-sensory learning, authentic play opportunities, and strategic large and small group instruction. The curriculum aligns with the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards, Teaching Strategies Gold and the Head Start Performance Standards. The following programs are utilized to meet standards with fidelity: Handwriting Without Tears, Visual Phonics, STEP phonics system, Second Steps social skills curriculum and Every Day Counts Calendar Math. Student evaluations incorporate the Teaching Strategies Gold and the STAR Early Literacy assessment. The school also houses the district's Head Start office and the district's only infant/toddler program, allowing student access to learning at the earliest age possible to make the greatest impact.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The arts is a field of endeavor and discovery in which Central Elementary encourages students to participate. The school provides exposure for all students to fine arts content, including visual art, music, drama, and dance, at least twice per week during specials. Many students take advantage of the in-school band and strings program. Additionally, the Drama Players club features two programs: one for grades 3 and 4 and another for grades 5 and 6. Participating students rehearse one to two times per week throughout the school year, to prepare for their culminating performance at the district-wide performing arts center, housed at the consolidated high school. That experience constitutes an excellent opportunity for students to develop and showcase their talent, building self-confidence in the process.

The fine arts teacher uses Silver Burdett "Making Music," and incorporates resources gained through professional development such as Candy Bar Rhythms, Poison Rhythms, and Body Percussion Patterns for teaching music. Visual arts utilizes "Art Everywhere", as well as teacher-developed units incorporating all the elements and principles of art. Drama instruction involves resources such as Reading A-Z, PBS Learning Media/KET Tool Kits, and YouTube. Students engage in self-assessments and peer assessments to critique their work through student-designed rubrics to improve upon products and performances. The arts teacher leads the Fine Arts Committee and effectively engages the community to encourage student participation in the Ice House, Gourd Festival, and other local events. She continues to seek learning opportunities for herself, and has recently earned her National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification in Early and Middle Childhood Art.

Students participate in physical education/health/nutrition a minimum of twice per week. The physical education instruction, based on both the Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK) and the Online Physical Education Network (OPEN) curriculum, aligns to the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) standards for physical education. The standards are critical to the development and maintenance of good health, with the goal to develop physically educated individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity. Strong community commitment allows for extended health education and opportunities provided by the Health Department and Baptist Health, who also serve on the school's Wellness Committee. The physical education teacher, certified in health and physical education, leads the committee. Beyond the regular classroom, students earn recognition for participating in additional physical education challenges on the Project Fit America equipment. During recess, students work to complete various levels of fitness

achievement on the equipment and earn certificates during our monthly assemblies.

Central's Family Fun Fine Arts and Family Fun Fitness events provide excellent opportunities to promote family involvement in both endeavors. This event encourages parents to enjoy a night of active participation with their child in physical challenges. The community at large participates by setting up various tables for a health fair as well as stations engaging students in dance, music, and visual arts. Established committees focusing on the arts and physical education meet throughout the school year to evaluate the current program in order to make improvements each year. These committees involve grade level representation, administration and community members. The school promotes this outreach into the community through collaboration with local events and publication through the school's weekly newsletters.

The school also focuses on world languages and global competencies. Central leadership established a committee to determine the most effective means of instruction for all the school's students. Each week, students actively participate in learning world languages, utilizing resources from the Española Para Ti curriculum and other globally focused resources from the internet. A teacher who is a native of Trinidad and two faculty members whose native language is Spanish share their linguistic knowledge, skills, and personal experiences through regularly scheduled instruction. The school continues to expand on this program in the following year, to ensure students are progressing toward proficiency in this area.

During weekly computer instruction, students benefit from new technological tools and techniques. Each grade level follows a technology checklist to monitor the progress of students toward mastery of these standards. Resources used include Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Type to Learn 4, Dance Mat Typing, Prezi, and numerous education sites and embedded technology within the regular classroom. Beyond the regular computer classroom, students may participate in the school's Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP).

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Central Elementary is comprised of students enrolled in preschool through grade 6, including the district's Head Start infant/toddler program. With these programs within our school, collaboration and a seamless transition from one level of instruction to the next occurs. The preschool program uses multi-sensory learning through authentic play. Anecdotal records, Teaching Strategies Gold and the STAR Early Literacy assessment help assess a child's progress towards Kentucky Early Childhood Standards, Teaching Strategies Gold and the Head Start Performance Standards. Resources used to instruct students include Handwriting Without Tears, Visual Phonics, STEP phonics system, Second Steps social skills curriculum and Every Day Counts Calendar Math.

In grades K through 6, students receive core instruction in reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies, plus additional intervention/enrichment during daily small group instruction based on STAR reading and math results. In addition to highly qualified grade-level teachers, small group instruction is enhanced by instructional assistants, AmeriCorps volunteers, Title I instructors, and many practicum students and student teachers who participate through the Murray State University partnership with Central. Students receive weekly instruction in technology skills, fine arts, world language and physical education. Student engagement is encouraged in all classes through strategies such as KAGAN and whole-brain teaching. Kindergarten and first grade classes are self-contained, while grades 2 through 6 are departmentalized. Each grade level teaches Common Core standards and utilizes standards mastery grading through Mastery Connect.

During core instruction, students in kindergarten and first grade receive multi-sensory instruction to develop a strong foundation for reading, based on phonics and phonemic skills. Additionally, the school strongly emphasizes all five areas of reading, with differentiated instruction based on various assessments such as Phonological Awareness Skills Test (PAST), STAR, DIBELS, and a phonics screener. These assessments inform teachers of the learning level for which each individual child is ready. Read to Achieve provides research-based instruction to the most struggling first grade students, as well as Comprehensive Intervention Model (CIM) instruction during small group learning for grades 1-3.

The Accelerated Reader (AR) program supplements instruction by encouraging all students to practice reading comprehension on a regular basis. Students reach goals for point accumulation, reading within their zone of proximal development, and comprehension percentages. Students are encouraged to read beyond their pre-determined goals through the “Shining Shields” program and earn recognition for reaching 25-point increments at monthly assemblies. This program has increased the time students spend reading as well as increasing comprehension skills and expanding vocabulary. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) supports this program, providing 9-week goal incentives and a culminating AR Celebration. Other technological resources that enhance instruction include Flocabulary, Prodigy, Mystery Science, and Brain Pop, to name a few. The library is open thirty minutes before school begins to allow students access to reading resources and instructional programs that promote the acquisition of math skills.

STAR math and classroom assessments emphasize and monitor early numeracy. The Math Intervention Teacher assists struggling students in the primary grades. Accelerated Math in all grades ensures that we challenge students to learn content not yet mastered. Learning Progressions through STAR inform teachers of the content each child is ready to learn. Small group instruction provides the means of accommodating the needs of each child, whether they need remediation or enrichment. Accelerated Math ensures students throughout the school are receiving instruction at their individual levels.

Weekly Professional Learning Communities provide the opportunity for the principal, math interventionist, reading interventionist, resource teachers, and grade level teachers to analyze student data and identify the content each child is ready to learn. Formative assessments, conducted five times per year, monitor student growth and guide instructional planning for each student, as well as weekly DIBEL progress monitoring. Teachers continually adjust their instruction, based on individual student needs. Students identified as not meeting grade level standards receive additional support through Response to Intervention (RTI). Students performing within the 25th-16th %ile receive Tier 2 instruction beyond the core instruction through Heggerty, Corrective Reading and Sound Partners. Students performing below the 15th %ile receive Tier 3 instruction beyond core instruction through Reading Recovery. Interventions and weekly progress monitoring measure whether the strategy is successful in increasing student achievement. If the intervention is not successful, the committee discusses other research-based interventions to implement and eventually may determine that the child be referred for special education services. Through close monitoring of student achievement, Central Elementary has closed the gap and reduced novice rates in both reading and math.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Central Elementary supports student academics to ensure every student is learning every day. Teachers meet with students to discuss the progress each child is making toward academic goals, including STAR assessments, Accelerated Reader, and Accelerated Math. Students chart their progress, which motivates them to continue progressing academically.

Students develop school pride through celebrations to recognize academic accomplishments, athletic competition, and other events, such as themed weeks dedicated to Dr. Seuss, College and Career Readiness, and Drug Resistance Awareness. They may participate in little league sports, chess club, drama club, the Student Technology Leadership Program, and Loyal Leaders.

The school's Positive Behavior Interventions and Support program promotes students' social development. Students begin the day by "ARMORing up" with attitude, respect, manners, order, and responsibility. Students displaying these traits receive ARMOR up tickets. Monthly assemblies feature the drawing of names from those tickets to reward students, as well as recognize Students of the Month who exemplify the positive character traits featured that month and Knightly Acts of Chivalry.

Response to Intervention provides appropriate supports for students identified as Tier 2 or Tier 3 for behavior. The customized intervention plan helps each child be successful in the classroom. Resource teachers collaborate with administration and grade-level teachers to prepare individual plans of intervention. Additionally, a counselor from Mountain Comprehensive Care is accessible for students who require interventions that are more intensive.

Administration seeks to make teachers feel supported by providing teachers with resources needed for success and encouraging strong, grade-level collaboration to assist teachers in developing appropriate standards-based lessons and assessments customized to student needs. Every grade-level teacher feels valued by representation on committees dedicated to school improvement. Teachers are empowered to take on leadership roles by serving as a grade-level leader, resource teacher for the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program, resource teacher for practicum students, and the District Instructional Leadership Team.

Students develop a true sense of being a "knight," beginning at an early age. Knightly decorations line the hallway, and special events take place during a student's journey through elementary school that emphasize the expectations of knighthood, including the Fairy Tale Ball, Knight to Remember, Crest Quest, and Knightly Competitions. Beyond the programs provided to instill the pride of being a knight, a physical castle amphitheater is part of the playground as a reminder that Central Elementary School is, indeed, the home to the Knights.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Central Elementary School is located in the heart of the district, which makes it convenient for parents and families to visit the school on a regular basis. Many parents enjoy stopping by for lunch with their children, while others, including grandparents, volunteer to work with students. The school's volunteer program, "Central's Treasures," invites all interested adults to become part of the school community. Through the volunteer program, many students benefit from one-to-one mentoring, reading with an adult, practicing sight words, learning basic math facts, and even earning belts for completing levels of recorder karate in music class.

Not only do families serve as an excellent academic resource, but Central also has collaborated with Murray State University for a practicum project through which approximately thirty college students entering the education field partner with reading teachers. They teach whole group lessons, lead small group stations and work with students on a more individualized basis, which have a positive impact on the students. Central also collaborates with the district's high school to allow various classes, some of which

are dual credit education courses, to work with students.

Special family events occur throughout the year to invite families to become part of the school community. A Family Fun Fine Arts and Fitness Night encourages parents to participate in physical challenges with their children, to create art projects, and to benefit from the many community organizations that participate in the Health Fair. Other special events include the Veterans' Day program, Central's Got Talent, Christmas music programs, and Grandparents' Luncheon. Additionally, many parents attend monthly assemblies, classroom parties, and other celebrations throughout the year.

The Parent-Teacher Organization is very active and supportive of the initiatives of the school. Last year, the PTO helped purchase a new playground for the students, and this year, the focus has been on purchasing Chromebooks for the classrooms. Other areas of support include purchasing academic software that increases student achievement and enhances classroom instruction, including Brain Pop, Brain Pop Jr., Accelerated Math, and school assemblies.

The school invites community members to teach students about their jobs and participate in field trips into the community to the local fire department, mayor's office, and city hall. These experiences help educate students on the world around them. Additionally, each Friday organizations such as Child Advocacy, the Health Department, and the DARE resource officer present lessons to students.

3. Professional Development:

Central educators participate in professional learning on many levels and through various avenues. All teachers complete a minimum of twenty-four hours per year of professional development to help grow in their content area. Two additional workdays allow all educators, both classified and certified, to be involved in professional learning. Instructional aides undergo extensive training in the five components of reading and complete training to administer various progress-monitoring tools, such as PAST, DIBELS, and a phonics screener. Beyond academic learning sessions, teachers complete training on technological resources that can enhance classroom instruction, as well as the district's reporting system, Mastery Connect.

Plans developed for the upcoming school year include varied opportunities of training. All educators involved in reading classes will undergo training in Corrective Reading, Reading Mastery, and Rewards. Three teachers completed regional science training to prepare for the Next Generation Science Standards and will train the remaining staff. The district offers training in on-demand writing, math, and preschool/primary visual phonics. The Murray State University Summit offers numerous break-out sessions, including literacy, project-based learning (PBL), science/technology/engineering/math (STEM), novice reduction, Google, and a presentation by Ron Clark.

The school has utilized the services provided through the West Kentucky Educational Cooperative to bring in a specialist in the areas of literacy, math, and behavior/engagement to serve as a resource for classroom teachers. The specialist observes classrooms and then provides feedback, strategies and resources for the teachers. The school is also part of an autism cadre, where special education teachers who serve an autistic population receive regional support.

Each year, the school assesses achievement to design a professional development plan based on the needs of the students and staff. Last year, reading was a focus area, so the school collaborated with a high-performing district elementary school to form the Knight Rider Professional Learning Community. The schools designated specific times to allow intermediate reading teachers from each school to observe one another and to share effective strategies. The result of this focus was an increase in state assessment reading scores.

Beyond the designated professional development day, workdays, and resources provided through the co-op, teachers have various opportunities for embedded professional learning during PLCs. Teachers undergo training in various subjects, including the new science standards, writing across the curriculum, and research-based strategies by Hattie. Other job-embedded learning includes designated times for teachers to

visit classrooms that are implementing effective strategies, such as Whole Brain teaching, Kagan, and multi-sensory instruction. Student engagement is an area of emphasis, and Central is providing school-wide training on KAGAN strategies this summer.

4. School Leadership:

Administration provides a balance of instructional and managerial leadership, while also empowering teachers to take on leadership roles. The assistant principal is responsible for discipline and the school-wide PBIS program to enable the principal to maintain an instructional focus. The principal facilitates weekly PLCs to lead teachers in analyzing data to make informed instructional decisions. Schedules are adjusted as needs change throughout the year. For example, according to mid-year STAR math results, this year's sixth grade students perform well above grade equivalency, while fourth grade students have not yet reached anticipated benchmarks. Therefore, a sixth-grade teacher now assists fourth grade students who need intensive intervention. A culture of high expectations leads the school to make adjustments to ensure students are growing academically.

The principal seeks teacher input through the School Leadership Team, which includes representation from each grade level. This group discusses information that enables teachers to make instructional decisions, suggest scheduling options, and implement school-wide programs to address student needs. The SBDM considers recommendations from the School Leadership Team for final approval.

The grade-level teams strategically consist of an experienced, veteran teacher to lead instructional decisions. Two teachers from the school serve on the District Instructional Leadership Team and share information from the district level with the school faculty. A Math Intervention Teacher and Read to Achieve teacher provide leadership for primary grades in the areas of math and reading, respectively. These interventionists provide services to the students, while also sharing expertise gained through extensive professional learning. They also serve on the Response to Intervention teams to assist in making instructional decisions regarding intervention strategies.

Approximately 20% of the certified staff is National Board-Certified, 7% are previous administrators who have decided to return to the classroom, one of whom serves as a peer coach, and 60% of the instructional aides have earned their teacher certification, which strengthens our instructional program. With extensive training and experience, the staff is an effective team of school leaders with diverse strengths.

Doing what is best for student learning is what guides decisions concerning hiring, staff assignments, scheduling, and professional learning. Schedules and staff assignments may change throughout the year, depending upon the needs of the school. If one grade level has greater needs than another, staff and resources will be reassigned and secured to address those needs in order to increase achievement. The school's mission statement is "All students can learn and rise to our expectations." The school must respond to student needs with flexibility and a willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure that every child learns every day.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Without a doubt, one of the greatest reasons for the success of Central Elementary is its people and their collaboration to make the school and its students successful! We have an amazing staff who believe in high expectations for themselves and their students, and students who genuinely take pride in being Central Knights. However, those things were not enough. Established thirteen years ago, Central experienced great success from the start, being designated a “Proficient” school. We had the consistency of unending success on state assessments until four years ago when our school became a “Needs Improvement” school. In retrospect, it was then, at that very lowest moment in our history that our school took a turn for the best! We began assessing individual student progress consistently, scheduled weekly professional learning community (PLC) meetings to analyze data, and formed small reading and math groups based on STAR results. Once we identified areas of student learning needs, embedded professional learning took place and guided teachers to implement effective strategies within their classrooms. The next year, Central Elementary attained its status as a “School of Distinction” – the highest rating our school ever had achieved! We ranked 42nd in the state among more than 700 elementary schools! Then, with the same data-driven focus to monitor student progress and adjust instruction accordingly, the school earned the same accolade the next year moving to 36th in the state and then to the current year’s ranking as 12th among elementary schools statewide!

Central Elementary grew from our mistake – the mistake of taking for granted our status as a perennially high-achieving school and believing that it was not important to monitor each individual child or to provide each child with differentiated learning. We expect even students performing above grade level to achieve a year’s growth and design enrichment classes to provide content each individual child is ready to learn. Using data to monitor each child’s growth and to make informed instructional decisions has become indispensable in guiding our scheduling and staffing decisions. When we identify an area of weakness, we realign resources immediately to target specific areas of concern. Central is committed to making the changes necessary to ensure significant student learning. Faltering from a tradition of success caused us to reinvent our school to emphasize more than ever before a culture of collaboration, data analysis, high expectations, and flexibility. Those changes have returned our school, its teachers and student to a path of continual upward progress, where students achieve at ever-higher levels.