

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. Julee Spann

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

Official School Name Vincent Settlement Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1072 Vincent Settlement Road

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

City Sulphur State LA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 70665-7654

County Calcasieu

Telephone (337) 217-4580 Fax (337) 217-4581

Web site/URL http://www.cpsb.org/Domain/178 E-mail julee.spann@cpsb.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Karl Bruchhaus E-mail karl.bruchhaus@cpsb.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Calcasieu Parish School District Tel. (337) 217-4000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Ron Hayes
(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):
- 35 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 11 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 11 High schools
 - 2 K-12 schools
- 59 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	24	26	50
K	34	36	70
1	37	22	59
2	35	34	69
3	33	21	54
4	36	24	60
5	35	22	57
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	234	185	419

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 94 % White
 - 3 % 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: 11%

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	25
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	17
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	42
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	389
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.108
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

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

N/A

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 53 %
Total number students who qualify: 223

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
68 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
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	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	2
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.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1
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%	97%	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. 2008

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

The Vincent Settlement family will work together as a team to reach the highest potential 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

“The Vincent Settlement family will work together as a team to reach the highest potential for all.” This vision statement, along with our core values of strong work ethic, compassion, respect, honesty, responsibility, and accountability, exemplify the climate of our school. Vincent Settlement Elementary (VSE) is located in a small, unique, rural community with a population of 4,670, and is approximately 30 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. Our “family” is composed of students, faculty, support staff, parents, community members, and Partners in Education who all contribute to the support we receive as a close-knit community. The majority of our parents are employed with the local chemical and industrial plants as well as the farming and agriculture industry. VSE serves students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade with a current enrollment of 419 students and total staff of 48.

Vincent Settlement has a strong support system which helps uphold high academic standards. There is an open door policy where parents are welcome to provide support in the classroom, organize fundraisers, and donate time for activities that encourage student success. A Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meets monthly to plan support for school activities. This support allows students to have access to the latest technology used to enhance the curriculum with two computer labs and the most current technology in each classroom. After school and summer daycare programs are available to meet the needs of working parents. A variety of extra-curricular activities that involve parents and students such as Student Council, 4-H, Art Club, and Gardening Club are actively in place.

Our school has embraced the Balridge-based system of continuous improvement of teaching and learning. This system incorporates quality tools and processes which are used throughout the school to add value to the learning experience and to assist in bringing performance to a higher level. All students have personal quality binders which are used to set goals and track data such as grades, attendance, behavior, and gains in individualized programs. Student “snapshots” are completed with each student to build awareness and ownership with students, families, and staff toward helping all students reach their individual potential academically and socially. Students and teachers use data to guide learning, and to drive instruction. School-wide processes include the use of flow charts, plus/deltas, consensograms, and Google surveys. Student successes are acknowledged through a variety of celebrations.

The leadership team and staff at VSE disaggregates school-wide and individual data from multiple sources and research-based instructional methods are chosen based on this cross referencing of data analysis. Two administrators, one curriculum lead teacher, and grade level or content specific lead teachers facilitate ongoing applied professional development and instructional feedback in weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

VSE has consistently been a high performing school for the past 12 years. The Louisiana Department of Education has labeled VSE a “Top Gains” school. Vincent Settlement Elementary was named a National Blue Ribbon School in 2008. That Blue Ribbon flag and emblem are still proudly displayed in our building and on publications. This acknowledgement has created a sense of pride, accomplishment, and drive for excellence throughout our community. As a result, our small, country school has developed a reputation for doing whatever it takes to provide the highest quality of services to our students. Despite rezoning of the school district, increased rigor of assessments, and a shift in school demographics to a higher poverty level, the school community has held fast their high expectations and collective sense of urgency to continuously improve. The staff remains humble and seeks out opportunities to learn from a wide variety of educators through site-visits, fellowship opportunities, professional development, research, and peer collaboration experiences.

John Hattie’s research about effect size has been a driving force toward instructional shifts at VSE. An increased focus in PLCs and professional development sessions has been around the implementation of differentiated, high quality interventions delivered by classroom teachers and staff interventionists. Providing immediate and consistent feedback to students both verbally and in written form is another one of Hattie’s methods that has proven powerful in increasing the quality of student work. Feedback is given from classroom teachers and peers throughout each lesson. In addition, rigorous and accelerated learning

has generated challenging opportunities specifically designed to meet the needs of our more accelerated students. These students now experience a more engaged learning environment which in turn produces a more advanced rate of growth.

Goals, action plans, and allocation of resources align with the school vision to provide for children first. The staff and families are empowered by leadership to have a voice in school decisions and planning. This empowerment creates buy-in and ownership of success which supports strong teacher retention and sustainable excellence beyond changes in administration. VSE measures its success based upon our ability to consistently improve student achievement and to prepare our students to become future leaders.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Vincent Settlement Elementary (VSE) addresses a rigorous curriculum which is aligned to the Louisiana State Standards. The curriculum is comprised of both parish/state guidelines in addition to programs that have been field tested and shown to meet the overall needs of our students. Students are engaged in learning that focuses on real-world applications and challenging learning situations that are important to everyday knowledge. Classroom expectations provide students with important skills needed to become successful adults who are able to think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate, problem solve, and engage competitively in the global world.

The pre-kindergarten program is available to four year old students and utilizes a state developed, cross-curriculum guide. The guide is aligned with Louisiana’s Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards. These thematic units have been proven to increase school readiness. Pre-kindergarten teachers provide opportunities for children to explore, problem solve, and create. Lessons engage students in hands-on activities and provide them with opportunities to become successful learners through analysis/reasoning, creating, and effective questioning. Students are encouraged to interact with peers and adults to construct their own understanding about their environment. Students are provided with foundational skills and experiences necessary to become successful learners.

Children in kindergarten through second grade acquire phonemic awareness and phonics skills sequentially and systematically through the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) program, a research-based, multi-sensory phonics program. Through small group instruction, children in grades K-2 are taught word-solving techniques, how to key into interesting words, and how to apply comprehension strategies as they read. CKLA also builds students’ vocabulary and knowledge across essential domains in literature, global and American history, and the sciences.

Teachers consistently implement engaging instruction through the use of complex texts. Students express their understanding of these texts through oral and written expression. Louisiana guidebooks and a basal reading series curriculum are used to focus on genre-specific skill building and to enhance the skill of close reads using a strategies-based approach. Using these strategies, students develop critical and analytical reading skills. Students express their understanding of complex, grade-level texts with written responses using three major writing styles: narrative, informative, and literary analysis. Students who indicate at risk reading behaviors are provided multi-sensory instruction through small group remediation. Many of these texts are unit based with common themes such as American History, Famous Americans, Louisiana Purchase, or American Revolution. These units are often taught using a cross-curricular approach. Students become more knowledgeable, are actively engaged, and grasp an appreciation of history and the fundamental processes of American democracy. Engaging students in these topics beginning as early as kindergarten will help us to better prepare them for the demands of future generations. By middle school, students have a better understanding of their learning and its connection to real life situations. They are continuously being instilled with necessary skills such as: critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration to become successful citizens.

The math curriculum for grades K-5 also originates from the Louisiana State Standards and is strengthened with additional resources such as Eureka and Expressions. The curriculum is taught using discovery, questioning, and application methods, which are all valuable components to daily instruction. Students are taught to discover procedures through the use of real-world applications and problem solving. Eventually students learn procedures and algorithms, but they understand why they are using these strategies rather than just knowing how to solve problems. When students are forced to apply what they have learned to real-world applications, they are required to think critically, strategically, and collaboratively. These strategies will effectively prepare them to collaborate and communicate with others to solve complex problems. Confronting different views on solving problems is an important skill in today’s classroom whether it is taught during a mathematics lesson or in a physical education classroom. Students gain a better understanding of how their learning applies to everyday life and are given the connections necessary for

learning and exploration. This will empower them with the knowledge needed to take on leadership roles in and out of the classroom and will instill the confidence needed to solve any of life's challenges.

In the lower grades, science and social studies are naturally merged with core reading instruction through the use of the Louisiana Guidebooks. Since it is a unit based curriculum, it lends itself naturally to whole language lessons. Third through fifth grades are departmentalized, therefore teachers must collaborate to ensure the social studies and science curriculum is aligned with the English Language Arts standards. Science lessons reflect project based learning through the use of Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM) activities, primary resources, and extended response tasks. The social studies curriculum also incorporates life skill lessons needed to become informed citizens who consider diverse points-of-view, use critical thinking skills, and are active in their communities. Civic learning and engagement opportunities are provided through guest speakers and field trips to local businesses and government agencies.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students in grades pre-k through fifth visit one enrichment class daily on a rotational basis. Students visit each enrichment class for fifty minutes once or twice per week. These include library, physical education (PE), and art. A French program is offered to a select group of fourth and fifth grade students based on advanced academic eligibility. The French teacher also conducts short informal lessons with students in lower elementary. Pre-kindergarten students attend a thirty minute enrichment class once per week. In all enrichment areas, teachers strive to create lessons that are engaging, standards-based, and address all facets of student development.

During library class times, the librarian leads lessons and assists students in selecting and checking out books. The library has an open access policy all day for students and teachers to independently search and select materials. The focus of curriculum in the Vincent Settlement library is to instill a love of reading from an early age and to prepare older students to become 21st century learners. Younger students are immersed in rich literature and participate in activities that correlate with the English Language Arts standards being taught in the classroom. Instruction for upper elementary students focuses on research skills. Students use various types of technology to inquire, collaborate, and discover. Lessons include library use, research, online citizenship, and other skills needed to navigate our ever changing digital world.

The PE program supports math and ELA instruction by incorporating skills being taught in the classroom into PE lessons. For example, students may use dice during an activity to multiply numbers together to get a product which in turn determines exercise repetitions. Biographies of athletes and background information about athletic events and sports, also inspires students to dig deeper to understand the history behind something or someone. Participation in PE helps students remain active and teaches students how to live a healthier lifestyle. Being active increases the oxygen flow to the brain which improves focus and academic performance in the classroom. In addition, PE helps students' social skills and builds teamwork, which promotes healthy living and supports classroom instruction.

The focus of the art curriculum at Vincent Settlement is to instill a love and appreciation for art, as well as developing an understanding of the elements of art and principles of design. The art program, for pre-k students, provides readiness activities that help them strengthen their fine motor skills needed to participate in future art classes. The lower grade levels create projects based on literature that focus on one or two elements of art and/or principles of design. They also participate in Kagan Cooperative Learning activities to help them generate ideas about their own artwork and the works of others. The upper elementary students create projects based off of literature that correlates with various artists and/or art movements throughout history. Their projects focus on more complex elements of art and/or principles of design. They also participate in Kagan activities to collaborate about their projects.

The French curriculum focuses on intense instruction at the fourth and fifth grade levels. Weekly class visits to pre-k through 2nd grade are conducted to expose students to the French language. It is proven that students exposed to a second language at an early age are more likely to be academically successful. During French instruction, fourth and fifth grade students are expected to apply their knowledge of the core subjects such as math, social studies, and English Language Arts. For example, the French and English grammatical

rules are somewhat similar. Students need to master English grammatical rules before learning to manipulate the French language. Students also study numbers and solve easy math problems. This gives students a chance to reflect on their own mathematical knowledge and apply it in the French language. In Louisiana, the evidence of French culture is prominent. Students learn about Louisiana history and how the French culture has influenced their own state. Students also learn about French cuisine and participate in the recreation of a French cooking show. The differences between American and French cultures are studied by exchanging letters with a sixth grade class located near Paris, France. This pen pal project is a direct application of their French knowledge and a great way to improve their understanding of another culture around the world.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

One of the objectives for staff at Vincent Settlement Elementary (VSE) is to assist students in maximizing their abilities to reach their highest potential. Students are required to invest personal effort by taking ownership of their learning. Teachers create engaging lessons that include tasks which call for students to create their own higher order thinking questions, and engage in peer-tutoring, as well as self and peer assessment. These tasks are planned using criteria for mastery of standards of excellence in a given content area. Instructional staff often serve as facilitators of learning, as opposed to messengers of information. As a result, our students take pride in their learning because they are part of the teaching process.

Teachers strive to develop individualized instructional plans that meet all students' needs through differentiation. As a means to address all learning styles, lessons are interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, and technology rich. Our Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) initiative has been a valuable tool toward achieving this challenge. STEM lessons involve teaching students how to be effective problem solvers. Being part of a community with an abundant supply of industrial jobs enhances the need to emphasize the value of effective problem solving skills in the work force of the future. STEM lessons offer opportunities for our lower level students to excel, while also creating a challenge for our higher level students. Cooperative learning plays a major role in achieving differentiation in our classrooms. Kagan structures are used consistently to ensure that students are highly engaged in productive and purposeful collaborative experiences. Structures such as color-coding task cards, leveled tasks, and/or using specific grouping methods are used to reach all ability levels.

The value of authentic assessment is at the forefront of and is a constant companion to classroom instruction. Frequent assessment results are used to monitor and adjust instruction, as well as to identify student strengths and weaknesses. Formative assessments are used to track mastery of grade level standards in order to determine if adjustments to instruction are required. Cooperative learning strategies, such as the use of an exit ticket, are used to informally assess skills and provide timely feedback. Hands-on tasks are used in summative fashion to give students an opportunity for self-assessment.

Analysis of data is a process that ensures that academic needs of students are being met and can also spotlight a need for strategic or intensive interventions. Data analysis formally takes place in Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions. PLC sessions provide support for teachers to be successful during instruction. A lead teacher provides a variety of resources and strategies to assist teachers with instructional planning and data analysis. All data is analyzed and evaluated collaboratively by teachers, as well as administrators. The English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science and Social Studies teachers in third, fourth, and fifth grades meet weekly for the purpose of vertical teaming. DIBELS, SuccessMaker, writing samples, and formative/summative assessments are examples of data that is analyzed during meetings.

A key output of high quality assessment and data analysis is prompt and appropriate instructional interventions. Following collaborative and individual reviewing of ELA and Math student data, teachers review low scoring areas and personal growth goals with students and interventionists in order to match skill specific interventions to each child. Students set and adjust their goals as needed throughout the year. As a result of data analysis, combined with necessary interventions, students, teachers, and interventionists are active participants in identifying needs and developing and/or tweaking action plans to assist in meeting goals.

Vincent Settlement Elementary (VSE) recites a daily mission statement that alludes to “the Vincent Settlement family.” With that in mind, all staff members, from administrators to custodians, embrace the belief that student accountability is an important factor in maintaining a high level of school-wide achievement. Accountability occurs among staff, students, families, and community stakeholders. Teachers are held accountable through a wide range of methods such as data analysis, high quality lesson plans, and purposeful assessments. Students are responsible for tracking their own data and using it to achieve or surpass individual goals. VSE also encourages parents to be active participants in their child’s academic progress in order to eliminate gaps between home and school. Parent involvement is essential for Vincent Settlement to continue to perform as a high achieving school.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Vincent Settlement Elementary (VSE) engages and motivates our students in varied ways. Accelerated Reader (AR) is a school-wide reading program that has been successful with motivating our students to read. When students meet or exceed their individual goal, they are rewarded by attending a special “Lunch Bunch” celebration, which includes a special themed lunch. School-wide celebrations are also provided for the entire population when we reach these goals. VSE also has school-wide quarterly goals based on attendance, behavior, and student performance. Students are rewarded through our Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) process. “Cowboy Cash” is an incentive used to recognize positive behavior socially and academically. Students spend cowboy cash quarterly at the PBIS “Trading Post” store. A “Rise and Shine Rally” is a school-wide gathering held once a month to provide praise, recognition, and appreciation to our students and staff for extra-curricular activities and academics. These gatherings provide a sense of family where we all encourage one another.

Our school provides many opportunities to create and maintain a positive environment. Flexible seating has been implemented in several classrooms where students learn in a more comfortable and flexible atmosphere. Students have seating options to choose from to meet their individual needs for academic, social, and emotional growth. On our playground, we have “Buddy Benches” that were created for students who need a friend for any reason. Two of our school clubs focus on faith and caring. The “Kindness Club” is designed for students to show love and appreciation for their peers and our staff. “Kids of the Kingdom” is a student-led Christian club. Through Big Brothers Big Sisters, students are paired with an adult who comes periodically to tutor or simply have lunch together. In addition, our school counselor leads lessons and focus groups to attend to the emotional and social needs of students. The “Backpack Blessing” program has been implemented to address nutritional needs of targeted students. Our community Partners in Education liaisons teach a series of lessons on economics through our Jr. Achievement Program.

Our staff consists of dedicated individuals who thrive in a family type of environment. Everyone has mutual respect for each other, regardless of their title, and is willing to help when a need arises. Teacher needs are met and their opinions are valued through surveys, committee interest inventories, and leadership empowerment. “You Matter” cards are something special that we use at VSE. This is an opportunity for any staff member to acknowledge the success, comradery, and appreciation for each other.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Vincent Settlement believes when schools, families, and community members come together, our school climate remains positive and our students grow to their unique and individual potential. Engaging families begins at the start of each year. Our school hosts an open house to allow families to tour the school, meet teachers, and complete necessary paperwork. Open house is followed up with a drive-thru breakfast where families are given breakfast and a folder containing information. Examples of information given include a calendar of events, volunteer opportunities, school brochure, and historical data. Throughout the year, events are held to encourage family involvement both socially and academically. Some of these events include: family movie night, family reading picnic with guest authors, lunch with grandparents, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math night (S.T.E.M.), and volunteer opportunities through our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).

Our PTO consists of parents, grandparents, and teachers who actively work with our school to help improve our culture and climate. Our PTO has been empowered to take leadership over many activities that directly benefit students. They take pride in our Trading Post where students shop with Cowboy Cash they earned at school through our positive behavior reward system. They also organize our quarterly Accelerated Reader party. They help with costs of professional development through annual fundraisers. Our PTO hosts an auction for families and community members. They have also hosted a Mardi Gras Ball for students, and they are willing to assist the staff on professional requests. PTO volunteers have covered duties and classrooms for teachers when the need arises. Our PTO provides great support and

encouragement for our teachers, which includes providing lunch and a variety of treats during teacher appreciation week. We believe that because of the wonderful support from our families, our community members also feel led to contribute to the success of our school.

Community involvement comes from a wide array of volunteers. Our Partners in Education (PIE) provide financial support and direct services to our school. They provide materials and man hours toward our learning garden, banner and honor roll treat bags, funding for field trips, staff lunch during Christmas and faculty in-service days, and assist families in need during holidays. Strong support also comes from local churches and organizations within our community which includes donations for our current library renovation, Buddy Benches, and school-wide assemblies. We believe our school success is supported through the collaboration with families and community members to ensure our students have a positive and nurturing school experience.

3. Professional Development:

Vincent Settlement Elementary (VSE) partakes in Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions, which are facilitated weekly by grade level teachers, the lead teacher, or administrators. PLC sessions assist teachers in developing proficiency in teaching student-centered strategies that address areas of weakness determined through data analysis. These sessions allow opportunities to address individual student needs. Student progress is tracked and adjustments are made to ensure his/her highest potential is reached.

Our third, fourth, and fifth grade levels are departmentalized. These teachers meet in weekly vertical teaming content areas to support one another and provide alignment in instruction. The ELA teachers are also part of a district level writing alignment project. The goal of this project is to develop alignment of writing skills among district schools. The project is designed to create rubrics and writing prompts aligned to state standards. Science teachers meet at the district level to develop “best practices” to share the most effective district-wide teaching strategies. Math teachers have attended a Math Science Partnership (MSP) training for the last two summers. This is an intense math and science training focused on standards based lessons to highly engage students. The principal has recently completed the National Institute of School Leadership (NISL) program and is a certified facilitator. She has shared this learning with school staff, the leadership team, and through redelivery to peers at administrator trainings.

New teachers are provided with a more intense support system through mentor relationships. Mentor teachers share expertise and encouragement on a weekly basis. The district provides ongoing professional development specifically designed to meet the needs of new teachers through the New Teacher Academy.

Our faculty is provided with a variety of opportunities for professional development through in-service days, site visits to other schools, faculty meetings, and development requested through needs assessments. Teachers collaborate to share the strategies and techniques learned during staff collaboration sessions. Because of substantial professional development opportunities, educators at VSE maintain high qualifications in a variety of areas, including: technology, classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies.

Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is a vital part of our success with professional development due to their contributions through volunteer hours and funding. They work vigorously to raise funds to support the educational needs of our students and instructional staff. Our Partners in Education consist of a very caring and generous group of local businesses that consistently provide us with funding and/or volunteers to help make a positive impact on our learning environment.

4. School Leadership:

The success of Vincent Settlement Elementary (VSE) is directly connected with the school’s leadership philosophy of modeling core values, aspiring to higher levels, and empowering committed staff members with the specific intention of creating sustainability for lasting change. Inevitably, the leadership of a school changes over time. Creating a positive culture, driven by staff, ensures positive transformations

continue the vision of VSE.

By demonstrating the values of exemplary leadership, the mentality of continuous improvement is inspired within teachers and students. The principal and assistant principal intentionally nurture an environment of mutual trust and respect which inspires employee excellence, ultimately creating greater academic success. Leaders, teachers, and students set performance goals at the beginning of each year and transparently reflect on progress throughout the year to make appropriate adjustments to achieve success.

The members of the leadership team passionately communicate the shared vision of reaching the full potential for all. With this in mind, teachers are allowed to make instruction priority over other responsibilities in the school. This allows teachers to remain focused on providing quality learning experiences for their students. Additionally, teachers have time to lead students through reflective experiences to develop ownership toward their individual progress. Student achievement has shown significant gains when our students are highly engaged in the goal setting and reflective process.

The Vincent Settlement Elementary staff and community are empowered to have a voice in a variety of leadership opportunities and decisions. Staff members are matched with their personal strengths and passions to serve the school and students through committees and clubs. Representatives from all grade levels and sectors of the school community serve on the leadership team on a rotating basis. By rotating a portion of leadership members annually, this gives valuable insight and understanding of the school decision making process to a greater number of staff who are directly impacted. Increasing understanding fosters support in the structures and expectations in place to support achieving at the highest levels.

All VSE stakeholders are given multiple opportunities to provide feedback and evaluations of school leadership and events through surveys, plus/deltas, and inventories. These results are shared with stakeholders in an effort to model being open to the value of learning from one another. Vincent Settlement has a climate that reflects a deep sense of family. This climate is a direct reflection of the hiring and support practices in place by the school administrators. Teachers and staff appreciate and actively contribute to the positive culture which allows for superior retention of high quality educators.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The vision of Vincent Settlement Elementary is achieved by using a variety of tools to analyze data on a consistent basis to maximize the growth potential of each individual student. Vincent Settlement is a successful school in large part because we address the whole student. The whole student encompasses the academic needs, physical needs, artistic needs, and emotional needs of each student. The main strategy we focus on is data analysis. Data analysis drives our decisions and planning. The data reflects student needs in academics, enrichment, clubs, and alternative programs.

Through the use of surveys and inventories, students indicate their needs and desires for clubs and activities. These extracurricular activities keep our students motivated, interested, and involved in school. Some of the clubs currently in place are the Art Club, Kindness Club, Student Council, Kids of the Kingdom, Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM) Club, KVSE newscasters, and 4-H.

Through the use of Fitness Grams, our physical education teacher is able to analyze results to determine the particular needs of students. These results allow the teacher to provide individualized instruction in the area of physical fitness and health.

As teachers and administrators, we analyze data weekly and sometimes daily. We meet in grade level strategic planning sessions during the summer and weekly PLC meetings to address our data. Several tools are used to provide an accurate and in depth snapshot of each student. Louisiana Education Assessment Program (LEAP) is our criteria referenced state assessment. District Common Assessments (DCA) are bi-annual norm referenced assessments for each grade and content area. DCA tracks students' growth from the beginning to the end of the year. We also use the DCA to create and adjust our Response to Intervention (RTI) groups in math and reading. DCA results are also one tool used to create student groups for after school tutoring. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is an assessment tool used to measure reading fluency in kindergarten through third grade. SuccessMaker is an individualized web based program that measures each students' progress in math and reading. This program provides immediate feedback to the students, teachers, and RTI instructors. DCA and SuccessMaker data, along with classroom assessments are just a few of the tools used to monitor and adjust RTI groups and daily lessons. The Accelerated Reader (AR) program is individualized to students by setting personal goals to assess reading comprehension. AR data is analyzed and used to reward students with incentives on a school-wide level, as well as individually.