

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. Jolynne Dobson

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

Official School Name Countryside Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 8200 Eastern Avenue S.E.

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

City Byron Center State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 49315-9389

County Kent County

Telephone (616) 878-6900 Fax (616) 878-6920

Web site/URL http://www.bcpsk12.net/countryside E-mail jdobson@bcpsk12.net

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. Daniel Takens E-mail dantakens@bcpsk12.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Byron Center Public School District Tel. (616) 878-6100

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 Mrs. Lenore Roede
(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	19	4	23
K	46	47	93
1	43	47	90
2	62	44	106
3	49	59	108
4	56	55	111
5	0	0	0
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	275	256	531

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 88 % White
 - 0 % 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: 7%

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	22
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	36
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	503
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.072
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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):

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 22 %
Total number students who qualify: 118

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
49 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
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 4 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 1 Orthopedic Impairment
- 3 Other Health Impaired
- 3 Specific Learning Disability
- 35 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 1 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 25:1
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%	95%	96%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes _ No X
If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

The Countryside Staff provides a rigorous education in a positive child centered environment, developing students' academic, social, emotional, and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

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

Countryside Elementary is a public school located in Byron Center, Michigan, a small town in a rural community just outside the greater Grand Rapids area. Byron Center Public Schools is composed of an early childhood center, three elementary buildings, one intermediate school, one middle school and one high school.

In the fall of 2004, Countryside opened its doors for the first time to students in preschool through fourth grade. Rapid growth in the Byron Center community had made it necessary to build a third elementary school in the district. Originally an area rich in agriculture, Byron Center is evolving from rural to suburban. In order to preserve its rural roots, the community selected the name Countryside Elementary, paying tribute to community members and their past dedication to agriculture.

The building has a contemporary country motif that utilizes natural resources to enhance learning. The school grounds include a wetland trail, working windmill, outdoor learning spaces, raised garden beds, and observation decks. The agricultural influence continues throughout the interior of the building, including unique structures and materials such as small group rooms designed like silos, corrugated metal siding, and a John Deere buffet in the lunchroom. The school also includes three open learning centers to facilitate collaborative learning experiences.

The staff at Countryside is committed to ensuring that every child reaches his or her fullest potential. Our team includes 21 General Education Teachers, one Special Education Teacher and four Specials Teachers (Art, PE, Music, and STEM). Our support staff is shared with other buildings and includes: Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Social Work, Counseling, and ELL. Our Title I staff includes an Academic Support Instructor, five paraprofessionals and two math interventionists.

The Countryside staff prides itself on providing a rigorous curriculum while maintaining a strong, positive culture focused on building character. Teachers work very hard to make learning fun and relevant, while continuing to grow their students' abilities to read, write, problem solve and think critically. We have been very intentional about building a culture of continuous growth and improvement through Professional Learning Communities (PLC), using our data to drive our instruction and professional development. The staff has eagerly embraced watching each other teach as well as giving and taking feedback. As a result, our academic scores have continued to increase. Countryside Elementary has been recognized as a Reward School for the past three school years ranking in the top five percent of schools in the state of Michigan.

Countryside staff, students, and families have formed a close knit community focused on supporting each other in all areas. It is not unusual to have a dozen or more parents at a time volunteering in classrooms, on the playground, or in the cafeteria. We have a thriving mentoring program, WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program, and a strong parent group all of whom are committed to meeting the varied needs of our student population. Additionally, parents and staff work together to support Best Bulldog Behavior (BBB) which is part of our Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS). For the last two years, we have also been able to offer the parenting class, Love and Logic, which supports our building PBIS initiative, strengthening our home to school connection. The feedback from families who have attended the parenting class has been positive and encouraging.

The Countryside community is very caring as evident by the variety of fundraisers and activities organized whenever there is a need. Two years ago, one of our staff members lost her newborn son to a rare blood disorder. The Countryside parent group organized a bone marrow drive in his memory which resulted in over 415 people registering for the donor list, and raised over \$5000. Each fall our students continue to raise money for this important cause. Teachers also intentionally build opportunities into their classrooms for students to give back to the community with projects such as collecting bandages for a local children's hospital, socks for homeless shelters, cards for a local nursing home, produce grown in our gardens given to a food pantry, and a penny drive to fund cancer research. We truly believe building character and teaching our children to care about others is just as important as academics.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Countryside Elementary, as part of Byron Center Public Schools, provides a vertically aligned curriculum for pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade based on Common Core State Standards for Reading, Writing and Math. Science and social studies are based on Michigan State Standards. The Countryside staff is committed to providing a rigorous curriculum to ensure each student experiences outstanding academic achievement. We have high expectations for ourselves professionally and translate this passion to our students as they seek to grow academically. Our day is intentionally scheduled with large uninterrupted periods of time to maximize learning.

Reading Curriculum: Byron Center Public School's reading curriculum, Lucy Calkins Units of Study, is vertically aligned K-8 with the Common Core Reading Standards. The Countryside Elementary staff is committed to 90 minutes of reading instruction daily including all elements of a balanced literacy approach: phonemic awareness, word study, fluency, comprehension, read aloud, and shared reading. Our passion is to instill a love of reading through a workshop model of instruction: mini-lessons, independent reading, conferring, and sharing time. District, building, and parent group resources are designated each year to continue building classroom libraries with leveled text, a key component of workshop instruction. Students engage in reading self-selected books for extended periods of time. Teachers provide differentiated instruction via conferring which allows them the opportunity to meet each child's needs.

Writing Curriculum: The Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Writing are vertically aligned K-8 with Common Core Standards for Writing by Byron Center Public Schools. These units are taught using the workshop model of instruction: mini lessons, independent writing time, conferring and sharing. Students at Countryside are immersed in writing instruction for 60 minutes each day with the philosophy of instilling the love of writing. Students are encouraged to choose their own topics and write for extended periods of time. End of unit celebrations highlight the growth of all writers. Teachers confer with students individually and/or in small groups to meet their needs. The benefits of aligned curriculum, common language, and writing rubric scoring are apparent in the growth we have seen in our students' writing over the past two years.

Math Curriculum: All Countryside students receive 60 minutes of math instruction daily using Math Expressions curriculum, which has been aligned kindergarten through fourth grade with the Common Core Standards for Math. Students are taught to be flexible mathematical thinkers through learning a variety of strategies to solve complex math problems. Over the last year, we have implemented number talks into our math instruction to further develop students' deeper level thinking skills by explaining their mathematical thinking and applying flexible thinking to complex problems. Teachers use a variety of assessment methods to ensure mastery of the content including quick quizzes, formative assessments, end of unit tests, and Discovery Education assessments. The data collected are used to determine interventions and extensions.

Science: Up until this year, the Michigan Grade Level Science Content Expectations have been the foundation of our science instruction. Michigan adopted new science standards which are based on the Next Generation Science Standards in November 2015. Byron Center Public Schools is currently working on unpacking the standards and researching curriculum that aligns. Our goal is to find a program that includes lessons and assessments to teach and assess deeper level thinking skills, science content, and technology. Informational text on science topics are also integrated into reading and writing instruction allowing us to maximize instructional time. During the 2014-2015 school year we were approved by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to develop the wetlands on our property as an outdoor learning space. We have a classroom gathering spot and trails for observation and hands-on science investigation. Raised garden beds were also built to support science instruction.

Social Studies: Our social studies curriculum is aligned to the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations. Social studies informational text is woven into reading and writing allowing teachers to integrate content areas. Our students participate in mock elections, visit our state capital in third grade, and celebrate national

holidays such as Martin Luther King Day, Black History Month, and Presidents' Day. In addition, we intentionally focus on civic awareness and character building with assemblies, announcements, and opportunities to give back to the community.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Countryside Elementary, our school day begins at 8:25 AM and ends at 3:40 PM. We have designed our daily schedule to include blocks of uninterrupted instructional time, including time for specials classes: physical education, art, music, library, and STEM.

Physical Education (PE): Countryside Elementary students participate in physical education twice per week for 30 minutes in grade first-fourth, and three times per week for kindergarten students. Instruction in physical education is designed in accordance with the Michigan Physical Education Grade Level Content Expectations. Common Core State Standards for Math and Reading are also embedded into P.E. instruction when appropriate and purposeful. Our students also participate in a fundraiser each year to support the National Heart Association, as well as the opportunity to participate in running club which includes a district wide Dynamite Dawgs 5K Race each spring.

Art: Countryside students attend art class each week for 60 minutes, except for kindergarten who attend for 40 minutes. Art education allows our students the opportunity to explore a variety of cultures and visual art techniques such as painting, drawing, sculpture, weaving and metal work. Our art teacher incorporates global and cultural themes into her classroom building awareness and connections across the curriculum. As a result, Countryside students are developing a broad worldview and appreciation for ideas and beliefs different from their own. We also offer a before school art club two times per week for students who want to further their exploration of art.

Music: The students at Countryside attend music class twice per week for 30 minutes. Children learn about different places in the world and cultural diversity through music. Our music teacher purposefully embeds activities to support Common Core State Standards in Reading and Math through sight words, math facts and reading. Students learn to read, perform and enjoy a variety of music genres. Each year our first through fourth grade students showcase their musical ability at the Countryside Spring Music program. In addition, students in third and fourth grade are given the opportunity to join Countryside Celebration Choir with opportunities to perform a holiday concert, sing the National Anthem for a local minor league baseball team, the West Michigan Whitecaps, lead Countryside Character Assemblies, and honor our area veterans at a Veteran's Day Assembly.

Countryside students and families celebrate art and music each spring with an Arts in Our School night. Students' artwork is displayed and the Countryside Celebration Choir performs a variety of songs centered around a common theme. Parents and community members are invited to celebrate our music and art programs.

Library: The Countryside Library has over 14,000 books available for teachers and students. District, building and parent group money enables the media center specialist to add books to the library each year to fit grade level curriculum and student interest. Students attend library once a week for 35 minutes and are engaged in an interactive read aloud as well as time to check out and read books. In order to encourage a love for reading and grow students' comprehension, the media center specialist manages Scholastic Reading Counts for all students first-fourth grades. Each week, children monitor their progress towards Reading Counts goals earning a variety of prizes and awards. Students who meet or exceed the grade level Reading Count goal attend a celebration of reading in January and then again in May.

STEM: During the 2016-2017 school year, STEM was implemented as a specials class which students attend for 40 minutes each week. In STEM the students are engaged in learning centered around Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. The STEM teacher coordinates activities based on grade level content when possible. The students enjoy this hands-on learning while applying a variety of skills including flexible and deeper level thinking.

Technology: As a result of a school bond in 2011 which included funds for one-to-one computers, Countryside students in grades second through fourth have been given the opportunity to use Chromebooks in their classrooms as a tool for learning. Students in kindergarten and first grade have access to iPads as well as computers. Teachers are intentional about using technology to teach the state standards including research, writing, and reading to promote deeper level analytical thinking.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

The Countryside staff is focused on meeting the needs of all students. Staff and students maintain high expectations for academic achievement. Our belief system is to continually strengthen Tier I (classroom) instruction to meet the needs of our diverse learners. As a result, we continually look for ways to grow in our understanding and implementation of research based practice strategies.

develop extensions, interventions, and strategies to support student achievement. Teachers also value this time to monitor and build the culture of the building as a whole as well as in their individual classrooms.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

School climate and culture are the bedrock of the Countryside community, including students, families and staff. We work diligently to meet the needs of the whole child, intentionally fostering an environment where students believe they are safe and cared for emotionally and socially. Each child is valued and encouraged to grow and develop to his or her fullest potential in all areas.

The staff has been trained in Capturing Kids' Hearts, a research based program which provides educators with the tools to build relationships and a sense of community within their classrooms as well as teach students to reflect on their choices and monitor their own behavior. As a staff we create a social contract at the beginning of each year which is foundational for grade level work in PLCs, but also for the staff as a whole. The principal intentionally models using our social contract as a means of holding ourselves accountable for our commitments to each other. Teachers also use this model in their classrooms, creating classroom social contracts to use throughout the year as the foundation for the learning environment and expectations in the classroom.

The Countryside Elementary staff has created a school-wide system of support that includes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behavior through our Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) initiative. This PBIS system includes our "Best Bulldog Behavior" expectations of being Respectful, Responsible, and Safe. These behavioral norms are referred to as our "B3 Attitudes" and are highlighted every eight weeks with a building-wide assembly and a take-home activity to strengthen our home to school connection and partnership. This program is also supported each day during morning announcements when the principal shares the Best Bulldog Behavior winners for the day. The 2015-2016 Parent Survey validated these efforts as 83 percent of our parents reported the "Best Bulldog Behavior" initiative makes a difference in their own child's behavior. We routinely assess our behavior data and make necessary adjustments in the building and with individual students.

The Countryside staff recognizes the potential stressors of our profession and seeks to find ways to support each other. We find ways to weave fun into our staff meetings and work days. The office team provides monthly opportunities for staff members to socialize and laugh together. Once per month a local organization also provides a breakfast for staff members where we take time to share concerns and encourage each other.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The parents of Countryside Elementary students are highly involved in our school community. We consistently have a high percentage of parents participate in parent teacher conferences, thus partnering with their child's teacher to make it the best year for their child academically, socially and emotionally. We have parent representation on our School Improvement Committee. They have input in the Countryside Parent Involvement Policy and Countryside Parent Compact. Parents At Countryside (PAC), our parent group, meets monthly to celebrate all the good things happening at Countryside and to explore ways to further support families, classrooms, and students. They also plan family centered activities such as Daddy/Daughter Dance, movie night, Fall Festival, and Mother/Son Bowling. Currently, PAC is leading a fundraising effort to raise money for a greenhouse.

The Byron Center community is also an integral part of Countryside's success. Hand-2-Hand Ministries is a non-profit organization that provides a backpack full of nutritious food for our families in need each week. Students also form special relationships and interact with positive role models through weekly Kids' Hope mentoring and our Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program.

Countryside Elementary truly values our partnership with parents and the Byron Center community, knowing their involvement makes a significant impact on student success. A new parent to our building, in the 2015-2016 school year, shared the following when asked about her family's experience at Countryside:

"As the parents of three Countryside Elementary students, we have been profoundly impressed with the school's investment in striving for excellence for every student, as well as, fostering model behavior for all students. We are reminded daily of the school's commitment to maintaining a relationship between home and school, especially through many key initiatives, such as the at-risk reading "Super Switch" program and the Best Bulldog Behavior program. We cannot speak highly enough of the constant communication and support from the school to us as parents. Beyond academics, the support to help us lay the foundation to raise good children who will become wonderful and productive citizens is unparalleled; we are incredibly blessed to have Countryside Elementary as part of our family."

3. Professional Development:

Professional development at Countryside is an integral part of what we do every day. Our decisions to further our growth as professionals is based on our PLC data analysis and focused to support and enhance our curriculum as it aligns with our standards.

The Byron Center K-12 staff, with support from a consultant, unpacked the Common Core State Standards, both math and language arts, identified learning targets and continues to create and refine summative and formative assessments. Michigan recently adopted the Next Generation Science Standards. Our science team composed of one teacher from each grade level is currently researching new curriculum and has begun the process of unpacking the standards for common understanding.

Teachers from all of our elementary buildings, along with one administrator, attended professional development through the Teachers College, Columbia University, Reading and Writing Project. Furthermore, all teaching staff participate in embedded professional development throughout the year including: time with a reading workshop consultant, learning labs, PLC meetings and grade-level release days focused on intentional unpacking of the Lucy Calkins Units of Study to ensure a common understanding of the teaching standards. The principal does observations providing consistent and timely feedback using a workshop continuum. Paraprofessionals and teachers have also received training for intervention literacy strategies.

Teachers have been involved in ongoing professional development with a math coach including book studies with Number Talks by Sherry Parrish and Teaching Student-Centered Mathematics by John A. VandeWalle, classroom learning labs and Professional Learning Communities conversations. The School Improvement Team is participating in Michigan Mathematical Educators, a professional learning opportunity through our local ISD (Intermediate School District). This professional development has increased our ability to teach students to explain their thinking, write constructed responses, and apply flexible thinking to complex problems.

The Countryside staff continually seeks to grow in the craft of teaching through PLCs, classroom learning labs, book study groups, and coaching opportunities. Teachers, interventionists and paraprofessionals are open to feedback and have embraced a growth mindset, all of which has created a culture of continual refinement and goal setting. We have high expectations for ourselves professionally and translate that passion to our students as they seek to grow academically.

4. School Leadership:

The philosophy and structure of leadership at Countryside is centered around shared leadership, believing that every voice must be heard and considered in decision making with a focus on student success. The school improvement team, comprising a representative from each grade level, the principal, academic support instructor, and parent representation, meets monthly. Decisions regarding professional development are based on academic achievement data as well as staff surveys. Team members are responsible for communication between the leadership team and grade levels. Cultural issues and needs in the building are also discussed as well as ways in which the team can support the staff.

The Countryside principal is passionate about providing sustained professional development embedded consistently throughout the school year to support teachers' professional growth. This includes coaching

opportunities, conversation, feedback and encouragement. She firmly believes that well trained teachers have the most impact on student success, and intentionally organizes her time and energy to reflect this belief.

Countryside also has a leadership team for the Best Bulldog Behavior initiative. This team meets at least five times per year to analyze behavior data. From the analysis, we determine areas of need and plan strategies for the building as a whole as well as for students with high behavior needs. Our goal is to sustain a positive culture centered around common expectations.

Another key component of leadership is our Response to Intervention (RtI) team. This team meets approximately every six to eight weeks to collaborate regarding strategies for at risk students. The RtI Team is coordinated by the academic support instructor and includes our district psychologist, social worker, speech therapist, special education teacher, principal, and a teacher from each grade level. The team analyzes student data, brainstorms strategies, and creates individualized plans to ensure success for at risk students.

Each leadership team intentionally strives to remain student-centered reaching toward the goal of academic, emotional, and social success for each child.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The Countryside staff has embraced the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) process as our platform for school improvement in all areas. We focus our work and collaboration on the following questions: What do we want students to know and understand?; How will we know if they've learned it?; What will we do if they did not learn it?; and What will we do if they did learn it?

Everything we do is filtered through the PLC process. Teachers have been supportive of building consistent time to meet into their contracts, and the principal guards PLC time, protecting it from being taken up by nuts and bolts issues in the building. As a result, grade level teams unpack standards and align curriculum collaboratively ensuring a common understanding and implementation of a viable curriculum. They routinely check pacing guides to make sure everyone is on track and clear on the expectations. In addition, they create and refine common formative assessments to make sure they are checking students' understanding of the content. The information from the results is used to design interventions and extensions for students maximizing each child's academic success, as well as to reflect on instructional practices. Building teams also participate in the PLC process through our RtI meetings, behavior meetings, reading intervention meetings, and math intervention meetings. We continually assess our progress through a variety of data points: Discovery Education, SRI, running records, district common assessments, and anecdotal evidence. The PLC process is also used to address behavioral issues both with the building as a whole and with individual students. Through our Positive Behavior Intervention System, we set building expectations, plan activities and incentives and collect behavior data to determine areas of need. As a result, we are proactive in making decisions to support students, staff and teachers. The structure and systems of Professional Learning Communities continue to help us improve our academic achievement and behavioral issues with all students.

The Countryside community, including students, families and staff are proud of our academic success and positive culture. We purposefully balance the focus on rigor and relationships. The staff has fully embraced a PLC mindset and teachers consider themselves responsible for all students, not just those in their individual classrooms. We all work together to support each child academically, socially, and emotionally. We have proven to ourselves we can accomplish more together than we can separately.