

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 Mr. Reuben Bellows Jr.

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

Official School Name Earl Harris Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4311 North Asbury

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

City Bethany State OK Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 73008-2664

County Oklahoma County

Telephone (405) 789-6673 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.bethanyschools.com E-mail rbellows@bps.k12.ok.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*Mr. Drew Eichelberger E-mail deichelberger@bps.k12.ok.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Bethany Public School District Tel. (405) 789-3801

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. Heather Miller
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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 | 39 | 40 | 79 |
| K | 54 | 58 | 112 |
| 1 | 61 | 53 | 114 |
| 2 | 64 | 53 | 117 |
| 3 | 57 | 63 | 120 |
| 4 | 67 | 45 | 112 |
| 5 | 58 | 53 | 111 |
| 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 | 400 | 365 | 765 |

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 17 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 65 % White
 - 12 % 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: 5%

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 | 18 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 40 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015 | 748 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.053 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 5 |

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 13 %
99 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Arabic, Pakistani, Creole

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 40 %
Total number students who qualify: 307

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
97 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
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 | 31 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc. | 15 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 20 |
| Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 5 |

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 251:1
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 | 98% | 98% | 98% | 98% | 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.
Our mission is to foster a desire within each student to become a lifelong learner, as well as a caring, productive, and responsible citizen of their 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

Founded in 1910, Earl Harris Elementary is the sole elementary school in Bethany Public Schools. Bethany, Oklahoma is a suburb of Oklahoma City. We are able to maintain a small town atmosphere while enjoying the resources of a larger metropolitan area. Earl Harris is unique in the fact that our district is only one square mile in area and we have a population of 750 students in grades Pre-K through fifth. We are surrounded by a much larger school district and are adjacent to a university campus. Over half of our students, 52.7%, transfer into our school from across the Oklahoma City metro area. Hundreds of families apply for the opportunity to be on a waiting list with the hope of attending our school. This demonstrates Earl Harris is a desired school of choice.

Our school is one of diversity. We have students from a variety of cultures and socioeconomic levels. We are a Title I school with 40% of our students qualifying for the free or reduced lunch program. Our English Language Learner population continues to grow. Even though students come from such varied backgrounds, they interact with love, grace, and acceptance in the learning environment, as it is modeled by their teachers. This makes for very healthy relationships. Our families value education and partner with the school. Parents volunteer for PTO committees, show up weekly to assist teachers, serve as Camp Classen sponsors, and participate in classroom activities or parties including the fifth grade promotion celebration. This community environment continues at the end of the day with an after school childcare program provided by a nearby church at no charge to families.

The Children's Center, a state-of-the-art hospital for medically fragile children, is located within our district. These children are mainstreamed into our classes, whenever possible. Even though these children face challenges, students soon realize how much they have in common, and how much they have to offer. Relationships are formed quickly through play, conversation, and smiles. Each year we have a "Children's Center Bowl" during our football season to collect donations for this hospital. This builds empathy and compassion for others among our student body.

Our students have many opportunities to interact with the administration in positive ways. Our principal meets monthly with students who are celebrating birthdays. He reads a story, in costume, and gives each student a birthday treat. This is his gift to them. They feel important and it allows a relationship to develop between student and principal, contributing to the community feel of our school. Our administration models servant hood when serving food for holiday meals. Our principal and dean of students are highly visible. They greet students in the car line and spend time in the cafeteria daily. Our superintendent walks the halls and interacts with students as he passes. Administrators are accessible to teachers and approachable if students need them.

Students are involved in the daily activities of the school. Students introduce themselves and lead the school in pledges, the school creed, and word/quote of the week. On Friday mornings we gather for "Roundup", our all school assembly. One class is featured each week by performing a special showcase highlighting a current topic of study. During Roundup, we also recognize students, sing songs, and kick off school-wide campaigns. At the end of the school year, fifth graders are applauded as they leave Roundup for the last time. This enhances the sense of community within our school.

Earl Harris Elementary has an outstanding legacy. It is a generational legacy not often found in a public school setting. We have students in our school who are the fourth generation attending Bethany Public Schools. Several of our teachers and administrators graduated from Bethany, established their career here, and sent their children to our school. Retired alumni return as volunteers.

Since Earl Harris Elementary is physically connected to the other schools within our district, all three benefit in many ways. Students from the secondary schools work with elementary and early childhood students every day. They interact by working on sight words, helping them focus on work, listening to young students read, or practicing math facts. These relationships contribute to students' success and provide additional classroom support. Older students are role models for younger students. A "Senior Walk" is held at the end of the school year. Graduating high school seniors wearing their caps and gowns, walk through the halls of the elementary school and down the sidewalk in front of the Early Childhood Center. This tradition allows younger students to visualize themselves as graduates.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Earl Harris Elementary, including our Early Childhood Center, uses a variety of curricula for instruction. It encompasses everything from teacher created units to established publishers. Our school is unique in its curriculum because each grade level has the ability to pick and choose practices and programs that produce the best instruction for their particular standards and students. Each student is provided a rich, deep, and meaningful foundation in our Pre-K and Kindergarten programs. Layers of content continue to be added with each grade level they complete.

The first building block for reading instruction is our strenuous phonics program. It is a combination of Zoo Phonics and Saxon Phonics. We also utilize Scott Foresman’s Reading Street. Weekly stories focus on both literacy skills and vocabulary. Once the foundational pieces for reading are in place, students begin to make connections through a more in-depth study of literary elements using novels.

Our overall language goal is to inspire students to master writing. This includes using correct spelling and proper grammar. Our spelling program uses Words Their Way and Scott Foresman’s Reading Street. Both of these programs focus on four stages of spelling. Our grammar curriculum includes Daily Edit, Mountain Language, and Language Arts Interactive Notebooks. All of these pieces provide opportunities for students to engage and apply grammar daily in various types of writing.

Our math curriculum is rooted in mastery of basic facts, number concepts/application, and problem solving. Students progress from the concrete to the abstract. They are introduced to math concepts through hands-on activities. Basic fact memorization is a vital foundational piece as students prepare to engage in higher level problem solving. Multiple learning styles are addressed to accomplish mastery including songs, chants, and videos. As students grasp new concepts, they transfer these skills to written exercises. Saxon, Harcourt Houghton Mifflin, and interactive notebooks are used to introduce number concepts/applications. These notebooks also serve as reference sources for students as needed. Instruction is data driven using both Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) results and Oklahoma Academic Standards (OAS) based pre/post tests to differentiate student learning. Flexible learning groups are established based on this data.

Science curriculum focuses on inquiry, scientific process, data analysis, and problem solving as well as content knowledge. The instructional emphasis in the primary grades is to create a passion for inquiry and an understanding of the world around them. A majority of this is taught through cross curricular thematic units. As students advance in their educational career, more time is dedicated to science concepts and application. Another component to our science curriculum is field trips which provide real world experience. Students visit the Oklahoma City Zoo, “Wildlife Expo”, “Weather Camp”, and Science Museum Oklahoma. Our 5th graders spend three days immersed in science at Camp Classen, an outdoor classroom. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) is an initiative in our district. Our STEM committee provides curriculum and kits for teachers to implement within their classrooms and in our new STEM building.

Social Studies standards are centered around nonfiction and historical literature. In addition to a rigorous curriculum in the upper grades, students are able to engage with time periods in history in a hands-on way participating in recreated events such as the “Oklahoma Land Run”, “Chuck Wagon Breakfast”, and “Colonial Fair”. Participating in these immersive activities promotes a historical knowledge and an introduction to civic learning. Mock elections, visits to our State Capitol and the Oklahoma History Museum, as well as virtual field trips allow our students to develop pride both as a citizen of their state and country.

Earl Harris has a strong Pre-K program. Multi-sensory activities are used to help reach all learning styles. When letters and sounds are mastered, sight words are introduced. Pre-K students are moving and dancing while learning letters, numbers, and words. Number sense is taught using number of the day, tally marks, 10-frames, and manipulatives. Technology is also used in small and large group settings. However, the

essence of Pre-K is social development. This includes how to behave with friends, expectations in a school setting, and learning about emotions and what to do with them. Fine and gross motor skills are also developed. For example: pencil grasp, scissor cutting, and building with different kinds of blocks. Science is taught through exploration centers and thematic units. As a result, these students are taught foundational skills and are better prepared for transitioning to the primary grades.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our weekly art program is a blend of published and teacher-created material. Through a multitude of mediums, styles, methods, histories, and cultures, our art teacher organizes and breaks down the creative process. Instruction begins by first building background knowledge of the artist and style to be studied. Building on background knowledge, students have the inspiration needed to accomplish their own creative works. It is the beginning of inspiration. Students plan their compositions using the “Principles of Design” which incorporate the “Elements of Art.” Students experiment with the strengths and limitations of the medium to ensure its optimal use. Students develop their own style and discover their own potential.

Music is also a weekly rotation for each grade level. The Kodaly Method is implemented to systematically teach the components of music as well as create proficient singers and sight readers. Students play a variety of instruments such as: drums, boom whackers, ukuleles, and bells. Fourth and fifth grade students participate in “Recorder Karate” as part of their music curriculum, a program designed to teach recorder skills. Students in grades K, 1, 3, and 5 have an evening performance showcasing skills learned in which every student participating has an individual role. Additionally, fifth grade students have the opportunity to audition and perform in our All-District Musical.

Orchestra is another facet of our fine arts program. In Kindergarten, students are taught violin basics using the Suzuki Method each week. By the end of the year, students are able to play simple songs using a bow. Our orchestra students also perform two times in our Friday morning assembly. In upper grades, students are offered the opportunity to attend orchestra classes each week. The Orchestra Expression curriculum teaches essential skills and builds on existing knowledge. Students perform in two concerts per year.

Students attend a physical education (PE) class weekly. Our PE curriculum follows the OAS for Health and Physical Education. PE lessons focus on skills and reinforce information students are learning in the classroom. This is accomplished by collaborating and communicating with faculty. Teacher and peer assessments allow students to identify areas of improvement as well as opportunities to revisit essential skills. Students participate in a variety of activities such as “Super Kids Day”, “Jump Rope Club”, or school sponsored 5K and fun run. During “Red Ribbon Week”, students are taught the importance of making healthy choices for their bodies.

Technology is integrated into students’ daily lives within Earl Harris. Teachers incorporate Smart Boards, document cameras, clicker response systems, and classroom iPad carts to enhance their lessons. Students are given the opportunity to interact with these devices. For example, fifth grade students utilize the iPad carts and iMovie to create videos summarizing units they have studied. In addition to technology in the classroom, students in grades 2-5 have a computer class weekly. Internet safety, coding, and keyboarding are at the heart of the program. To incorporate research and problem solving skills, lessons are aligned with the Oklahoma Information Literacy Standards as well as the International Society for Technology in Education Standards. Age appropriate databases, “PebbleGo” and “PebbleGo Next”, are available for student use. Kindergarten has a weekly enrichment class built into their schedule. This exposes students to STEM concepts in an age appropriate way.

Students are involved in bi-weekly guidance classes. Our counselor uses a variety of curricula to teach a range of life skills. These skills include, but are not limited to, character development, goal setting, problem solving, personal safety, bullying prevention, and testing procedures. Students are guided to responsible citizenship by participating in community endeavors such as “Pennies for Patients” and the “Food Drive.”

Students visit the library for media instruction once a week. The library media specialist (LMS) uses this time to engage students in activities focusing on research and information skills. Fostering a love of reading

is also a crucial element of this time. Classroom reading instruction is enhanced and supported through collaborative planning with the LMS. Reading events such as the “Great Pumpkin”, “Read Across America Week”, and “Bowling for Books” encourage students to engage with literature in a fun and creative way.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Earl Harris Elementary School has a diverse population of students. We strive to meet the needs of each student through our instructional methods, interventions, assessments, and enrichment activities.

Cognitive Abilities Test, which is administered annually. Our program is two-fold as the teachers provide enrichment activities within the classroom, and students who qualify are provided with small group instruction. Students participate in enrichment activities through after-school clubs, such as “Chess Club”, “Lego Club”, and “GameStop”. We are in the process of constructing a STEM building which will be used for enrichment activities for our elementary students as well.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Earl Harris Elementary is a place where our unique climate and culture permeate every area of our learning environment. This tone is set each morning as our students enter the building. With a warm smile, our office staff greets each child by name. Students know they are loved and challenged to always give their best effort academically and behaviorally. We have a multitude of activities and programs which are designed to cultivate students' love for our school and community. However, there is one program that sets our climate apart and gives students an opportunity to "shine." It is our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Our staff and students refer to it as "Broncho Best." This program highlights positive student behavior and builds kindness and generosity toward others. Each day there are ten randomly selected adults who have a "Broncho Brand" to award. When positive behavior occurs, the adult writes the Broncho Brand, awards it to the student, and sends the duplicate copy to the office. From this one Broncho Brand, students are recognized in various instances. This begins with each student's name being called during morning announcements. Next, their photo is taken and displayed on televisions throughout the building, and their name is published in our school newsletter. But the recognition does not stop there. Their name is displayed on a large Bingo board. Students who bingo are taken on an additional reward trip with our principal. He intentionally establishes and maintains a relationship of value and respect with the students. This program encourages individuals to be their "Broncho Best" as they create a climate of mutual respect and comradery.

This climate of mutual respect and comradery carries over to the faculty and staff as well. We recognize each other through staff-wide Broncho Brand emails. These emails are words of encouragement which emphasize acts of kindness, going above and beyond what is required, and putting others first. Our kindness, care, and concern for each other creates an environment that is more like a family than a faculty. This is evident to our parents and students.

Additionally, Broncho Brands provide classroom management support for teachers. The three cornerstones of Broncho Brands are "Ready, Responsible, and Respectful". These three cornerstones create a springboard for teachers to implement individual classroom expectations. Our "Broncho Creed" encompasses these core values and is recited every morning during the daily announcements.

Although there are many things that make Earl Harris a wonderful place, what sets us apart are Broncho Brands and the climate created by them. It is a thread that binds us together from Pre-K to fifth grade, student to teacher, teacher to school, and school to community.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Our goal is to partner with families and maximize community resources to provide optimum educational support for students. Open lines of communication are the key to our partnership. "Parent Portal" is a computer-based system where parents can view grades, attendance records, and behavior reports. Kindergarten teachers interact with parents and share classroom events through "Bloomz", a web-based invitation-only social media site for education. Pictures of students receiving rewards, our school's accolades, and special programs and events are posted on our website and digital displays throughout the school. Our principal sends out a weekly newsletter listing upcoming events, student recognition, and any safety/procedural information. Attached to the newsletter is the School-Home Connect pamphlet in English and Spanish with parenting tips.

Earl Harris provides home visiting services for families with children birth to age five, through the Parents as Teachers program. The parent-educators offer support and engage caregivers to ensure proper growth and development.

Volunteers working with individuals or small groups of students is a common sight throughout the school. Southern Nazarene University students work with our students to improve reading skills. At the heart of

our volunteer program is the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). PTO facilitates fun activities for families such as “Skate Night”, “Movie Night”, art shows, and “Grandparent’s Tea”. The PTO hosts “Doughnuts for Dads” and “Mornings with Moms” where parents enjoy breakfast with their children. They also hold fundraisers to provide additional resources and purchase playground and technology equipment. The Bethany Public School Foundation funds grants for teachers to provide students with educational opportunities, and hosts our annual “Daddy-Daughter Ball”.

Although our school district is small, we have enormous community support from our local businesses and non-profits. A local church provides free after school care for students. They receive help with homework, snacks, structured activities, and most importantly a safe place until parents are available. The Bethany Library has a summer reading program to keep our students engaged in learning. The OKC Thunder organization provides both reading and STEM incentives. Families can enjoy a night out at designated local restaurants. A portion of the proceeds benefit our school. Stores and churches donate school supplies. A local food bank provides backpacks filled with nutritious food when school meals are not available. The Bethany Kiwanis Club provides assistance to students purchasing eyeglasses. At Earl Harris, we maximize all resources to help each student reach their highest potential in all areas of their lives.

3. Professional Development:

Earl Harris Elementary takes a multi-directional approach to professional development. First, we maximize the talent of our faculty when they provide in-house staff development. In addition, we study current trends and instructional practices. With this in mind, we provide training in practices we anticipate to be effective. Finally, our professional development is data-driven. We analyze benchmark and state test scores, along with classroom performance, to identify areas of needed improvement. We provide faculty with training in these targeted areas. These strategies combined with instruction in safety, behavior management, and socio-emotional growth; provide our staff with the resources needed to increase the effectiveness of instruction.

The alignment of our curriculum across grade levels is a priority. We have regular meetings among our professional communities to scrutinize the current standards and adjust our scope and sequence. These meetings are held horizontally and vertically. Faculty participates in instructional rounds to observe other teachers in action. We are a cohesive group of educators who communicate and cooperate to give our students the best educational experience.

Staying current is vital to our professional development program. Sometimes we will train our entire staff in a new educational method, such as “Literacy First” or “Literacy Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling” training. Other times we will designate a team to be trained and then share. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate on a national level by attending conferences. Administration is adamant about keeping our instructional practices current and using resources wisely to train us in those practices.

Finally, we use data to guide our programs and procedures. When math problem solving skills were low and higher thinking skills in reading needed improvement, we addressed each area by sending teachers to be trained in effective practices for these skills. Data is used to provide direction in our professional development program.

In concurrence with instructional practices, we also provide our staff with training in safety procedures and practices for promoting socio-emotional growth in our students. Our dean of students was trained as a nonviolent crisis intervention instructor, and then trained many of our staff on how to intervene and de-escalate crisis situations. Some of our faculty have been trained in “Great Expectations” and “Teach Like a Rock Star”. We are diligent in using our resources to provide our faculty with the most innovative and effective instructional strategies and procedures available to the benefit of our students.

4. School Leadership:

At Earl Harris Elementary, we believe in distributed leadership. Our formal structure of leadership includes the principal, dean of students, grade-level team leaders, and our PTO Executive Council. Each of these leaders have specific areas of focus and resources they contribute to the school. The principal serves as a

liaison to ensure each group is coherent and aligned with the overall vision of the school. In addition to this formal structure, leaders emerge based on interest, ability, or experience rather than official titles or roles.

When we identify an area of priority or need, we establish action committees. This may include teachers, support staff, parents, or students depending on the area of focus. Leaders are determined within the committee and act as facilitators during meetings. Each member may assume specific leadership responsibilities as they work toward their goal. As we determine what committees are needed, students' needs and successes are our central focus.

Currently, academic committees are focused on curriculum and STEM. The curriculum committee creates standards-based maps that are vertically aligned while developing a common academic vocabulary. This ensures instruction encompasses all of the necessary skills and concepts without gaps or redundancy. The STEM committee's focus is enriching science and math curriculum as well as integrating STEM into the reading curriculum to provide more challenging and project based learning activities.

Our fundraising/family outreach committee focuses on our school-wide fundraiser. This is a carnival event that provides a fun evening for families, while raising money to purchase needed educational resources for the school. These funds are also distributed to each teacher for the purchase of specialized materials for their classroom needs.

The playground committee focuses on improving an aspect of our school that is important to students. Its primary goal is to provide physically and socially engaging activities, which improve students' strength and agility. An added benefit has been a decline in behavior incidents. Students are surveyed annually to provide input into the decisions made by this committee. At Earl Harris Elementary, student opinions are valued and considered. While we do have a formal leadership structure, all stakeholders have a voice in decisions through distributed leadership.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Among the many reasons Earl Harris Elementary School is an amazing educational institution is our Response to Intervention Program (RtI). It is “the practice” that makes a remarkable difference in the performance of our students. With RtI, we have an organized system of quickly identifying students who are struggling. Through RtI meetings we communicate concerns as we strive to understand each student’s specific needs. We continually monitor the student’s progress as a team and adjust techniques and interventions accordingly. Every student in our school ultimately receives the individual help needed.

The process begins with benchmark testing of all students in K-fifth grades three times annually in the areas of reading and math. Students entering our school are tested within the first two weeks. The students scoring below benchmark are identified and given a language screen and in some cases visual and auditory testing. Identified students are placed on an Academic Progress Plan outlining the required interventions. These interventions are orchestrated through: Title I, the English Language Learner Program, Speech and Language therapy, and/or after school tutoring. The parents, classroom teacher, and principal are involved in this plan. Certified teachers or paid paraprofessionals provide 30-45 minute interventions, 3-5 times a week, in addition to classroom instruction. These interventions are researched based and follow the OAS. All students’ data is monitored weekly and their progress is discussed at monthly RtI team meetings. The team consists of: the Title I Coordinator, school psychologist, classroom teachers, speech-language pathologists, and administration. Input from each of these professionals allows us to look at all the possible needs of the individual child. These needs may include: academic, behavioral, emotional, physical, and relational. After analyzing data, classroom performance, and other contributing factors, the team makes decisions to adjust or end interventions. Students not making adequate progress after completing all three tiers of the RtI process may be referred for specialized testing.

This RtI process helps us take the pulse of our level of performance. Our scores for the bottom quartile of our students show that this method is working. Our data continues to show increased numbers of students on benchmark each year. Students are involved in their learning and share in the data. We celebrate their successes and work hard together to remedy their struggles. We believe that this team approach to intervention is the key to growing confident, lifelong learners.