

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. Tina Rayborn

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

Official School Name Oakwood Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 631 N. Holly Street

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

City Oakwood State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75855-4546

County Leon

Telephone (903) 545-2106 Fax (903) 545-1130

Web site/URL http://www.oakwoodisd.net E-mail trayborn@oakwoodisd.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. Donny Lee E-mail Dlee@Oakwoodisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Oakwood Independent School District Tel. (903) 545-2600

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. Mack Botard
(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)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 2 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	13	14	27
K	14	5	19
1	4	8	12
2	9	6	15
3	6	2	8
4	10	4	14
5	5	7	12
6	8	5	13
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	69	51	120

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 19 % Black or African American
 - 12 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 65 % 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: 33%

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	16
(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)]	33
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	101
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.327
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	33

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 87 %
Total number students who qualify: 163

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %
4 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.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 1 Specific Learning Disability
- 2 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
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 12:1
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%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	91%	89%	100%

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	100
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	15%
Enrolled in a community college	69%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	15%

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.

Every student will reach their full educational potential and be a well-rounded, productive citizen.

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

Oakwood, Texas, is a small town located in the northeastern portion of Leon County. US Highway 79 runs through town with Palestine and Buffalo both being about 15-20 miles away. Students here are exposed to a close-knit, rural community nestled in the woods just west of the Trinity River. The total town population of Oakwood is 471. Oakwood has several prisons within driving distance and brings families of low socio-economic standing. While this may bring issues of its own, it also brings a unique type of unity and strength among the community and school.

Prior to 2008, Oakwood Elementary had an unacceptable rating by the state. Just short of being taken over by the state, the elementary school made a unanimous commitment to turn the school around. Every year since then, our school has been recognized or met standards with distinctions. In 2011, a bond was passed, and the elementary classes were moved out of portable buildings into a brand new structure. This new facility offered great advantages such as two computer labs, fully functioning smart boards in each classroom, and most importantly, it offered more unity between the teachers and staff being that they were now located under one roof. Oakwood Elementary has worked extremely hard over the past several years to ensure success. In the last two years, our school has had more distinctions than any other school in Leon County.

The educational philosophy of our school is based on each unique student who requires a secure and stimulating atmosphere in which to grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Each educator's desire is to guide our students, enable their natural curiosity to direct and inspire their learning, and promote respect in all aspects of daily life. Oakwood Elementary gives its students, day-in and day-out, structure and stability. The success of students is the main priority as well as dedication to excellence.

Oakwood Elementary serves 120 elementary students in grades pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. This allows for a low student-teacher ratio, but it also allows for a more personal environment with students and the community. Teachers are aware of most students' background and take that into consideration inside and outside of the classroom. Students attend a weekly character education class directed by our school counselor to encourage good values and self-worth. They are taught their importance, worth, and usefulness. Teachers and staff promote and model these traits throughout the school year.

The school has provided several programs that promote community involvement. Each year, parents, family, and community members are invited to attend our Veterans' Day Program, Elementary Christmas Program, Black History Month Program, and End of Year Awards Program. Cinco de Mayo is celebrated within each classroom. Every morning, students are responsible for saying the pledges and announcements. Students are individually recognized on their birthday. Oakwood has also offered several evening events, such as Nachos for Numbers and Reading Literacy Night. During these fun events, parents and/or family members participated alongside their child in several different activities involving math, reading, and writing.

Getting the community involved also includes holding students accountable for their academics and behavior. Oakwood Elementary works closely with the families and community to ensure that this accountability is held to a high standard. At the beginning of each school year, parents/guardians, students, and teachers are required to sign a behavior contract which outlines the code of conduct. Students are made aware of these rules, routines, and procedures on day one of the school year. Students are taught skills throughout the school year that assist them in effective decision making and organization. The administration, teachers, staff, and community gladly take on the responsibility to support and guide our students to have results beyond their expectations.

Daily collaboration with grade level teachers also plays an intricate role in high academic success. This collaboration allows for problems with individual students to be quickly detected and possible solutions to be discussed and implemented for the success of every student. Social or family conditions can also correlate directly with how a student is positively engaged in the classroom. Being able to quickly identify potential problems can help keep each student on track and performing to the best of their ability.

Learning to be a lifelong learner helps mold well-rounded students into productive, well-balanced, productive citizens. Students who experience a high-quality education are more tolerant of others, more willing to listen to differing points of view, and take greater responsibility for their actions and to improve their communities. The entire staff at Oakwood Elementary works together to unify not only our school, but also our community. Differing demographics provides challenges and opportunities. These opportunities allow our school to have an on-going emergence of new skills that are critical for students to discover the benefits of personal learning. Oakwood Elementary's motto - Dedicated to Excellence - goes beyond the walls of the classrooms. It is embedded in every aspect of this school.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Oakwood Elementary School strives to promote a positive atmosphere for students to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to become a responsible, educated citizen of society. As an economically and socially challenged community, Oakwood Elementary sees every child as an individual of great potential. In the classrooms, learning goes beyond just formal curriculum. With students' background knowledge and experience being limited, teachers' responsibilities greatly increase. This school is successful because the staff has learned how to incorporate education with citizenship and social responsibility.

Curriculum in Oakwood Elementary is very diverse. Each teacher uses their chosen curriculum based on their method of measuring student achievement and individual student learning style. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are the foundation curriculum for all educational instruction. All teachers, including pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, are required to follow the district scope and sequence. It includes alignment of supporting and readiness standards throughout each grade level. It seamlessly ties our classrooms together so there is no instructional gap. It supports student progress.

In English Language Arts and Reading, the curriculum is personalized for the students so they can master the grade-level TEKS. Criteria such as reading level, interest, and readiness-for-content all impact our curriculum. Starting in Pre-K, teachers begin laying a solid foundation for phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. Instruction is divided into three main sections: reading/vocabulary, writing, and spelling. The textbooks and multiple supplemental resources are used, many of which are technology based. Project-based learning is used to allow students to actively explore real world problems and challenges and acquire a deeper knowledge. Students' progress is continually assessed and monitored. Intervention is provided for struggling students, and above-level students are challenged with enrichment activities. The curriculum is most importantly centered on students being able to integrate their reading ability into other subject areas.

Our math curriculum was selected because of its flexibility so it can be personalized beginning in Pre-K and continuing throughout elementary. The TEKS are implemented in every aspect of the curriculum. State-adopted textbooks, internet-based programs, and other research-based materials are used to develop mathematical skills and a broad understanding of concepts associated with real world situations. Math journals are also created so students can practice putting their math knowledge into words, both verbally and written. It gives them the opportunity to reflect on different strategies and assess their own learning. It also provides examples of how different problems are solved. The use of manipulatives allows the students to bridge the connection between concrete, representational, and abstract thinking. Many math ideas are very abstract and being able to use something concrete, for example place value blocks or fraction strips, allows the student to see the big idea. Both above-level and below-level students are observed and/or assessed so support can be provided either for enrichment or intervention.

Students benefit at Oakwood Elementary from having at least forty percent hands-on science instruction in kindergarten through sixth grade. This interactive, TEKS-based approach is used because it gives students foundational skills through exploration, engagement, and collaborative group activities. Indoor and outdoor instructional centers are utilized to maximize the learning potential of various learning styles. Science skills are enriched by using research-based computer programs that reinforce vocabulary. Scientific rubrics are given at the beginning of each lab so that expectations are clear and concise. Benchmarks are given at various points throughout the year and data is disaggregated to check for student strengths and weaknesses. Individual struggles are addressed through small group instructional time, tutorials, and our pull-out program. Advanced students extend their knowledge through project-based learning. Several science activities are offered throughout the year such as the Junk Art Recycling Project and Ag Awareness Day.

The Social Studies instruction is not only based on the state standard fundamentals of our community, our state, and the United States, but also on democratic values and cultural diversity. The overall design of the curriculum is to expand students' knowledge of the world around them. Students throughout elementary

learn through TEKS-based consumable newspapers and digital resources. It connects different areas of study and unifies concepts. Many activities are connected to real life through field trips, research projects, and classroom discussions. Students are expected to acquire and apply their knowledge of current and historical events. Through research, elementary students aid in the production of many of our programs such as Black History Month and Veterans' Day. The integration of social studies into other content areas such as reading and writing helps students make connections and build literacy.

Oakwood Elementary offers an excellent opportunity for an early foundation. Through a state-approved curriculum which focuses on the core subjects, at the age of three and/or four, students can begin learning about basic routines, rules, and procedures. Pre-K3 is a half-day program, and Pre-K4 is a full day. Social skills are introduced along with primary motor skills. It is a school-readiness program that benefits our students and aligns them with kindergarten expectations. Through our Educational Software for Guiding Students (ESGI), data shows that students who attended Pre-K outperformed those who did not.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Oakwood Elementary offers several non-core curriculums that create challenging, useful learning. All curriculum in these areas follow the standards set forth in the state required TEKS. The knowledge and skills acquired in physical education, art, music, accelerated reading program, and UIL competition are beneficial to all core subjects.

Oakwood Elementary students (Pre-K4 through 5th) attend PE five days a week for 45 minutes each day. Junior High athletics is offered to sixth grade students. High expectations for effort are expected throughout this TEKS-based program. Specific skills dealing with movement and physical activity are developed and assessed. Hard work, good sportsmanship, cooperation, and a positive attitude are incorporated into our program. During May of each year, our students are involved in Field Day which encourages students to participate in physical activities through a fun-filled competitive day. Also during the year, students participate in Jump Rope for Heart. This program is sponsored by the American Heart Association and the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE). Our School Health and Advisory Council (SHAC) plays an important role in strengthening the connection between exercise, health, and learning. They can help parents and community stakeholders reinforce the knowledge and skills children need to stay healthy for a lifetime.

The elementary art curriculum teaches basic art techniques and vocabulary outlined in the TEKS. It is conducted once a week for a 45 minute period by a certified art teacher. Students are encouraged to use their creative thinking and imaginations when creating various projects throughout the year. Students have the opportunity to participate in the University Interscholastic League (UIL) Art contest each year. This contest involves learning titles of paintings along with the artist, nationality, and art history.

Our TEKS-based music curriculum is taught in a fun, hands-on way. The students listen, sing, play instruments, and move to the music. They learn about many aspects of music such as tempo, pitch, and rhythm. Music class is offered to the entire elementary, and each class attends a 45 minute weekly session. Students in music also have the opportunity to participate in University Interscholastic League (UIL) Music Memory. This contest offers an opportunity to develop music appreciation by studying composers and their music with emphasis on time period, style, and theme. During music class, the students assist in producing songs for the annual Christmas Program and Veterans' Day Program.

Technology skills are reinforced in every classroom and in our computer lab. Our school has 2 connecting computer labs, each containing 18 computers. Each class has a scheduled time of 30-45 minutes daily in the computer lab. During this time, students complete various technology-based assignments through TEKS software programs. Each student can work at their own pace and level. This also allows our students to receive basic keyboarding experience. Students have learned to produce power point presentations and extensive research projects. They have also been able to go on virtual field trips to sites and places they may never be able to visit in person.

Starting in kindergarten, each teacher uses our grade-level accelerated reading program to promote and

advance student literacy. This program is used daily throughout the entire school year. Goals are set for each individual student and rewards are given for meeting these goals. Immersing our students into this reading program is and has been such a viable way to extend learning. Students are required to keep a reading log which includes book level and assessment percentage. This is monitored closely by each teacher and changes are made as necessary. The testing data has proven that this reading program has improved our student reading levels.

University Interscholastic League (UIL) academic competition is offered to all grade appropriate students. They participate in almost every event and have been successful over the years. Preparation for the event is immersed into the related core curriculum. For example, students in ELA/Reading choose and recite a poem for Oral Reading competition or students in Math practice calculator skills. These UIL events can be incorporated into each core curriculum, and students can benefit from the experience of competing in this format.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Oakwood Elementary is truly vested in the needs and interests of its students. Learning is enhanced for all students because they are engaged in what they are learning. Our students are given the opportunity to explore, debate, discuss, examine, defend, and experiment with the concepts and skills they are taught.

Master schedules and staff assignments are created to provide optimal instruction time. Pre-K through 3rd grade are self-contained; whereas, teachers in 4th through 6th grade are departmentalized. This allows for large blocks of instructional time (ninety minutes) for reading/ELA and math and narrows the TEKS a teacher must cover. Each teacher is allowed a great deal of flexibility in determining the method in which they will use the material in their individual classrooms.

The elementary students are held to a high standard of academic achievement. Beginning in first grade, high school standards are followed. Based off of a six week grading period, each subject has a minimum of three test grades and ten daily grades. The tests and daily grades are each calculated as fifty percent of the six week average. Much of our instructional decision making processes are based on these classroom grades, on previous years testing data, and benchmark testing using released STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) test questions. We use this data to refocus our classroom instruction and begin the intervention process for struggling students.

Our Response to Intervention (RTI) program helps to minimize the achievement gap. Using highly-qualified educators, the program is designed to aid in the early identification of students struggling with a specific skill or objective. This tiered intervention is incorporated three days a week for thirty to forty-five minute sessions. The RTI teacher works directly with the classroom teacher to ensure that all students are given every opportunity to succeed. This program begins in kindergarten.

Our dyslexia classes serve as part of RTI. These identified students meet with a dyslexia specialist once a week to receive phonemic support and consistent, repetitive fluency instruction. Our special education and 504 students also have individualized plans including their modifications and/or accommodations. These may include oral administration on testing, extra time or reduced assignments, preferential seating within the classroom, or the use of a calculator. English as a Second Language (ESL) students receive additional instruction from a certified ESL instructor.

Our above-level students are given the opportunity to enrich their learning through certain project-based activities. They are paired with lower-level students for peer tutoring and leadership roles in small groups. This advances both their academic and social skills and challenges them in the regular classroom settings to enable them to make continuous progress in school.

Our school district has provided materials for hands-on learning style. All classroom teachers have access to interactive smart boards, on-line TEKS based learning programs, and many manipulatives and educational games. These materials are utilized in the classrooms. Free after-school tutoring is available to all students to aid in preparing students for the STAAR test and to accommodate their needs as struggling students.

Tutorials are based on individual needs.

Oakwood Elementary prides itself in retaining highly-motivated, highly-qualified teachers. Throughout the last several years, the same core teachers have remained in the majority of our elementary school. This allows for a continual education from year to year with fewer instructional gaps. The focus in the classroom can be on grade-level TEKS with minimal re-teaching of previous grade objectives. This in turn closes the test score gaps among all students. Oakwood Elementary has less than a 10 percent gap between all students including any subgroups. Our greatest struggle is when a transfer or new student is enrolled in our school and not on grade-level. They are immediately given a grade-level assessment to identify their academic ability. We have found that most of these students need some type of intervention which begins immediately in order to close the gap.

"Not getting it" is not an option for the students. They are required to correct all failing papers. All errors are reflected on and complex ideas are retaught from a different angle. Teachers climb up and down Bloom's taxonomy from simple to complex in an effort to reach one more level of understanding.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The climate and culture at Oakwood Elementary begins each day as students unload from their means of transportation at the school. Students are greeted with a smile from staff and a warm hand to direct them to their designated location each and every morning. Teachers and staff are committed to giving the students their best and their undivided time during the school day to push each student to their fullest potential. Each school employee takes ownership in the school's mission of giving the students a safe learning environment to become successful. Failure is simply not accepted as an option.

It is not uncommon to see the bus driver in a tutorial classroom, the secretary reading to a group of students, some high school teachers helping in the cafeteria at elementary lunches, or elementary teachers at high school basketball games. The benefits of being a small district allow each teacher/staff member to interact with students at an entirely different level than that of a larger district. This benefits students because it gives them constant support outlets all over the school throughout the day. Certain student personalities seem to bond well with certain staff personalities. With having such a diverse staff, each student gets the support and bonding experience that is needed to fuel student stability.

To make sure that students remain safe, each year the staff goes through extensive training to be prepared to handle issues of fire, inclement weather, evacuation, or an armed intruder. Each staff member is also certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Throughout the year the staff practices the drills with students to be prepared as possible. Being prepared and proactive is the best defense against any unwanted surprises. To inform parents in the event of an actual emergency, Oakwood Elementary utilizes a call-out system that can inform every parent with a prerecorded phone message/text in a matter of seconds.

The buildings and grounds are checked periodically to keep them as safe as possible as well. Any safety concerns that surface are immediately turned into maintenance for repair. Students are constantly monitored on playground equipment and outdoor activities to insure that safety remain a top priority.

Providing a safe learning environment gives teachers a topnotch tool to do their job. Students that feel safe seem to work better for teachers. When teachers feel what they do matters, then their self-worth is measurable. Students and staff both win when everyone works to provide a safe, nurturing climate and culture.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Finding creative ways to engage families and the community has been a challenge that Oakwood Elementary is faced with continuously. Each year new ideas are pondered and discussed at teacher collaboration meetings to get more parents involved. An increase of 15% participation was placed in the Campus Improvement Plan because the need was noticed by the district. The Site Base Decision Making Team discusses the concerns and approves the family nights each month. Examples of approved engagements have been: muffins for moms, donuts for dads, goodies for grandparents, nacho math night, and literacy night.

Communication is the key. Oakwood Elementary communicates through online sources such as the Oakwood website and our Facebook page which offers information about school events, school calendar, dress code, code of conduct, etc. All parents have access to parent portal which allows them to keep a constant check on their child's grades and attendance. Parents are also notified about attendance and any other school-wide news through an all call phone system. Parents directly receive a recorded message with information such as no school due to holidays or bad weather. Teachers' schedules are also posted online which allows parents to view conference times in order to schedule an appointment. Parents have access to teachers' email which is an excellent resource of constant communication. Every elementary class sends home Wednesday folders. These folders contain upcoming events, behavior calendars, graded papers, and any other relevant information.

The Oakwood Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) has enhanced our community relations. They have been involved in our community wide Fall Festival, teacher appreciation week, providing snacks for our athletes before games, and our annual can food drive. Other members of our community offer ice cream rewards each six weeks for All A/A-B honor roll.

Oakwood Elementary attends several field trips each year that are community based. The Leon County Health Fair presents information encouraging increased health awareness and disease prevention for all county residents by providing health screenings, educational information, and motivation to make positive health behavior changes. Students attend the Fire Prevention Program hosted by our local fire department. They also attend Safety Town which provides various safety tips.

Our school facilities are open to many outside school meeting, practices, and functions. Our local 4-H chapter meets in our school once a month. Little Dribbler meetings and games are hosted by our school. Oakwood Cancer Society uses our facilities as well. So many of our staff and faculty hold the common bond and responsibility of having a great community and place for our children to go to school. This interest has intertwined the relationship of daily living with the high standards of education.

3. Professional Development:

High-quality teaching is vital for student success. Student needs are ever-changing. Professional development is meant to assist educators in improving their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. Point blank, teachers need to be at the top of their game. There are so many areas that require constant improvement such as specialized training in a specific content area, time management, behavior management, leadership, and motivation. Oakwood Elementary makes it a priority and understands its need for exemplary teachers.

At the beginning of each year and throughout the school year, teachers and staff attend several district-wide professional development sessions. These sessions are based on our school improvement plan. Training is provided that will specifically impact our school and students. New techniques are taught to handle certain situations that may arise. Required training in the areas of special education and gifted and talented are offered. Previous year STAAR results are disaggregated, discussed, and used to select individualized training for improved student achievement.

Much of our professional learning is through collaboration. Each six weeks grade level meetings are conducted in order to confirm that our vertical and horizontal alignment is being met. TEKS are examined, suggestions are offered, and planning is focused on the results of these meetings. Teachers also travel to scheduled professional development trainings at various other places including other schools and our region center. Collaboration with teachers outside of our school district offers excellent opportunities to explore different methods of presenting TEKS- based, classroom lessons for a specific content area.

Professional development is an ongoing process. There is always room for improvement. Oakwood Elementary has provided ample training for the integration of technology in the classroom. Technology now plays a major role in student performance. Advancements are continually evolving, and our teachers must be competent in providing students with the tools and knowledge that will take them into the 21st century. It is an ongoing process and demands continual learning.

Oakwood Elementary has had several challenges throughout the years. One main obstacle in being a small school district is that resources and staff are limited, but this also presents a unique, personalized working and learning environment. The basis for success is a strong foundation that begins with our administration. Each year our principal attends several conferences and workshops that focus on leadership, updates on laws and human resources, and TEKS resources. Our principal is our instructional leader that celebrates our successes and expresses her concerns. This is a process that continues through communication, determination, and willingness to grow.

4. School Leadership:

The philosophy and structure of Oakwood Elementary is having strength from the top of the ladder to the bottom. Leadership roles are assigned in specific areas, but overall leadership is expected throughout. Leadership is a collaborative effort made by all.

Our principal is the sole administrator and has created a legitimate rapport with all of our staff and works closely with our superintendent to reach our intended goal. Our principal is a consistent, credible leader that is an excellent role model for all to follow. Our principal has a vision to break out of the norm and aim for great things. Teachers are empowered to make decisions that are most affective in their classrooms. The principal provides support for these decisions and encourages that every decision be student-centered. Our principal evaluates our classroom environment and student performance and gives constructive feedback only meant to strengthen our campus. Expectations are clearly communicated and assistance in managing these goals is always available.

Our staff is committed to making and keeping Oakwood Elementary great. Our school has come a long way over the past several years, and it is all because of the dedication and hard work of our staff. This kind of improvement takes leaders. Some teachers volunteer to give their personal time to reach a struggling student. A teacher might volunteer to offer assistance when they know a fellow educator is struggling. A teacher might step up to take on assignments and duties they might not have planned time for such as being UIL coaches or program directors. These teachers are all great role models to our students. Our staff has a vision, and that vision is to have great students.

Our school's high achievements are directly linked to our leadership and accountability. All staff plays an important role in the success of our students. Every decision made is based on the welfare of our students. School leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning. Our students are provided with a stimulating and secure learning environment. Hopefully Oakwood Elementary is instilling the qualities of good leadership into its students so they will be successful in the future.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Oakwood Elementary has a multitude of issues that are dealt with on a daily basis. Students show up sometimes with issues that affect their academics but may not have anything directly to do with them. They may be hungry, they may have witnessed parents fighting the night before, they may not have had electricity or running water, or they may not have had anyone at their house when they woke up to get themselves ready to get on the school bus that morning. The staff and school are prepared to deal with each individual issue one-by-one. There is a washer and dryer, back packs stocked with school supplies ready to hand out, snack packs ready to consume, the counselor a call away, and Kleenex or band aids ready for small mishaps. When the students see that their outside issues really matter to the school, then they seem to work harder to please.

Teachers have taken up donations to help families in need throughout the year. They have handed out food baskets at Thanksgiving as well as Christmas. One Christmas, teachers rode around and placed toys in the yard of some children's homes on Christmas morning that may not have had toys otherwise. Oakwood takes pride in demonstrating to students that while educational success is important, so is their emotional, social, and physical well-being.

Teachers truly have made a difference in the lives of students at Oakwood Elementary. At Oakwood, teachers are just not there to educate the students. They become nurses, counselors, motivators, mediators, mommas, and daddies. They may just be there to listen or in extreme cases, protect them. Teachers also monitor student behavior and try to accommodate their individual needs so they can be successful in the classroom. Building positive relationships with students is a powerful tool to increase student achievement. All students are accepted and treated equally regardless of their background, ethnicity, or economic standing.

Ten years ago Oakwood Elementary was on the verge of the state taking over the school. A group of new teachers came in and gave up their conferences, their time, and donated their hearts to get this school to where it is today. So, with tears in our eyes today, we take this National Blue Ribbon nomination as a job well done!