

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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 33 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 11 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 5 High schools
 - 3 K-12 schools
- 52 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

| Grade | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| PreK | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| K | 51 | 39 | 90 |
| 1 | 43 | 43 | 86 |
| 2 | 40 | 41 | 81 |
| 3 | 50 | 65 | 115 |
| 4 | 56 | 51 | 107 |
| 5 | 58 | 74 | 132 |
| 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 | 298 | 313 | 611 |

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 6 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 82 % White
 - 6 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 3%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

We have a very low number of student exit our school during the year.

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, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year | 13 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year | 2 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 15 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016 | 599 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.03 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 3 |

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 8%
51 Total number ELL

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

Arabic, Chinese Mandarin, Finnish, French, Hindi, Korean, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 7%
Total number students who qualify: 41

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %
34 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.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>6</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>2</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>15</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
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, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 26 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc. | 9 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 11 |
| 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 24:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

| Required Information | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 | 2014-2015 | 2013-2014 | 2012-2013 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance | 96% | 96% | 96% | 96% | 96% |
| 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 2017.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

Our motto is "Together We Inspire." We believe that all kids can learn at high levels and we have the ability to ensure this.

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

Located in Fort Collins, Colorado, Zach Elementary School is a 16-year-old neighborhood school that fosters excellence in academic performance for students from all backgrounds. As part of the Poudre School District, we strive to enrich our students' classroom experiences through a broad base of knowledge, rich vocabulary, and integrated curriculum. The Core Knowledge Sequence has very specific learning goals from grade to grade which create coordination and articulation for instruction, create a consistent academic focus and provide units of study that motivate students to learn Language Arts, Mathematics, Geography, World History, American History, Music, Visual Arts, and Science. Our vision is to provide the highest quality instruction, best practices, and interventions that will match the unique needs of individual students ensuring all children reach their fullest potential. We have been ranked as one of the top performing schools in the State of Colorado. We have been the recipients every year of The John Irwin School of Excellence and the Governor's Distinguished School Improvement Awards for over a decade. Additionally, our recent School Performance Framework (SPF), which is the state's report card for each school, showed that we earned 98.6% out of 100 possible points. The fact that five years ago we were ranked 84th among all Colorado schools, and that we are currently ranked 13th, speaks to the incredible things we are doing! We are not only known for academic excellence, but also for promoting an environment where safety, learning, and fun are the priorities! Our teachers, instructional paras, office personnel, custodians, itinerants and kitchen staff all work together to create a safe learning environment for our students. This year we hosted our 5th annual Zach Gives Back (ZGB) Campaign, launched each November, with the purpose of raising funds and goods for local, national and international nonprofits. We gear our events for children helping children! Through our campaigns this year we collected 258 frozen turkeys and 1.67 tons of non-perishable food for our Larimer County Food Bank; Sponsored 100 families through Salvation Army Angel Tree; Collected 131 pajamas and new books for students in need in northern CO; Collected 506 stuffed animals for local foster and orphan children; collected \$1973.47 in loose change to support local homeless community; Cut and collected 250 inches of hair for children affected by medical hair loss; Parents donated 43 units of blood to save 86 lives in northern CO!

Our process is firmly grounded in our values and agreements about academic intervention. Our professional learning community (PLC) utilizes progress monitoring specific to interventions, evaluates outcomes and makes data-driven decisions that provide comprehensive academic support to meet all student needs. As a school we feel confident that each day we answer the questions, "What do students need to know and be able to do?", "How will we know they have learned it?", "How do we respond when they haven't learned it?", "How do we respond when they already know it?" Over the last five years, we have transformed our fundamental belief that all kids can learn into actual school-wide practices, ensuring high levels of learning for all. Through the creation and implementation of our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), we have a clear process for supporting all students at every level of learning. Our school knows the importance of being on a path of clarity, competence and consistency. We are sure to celebrate small wins along the way and not get too caught up in the net when something wasn't working. Our school holds tight to the belief that every voice is represented in the process. To best achieve this, we created a team of school professionals that would be trusted to do the work and act as communication liaisons to the grade level teams. This MTSS team is led by the Principal and the MTSS Coordinator and is made of representatives from each grade level (K-5) and department (Integrated Services, English Language Acquisition, Specials, and Administration). The team meets weekly with the purpose of considering the question "My student is struggling with academic achievement, what should I do?" The answer to this question begins with our school-wide MTSS system comprised of three tiers; tier one: the school-wide watch list, tier two: the top-five, and tier three: the formal case study. The five essential components of MTSS: team-driven leadership, data-based problem solving, layered continuum of support, and evidence-based practices for family, school, and community partnerships are ingrained throughout these three tiers.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Collaboration is a main function of our teaching and learning process. The reading/writing language and mathematics content is driven by the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) which includes the Common Core Standards (CCS). While the Science and Social Studies content is aligned with the Core Knowledge Sequence (CKS) and aligned with CAS.

The reading standards drive instruction in phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary and comprehension at all grade levels. The foundational reading skills (phonemic awareness and sound-letter relationships) are taught mainly in the primary grades. Students practice monitoring their reading for understanding by applying comprehension strategies, then move on to strengthening fluency. Since we are a friend to core knowledge, the reading resources from CKS include the reading of classic literature. We also use our district adopted language arts program called Treasures. Instruction is typically delivered using a direct instruction model followed by small group and individual practice. For independent practice, students use Accelerated Reader to set and achieve reading goals. A variety of assessments ensure all students progress through the standards at each grade level. Assessments such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, 95 Percent, Every Child A Writer Prompts. The Measure of Academic Performance and Colorado Measures of Academic Success. Students identified as Gifted and Talented receive Advanced Learning Plans (ALP) in reading and/or math.

EnVision 2.0 is our mathematics resource where primary grades develop solid foundational skills that allow students to access understanding of future concepts. The standards of mathematical practices are taught across all grade levels, giving students experience in the habits of strong mathematical thinking. We offer a compacted pathway for advanced learners who demonstrate a readiness to progress at a faster rate while ensuring all grade level standards are achieved. Standards are taught conceptually and procedurally, allowing students to apply their deep understanding to real-life situations. Technology, manipulatives, and models are used to solidify learning of all three aspects of rigor. This delivery is supported by student talk and presentation of ideas using multiple strategies. Mistakes are expected, inspected, and respected to cultivate a growth mindset for all students.

Students discover science topics with hands on exploration and study of scientific thinking. The end goal of the use of inquiry, academic rigor, cross curricular connections, and extracurricular activities is to foster a love of science, promote independence in learning through inquiry and a strong foundation in the scientific method as a means for problem solving. Students experience learning opportunities to: Understand the needs of animals; Understand life cycle stages through the hatching and releasing of praying mantises into class gardens; Conduct experiments; Make circuits using motors, batteries, switches, and wires as they learn about electricity; Research and write reports; Introduced to the scientific method in writing class and inquiry based thinking modeled through guided experiments; Study the Life Cycles of Butterflies and insects with a culminating trip to the Butterfly Pavilion; Cross curricular writing with student selected animal reports in conjunction with the animal classification unit; Create a cross section of a bone model; Visit the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Denver Zoo and the Larimer County Recycling Center; Incorporate ecology themes into their persuasive essay writing; Present research from both sides of the ecological debate on plastic straw pollution, in order to write a research-based essay; Study the cardiovascular system and partner with University of Colorado Health screening where they learn their cholesterol levels, examine heart rates, lung capacity, and blood pressure; Work with local surgeons to dissect a lamb's heart; Hatch chickens during the study of reproduction. Students can also enter the Science Fair & Invention Convention. Lego Robotics and Girls in Engineering, Math and Science are offered as a before school club.

History instruction serves as a driving force for language arts, science, art, and music instruction. At each grade level, the learning of history includes hands on opportunities, research, presentations, special events, and field trips that make complex ideas come alive in such a way that the children can developmentally understand the larger theme and the events that have led us to our present. For example, third grade hosts a

Roman Festival, fourth grade has a Middle Ages festival, and fifth graders research famous American heroes and scientists to create a living Wax Museum.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Zach Elementary School, all students, kindergarten through fifth Grade, attend Specials Classes. Specials Classes are Visual Art, Music, Physical Education (P.E.), Media (Library) and Technology. Each Specials Class is 45 minutes long and every student attends every Special once each week.

The Visual Arts illustrate the important elements of making and appreciating art, including art history, concepts and media. Students learn to analyze, interpret, and make meaning of art and design through the observation of art from various cultures around the world. They recognize and describe characteristics and expressive features of art and design using age appropriate vocabulary in both oral and written formats.

In Music, students learn to interpret music through movement, focused listening and use of various instruments, including the voice. They create music through instrumental improvisation and specific musical composition techniques as they explore specific conventions of Western Music Theory. Students also spend time connecting what they know and have learned about music to 21st Century life; how music is used in television, movies, commercials and other media.

Physical Education offers a unique contribution in the development of knowledge, understanding and positive attitudes concerning movement, fitness, teamwork and sportsmanship. Movement is one of the most utilized means of nonverbal communication, expression and learning. The goal of Physical Education is to develop physically educated individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of fitness and activities. As in all academic areas, students must learn basic skills, which require practice and refinement in a physical education setting.

The Media Center is a place for learning about the wonders found in books as well as learning how to find and use information. Students explore different genres, investigate different types of research skills, and the basics of library organization. They explore reader's theater using puppets and reading aloud. Zach students participate in the Colorado Council of International Reading annual Colorado Children's Book Award, which exposes students to quality new literature and the voting process.

In Technology class, students work on fine motor skills to critical thinking skills to be used in the real world. Students learn to navigate websites, as well as navigate within tools for projects and research. Basic tools are taught and then students use the skills learned in one tool to bridge to other similar tools. This teaches them to adapt to the digital environments that are always changing in our world. With most projects, students present their final product to the class using microphones and display tools. Kids are often curious about how things work in the world, so Zach students are guided through topics, such as email, texting, GPS, hacking, coding, building, etc. These topics allow them to question their surroundings and make the best choices moving forward in our digital world.

Our students also participate in a variety of enrichment activities (before or after school) that further enhance their knowledge and experience within the Arts, Physical Education and Media.

Student artwork from each grade level is displayed at various District and City-wide Art Shows, and around the school. Twenty to 25 percent of each grade level (3rd-5th grades) participates in our Art Enrichment Club every year.

Thirty-two percent of the eligible students (2nd-5th grades) choose to participate in choir. Second and third Grade students are members of Green Choir, while fourth and fifth Grade students are members of Gold Choir. Both choirs regularly sing the National Anthem at our local professional hockey games. Our choirs were invited and performed at the 2016 Colorado Music Educators Association Conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This was a great honor for Zach Elementary as only a few elementary school choruses are invited to participate!

Each year, 30-40% of Zach's student body and staff participate in "Schools on the Move." This is an annual event where participants complete daily challenges to eat 5 fruits and vegetables, spend 2 hours or less on screen-time, drink 0 sugary drinks and complete 1 hour of physical activity. Students also participate in the American Heart Association's annual "Jump Rope 4 Heart" event to annually raise about \$20,000 for research.

Fifth grade students can also participate in a lunchtime Book Club, sponsored by our Media Teacher.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Each day students receive universal Tier 1 instruction. This includes visual based learning through programs like Envision math, balanced literacy through guided reading and Lucy Calkins Units of Study as well as project-based learning through Core Knowledge Sequence. Small groups of students are given strategic Tier 2 instruction in conjunction with Tier 1. Targeted interventions include multisensory phonemic awareness programs, like Orton Gillingham and West Virginia Phonics, explicit writing instruction through Every Child a Writer, intensive conceptual knowledge interventions through Envision math as well as behavior and social skill interventions through programs like Second Step and Superflex. The purpose of Tier 2 for most students is to improve performance at Tier 1, however, for students who are ready to extend their learning, Tier 2 instruction provides a deeper exploration of content. A small percentage of students receive Tier 3 instruction when more specific and intense support is needed. At this level, students meet daily in a group of no more than three students or individually with a teacher to address targeted learning objectives. For many students, Tier 3 provides intensive intervention, but it also allows students who consistently perform above grade level to receive specialized instruction for content that meets their needs. Our shared belief is that all students are our students. In practice, this leads to teachers sharing students across classrooms and providing targeted Tier 2 and 3 instruction during a daily block of thirty minutes called "What I Need" (WIN) time. During WIN time teachers revisit previously taught concepts, work on gap skills, or offer extended learning opportunities to students in a small group setting. The English Language Development (ELD) teacher uses WIN time to provide additional vocabulary and language instruction for second language learners while the MTSS coordinator meets with a small group of students to target phonemic awareness skills. Our dedicated WIN time and tiered instruction model allows Zach teachers to successfully meet the needs both below and above grade level for our students.

Within our Tier 1 Assessments, 75 to 100% of students in a grade level are assessed. Typically standardized and nationally norm referenced, these assessments target grade level standards and skills and inform decisions for instructional differentiation, class placement as well as WIN groupings and instruction. Scores on these assessments below the 35th percentile and above the 95th percentile provide a mandatory point of entry to the MTSS process at Zach.

Within our Tier 2 Assessments, 10% to 75% of students in that grade level are assessed. These assessments are typically diagnostic, targeting skills and standards below grade level to inform decisions for instructional differentiation and Tier 2 intervention. Interventions and targeted learning objectives are built using data from these assessments. Typically, these assessments also serve as progress monitoring probes.

Within our Tier 3 Assessments, less than 10% of students in the grade level are assessed. Tier 3 assessments are diagnostic and target skills well below grade level. Data from these assessments informs instruction for the most intense level of intervention and serves as progress monitoring data throughout the intervention.

Our MTSS process provides the framework for interventions at Zach. We use data from assessments, teacher observation and class performance to identify students needing additional support or extension. Student achievement is discussed in Professional Learning Community (PLC) grade level teams each week. Students who present elevated concerns are discussed bi-weekly in our "Top 5" MTSS meetings, and our highest need students are discussed monthly at MTSS case study meetings. At each of these steps, PLC teams along with MTSS support create plans for intervention to meet the needs of each individual student.

In addition to the PLC-MTSS team meetings, our MTSS process targets students achieving below the 35th percentile and above the 95th percentile according to Tier 1 assessment results. The purpose of these

meetings is to ensure students who fall below the 35th percentile on multiple assessments have entered the MTSS process and have an intervention plan in place. We also discuss students who perform below the 35th percentile on one but not all assessments and students who perform higher than the 95th percentile.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

We agree with the quote by Roland Barth, “The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else.” (Barth, "Improving Relationships Within the Schoolhouse" 2006)

The Zach staff has committed to do our best to encourage, inspire, and meet each child’s needs while ensuring high levels of learning for all students. The collective vision and feeling of being in this journey together as a staff help to maintain a school culture of a positive and highly collaborative nature. Our culture focuses on providing an environment that fosters academic success, along with supporting social needs and emotional growth. Our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is an integral part of our school culture and climate. The MTSS team, along with all grade level and specials teachers, regularly discuss and develop ways to address student needs. The MTSS department of interventionists and grade level teachers work cooperatively to provide a continuum of intervention support in small groups and within classrooms. We create a school wide learning community utilizing progress monitoring, evaluation outcomes, and directed decision-making that provides comprehensive academic and behavioral support to meet all student needs. Another essential part of Zach’s culture and climate is Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS). Our environment supports teaching and learning, and PBIS is a systematic process of teaching, encouraging and recognizing positive behavior. The organizing theme for PBIS is R.O.A.R.: Respectful, Organized, Attentive, Responsible. In addition to classroom reward systems, students showing various aspects of ROAR around the school, are given Golden Tickets that can be saved and traded in for a variety of prizes, like a book, lunch with the Principal, or the honor of being Student of the Day. In addition, we have ROAR school-wide assemblies each trimester where we honor our Super Zephs. Here, each teacher recognizes one student who has gone above and beyond in some way. Contributing to our school culture and climate are staff recognition and support. Staff members recognize and show appreciation for each other by posting “Staff Shout Outs” on a bulletin board in our staff café. A staff member of the year is recognized at a schoolwide assembly, and staff members are celebrated during the Friday morning announcements. The focus of our culture is safety, learning, and fun where we incorporate each of those attributes into each day!

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We believe in following the national standards for family-school partnerships as a guiding practice. One of our core beliefs is that our school is better when our parents are involved with the layers of the school. First, we know that having a welcoming atmosphere is crucial and that is why the Principal either calls or sends a postcard to every new family within a few days of their arrival. Our front office is highly trained in positive customer service while keeping school safety at the forefront of everything. Our families feel they are an active participant in the life of the school and their child’s education. We host Coffee Talks during the morning where parents can come and learn about community resources and/or Q&A with the Principal. Parents and staff both serve on decision making teams of School Accountability and Gifted & Talented Advisory Committees. We host a vibrant series of family engagement nights that teach our families about internet safety, family dynamics, managing difficult behaviors at home, local library resources, plus a variety of other topics.

We have a dedicated Parent Teacher Organization that fundraises to support many special purchases in the school ranging from technology to classroom supplies to teacher professional development. Parents show staff appreciation in many ways, including special lunches, coffee, notes, and flowers. This teamwork fuels our success as a school community! We welcome and value volunteers at Zach. They’re essential to making a community school where all students can learn. Volunteers help with traffic supervision, office support, and in classrooms both clerically and instructionally. Their support allows teachers to maximize learning for students. For example, when volunteers help with small guided reading groups, teachers can maximize differentiated instruction during WIN (What I Need) time. Volunteers also positively influence our school climate and culture by planning, organizing, and running community events such as our Family

Fall Festival and Book Fair each year.

Our elementary is one of six schools that feeds into two middle schools and then one high school. We call this the feeder system, where the Principals of each school meet bimonthly to collaborate and articulate protocols. We launched a feeder wide focus on the Healthy Goals of Dialogue to serve as a model for all parents and staff communication. We also hosted three nights of internet safety events together, where an accumulative of 1900 people attended.

3. Professional Development:

Teachers at Zach have a long-standing tradition of learning together to improve and refine instructional practices. Staff are committed to participating in professional development (PD) at both the district, school and individual level. District offerings that support implementation of best instructional practice include courses in specific curriculum, like EnVision Math and Writer's Workshop Units of Study.

At the school level, staff participate in Summer Workshop. A recent workshop was a session facilitated by nationally recognized trainers focused on aligning the Core Knowledge scope and sequence with Colorado Academic Standards (CAS). Grade level teams worked together to unpack each standard, and then assessed the depth to which each must be covered and aligned them with the Core Knowledge scope and sequence. This work led to a deeper, vertical understanding of our curriculum and much more refined unit implementation. Another summer workshop focused on unpacking standards, developing essential learnings or outcomes for each, and allowing teams the time needed to develop common formative assessments for each. During the school year, many of the Zach teachers have participated in PD to enhance their instructional practices. Last year, staff participated in a book study focused on implementing engagement strategies. As staff learned, they created lessons that included these strategies and worked across grade levels to share ideas and develop highly engaging lessons. Currently, staff are working together in a "Pop Up" PD class model. Topics from the class, derived from a staff survey, range from math instruction to technology integration and maintaining a healthy classroom community.

Needs driven development of PD specific to our school is also done by our school wide team for intervention and support (a.k.a. the MTSS Team). Last year, through regular MTSS meetings, it became clear that an increasing number of students were struggling with early reading and phonemic awareness skills. This increasing need led teachers to request additional training in explicit, multi-sensory phonics instruction. The MTSS team provided training for staff using Orton Gillingham-based programs and facilitated the implementation of these strategies in the classroom. In the upper grades, teachers noticed an increasing number of students who needed social and emotional support. Teacher leaders from Zach's PBIS and MTSS teams worked with district support staff to develop a half day training in behavior support strategies as well as a yearlong book study, which allowed us to create school-wide systems.

4. School Leadership:

It is important to make note that school leadership here doesn't just mean the Principal and Assistant Principal, but rather includes our front office staff, our Teacher Advisory Group (TAG), and any staff member who chooses to take on a leadership role within the building regardless of their titled position. In this era of moving from good to great, excellence in everything, and high public accountability, creating a positive school culture must be paramount. This is why agreed upon values, clear decision making and supportive resources are imperative. Our principal has the will and skill to know that culture precedes structure. Five years ago, the Principal began implementing the methodologies of The Breakthrough Coach, and after a year discovered a shift in staff culture from adversarial to collegial. It served as a major success and turning point for our school. Admin designate three days to being in the office completing written tasks or confidential meetings and two days a week to being in classrooms. Each year we set a goal of how many classroom observations to do and typically complete between 200-400 in-class observations. These "coaching" days allow us time in the hall, in classrooms, in the lunchroom or at recess with our students. It's the time to have conversations with staff or parent volunteers in the hall or workroom that will lead to solving a problem, taking action for a student or just hearing how their life is going. We understand how managing time is directly correlated to leading a positive atmosphere in school. Time to vision and co-plan

for the path of our school. Time to get to know the quiet leaders in our school and encourage them from behind the scenes to step into a greater school role. Time to sit with students and see learning from their perspective. Our Admin also supports planning and facilitation of our committees: MTSS, PBIS, School Accountability Committee (a staff/parent team), G.T. Parent Advisory (a staff/parent team), TAG, Classified Leadership, and staff meetings. Our Principal manages our school Facebook page, website content, and facilitates weekly parent memos and weekly staff memo communication. With safety, learning, and fun as our focus, our school leadership includes all stakeholders from teachers to students to parents to support personnel. Everyone is valued here.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

As a school our operational leverage point is organizing ourselves into collaborative professional learning communities. Grade level and department teams of professionals working together with mutual accountability and a common goal is our lifeblood. For example, this entire application was written with the collaborative efforts of twelve staff members representing primary and intermediate grade levels, gifted & talented, performing and visual arts, academic and behavioral intervention, and administration. Working in teams, as a school, has allowed us to have a healthy school culture where clarity among staff is our school's focus. We spent time and attention developing people. We rely on the belief that together we inspire. Working together as a staff we realized our first best educational practice was like a diamond, the next best practices were like large rocks piled on that we could no longer see our diamonds. As educators we were lost in mandates and tasks. We knew we needed to focus on keeping clarity and purpose at the forefront, so four years ago we dedicated staff meeting time to figuring out a way to keep our "diamonds" visible. We looked at the research that said initiatives show their best rate of return after their fourth year of implementation. We agreed to empty our system of initiative fatigue and not introduce anything new unless it aligned with one of diamonds. We agreed that our four diamonds would be curriculum (a focus on learning), professional learning communities, MTSS (a collaborative culture), and assessments (a results orientation).

The collective vision and feeling of being in this journey together as a staff moved our culture into a positive and highly collaborative one. As Roland Barth says, "Empowerment, recognition, satisfaction, and success come only from being an active participant within a masterful group—a group of colleagues." A strong component of living the life of professional learning communities is treating each other respectfully even when in conflict. We set staff norms that we recommit to every year and follow the healthy goals of dialogue. In our norms we agree to create a safe environment where you listen and share while assuming the best in others; Be present in the moment; Honor everyone's time; All voices are shared and heard in a professional manner; and know when to be serious and know when to have fun.