

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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 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
 - 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	15	16	31
K	26	26	52
1	23	29	52
2	38	25	63
3	35	28	63
4	45	35	80
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	182	159	341

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 8 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 18 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 68 % White
 - 4 % 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: 4%

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

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	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	16
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	361
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 16 %
53 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Albanian, Gheg (Kosovo/Macedon), American Sign Language, Amharic, Czech, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Karen (S'gaw), Korean, Malayalam, Philipina (Tagalog), Polish, Serbian, Spanish, Ukranian, Urdu, Vietnamese.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4 %
Total number students who qualify: 15

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
44 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>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>11</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</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: 6
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, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	14
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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

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

Required Information	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.

Evergreen is committed to providing a nurturing community in which students, teachers, and parents respect and support each other. Each individual is challenged to learn and grow in a safe environment.

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

Evergreen Elementary is located in Carol Stream, a suburb of DuPage County. Our students live in the western section of the Village of Carol Stream, along with a small number of students residing in West Chicago. Evergreen serves 351 students ranging from preschool through 4th grade.

Our school and District have often been described as a public school in a private setting because of the “family” climate. Evergreen is in Benjamin School District 25. This two school district is comprised of one elementary school, Evergreen, and one middle school, Benjamin. Both schools work closely together, which helps our 4th graders have a smooth transition to the middle school.

The District was founded in the 1840’s and is one of the oldest in DuPage County. It was a one school district until 1974 when Evergreen was built. Early on, Evergreen was called Morton Road School, because of the name of the road it was by. In 1978, a thirteen classroom addition was added to the school to accommodate the increased enrollment in the area. The school was now located on Evergreen Drive rather than Morton Road. Students voted to change the name of the school to Evergreen in 1981.

Evergreen is very proud of the great character that is modeled by our staff, students, and parents. Everyone watches out for each other. We are a school family that is made up of 74.5% White, 1.4% Black, 12.9% Hispanic, 11.0% Asian, and 0.3% Two or More Races. We have 7.0% Low –income, 12.9% Limited-English Proficient, 14.0% IEP, and 0.5 % Homeless. Evergreen’s mobility rate is 5.0%. Having seventeen different languages in our school allows us to learn firsthand about different cultures.

The faculty of Evergreen includes 47 full time employees that are passionate about their students’ academic achievements along with their social and emotional growth. We are a faculty that has many veteran teachers who welcome new teachers to the teaching community. It is obvious when walking through the halls of Evergreen the school culture is one of harmony and excitement. Students and teachers alike are excited to come to school each day.

Evergreen is rich in tradition. One of our favorites is our Veteran’s Day Assembly. Veterans of our students’ families and community are invited to attend the celebration. This year we honored 40 men and women who served to make our life better. Our Police Department posted the colors; the scouts lead the Pledge of Allegiance; and the mayors of Carol Stream and West Chicago spoke to our students and guests. Our middle school band and choir lead us in song. We also had a speaker from Blue Star Moms speak to our students and thank us for all the supplies we collected for our service men and women. Other traditions of our school include: Fall Theme Day, Trivia Night, Family Math, Science, and Reading Nights, and Fall Festival, which is run by our PTA.

In addition to traditions, we are proud of our milestones. Teacher retention is high at 91%. The district was awarded the “Chicago Tribune Top Workplace in 2017” based on a climate survey. This award identifies workplaces that workers credited with having dynamic, supportive and inclusive cultures. Our preschool received the Excelerate Illinois, Gold Circle of Quality Award last year. This award recognizes programs which have demonstrated quality on all fifteen standards, as validated by a state approved assessor. We are unique in that we have a daycare housed at Evergreen for all staff members. Our most recent milestone was the implementation of 1:1 computing in grades 3 and 4. The roll out was smooth for students, parents, and teachers.

Each day Evergreen students are encouraged and challenged to develop to their full potential. This can be observed in many different ways. Teachers hold small group instruction to reteach or extend instructional goals during math and reading blocks. Enrichment classes are held during the week where students solve real life problems and practice the growth mindset philosophy. At the other end of the learning spectrum, we have students who need reteaching in order to master skills. Our teachers, reading specialist, interventionists, and educational assistants are called upon to implement interventions with fidelity. Students monitor their own growth and are proud of their improvements.

Our other programs allow the whole child to grow even more. Art, music, PE, technology, and before and after school clubs are times for students to explore and grow culturally, emotionally, physically, and socially. Evergreen also provides leadership opportunities for students. All fourth grade students choose a service to do in our school. They are our safety patrollers and flag tenders. They help the younger students get ready for recess after lunch and run the school store before the start of the day. Our fourth grade students also help in the lunchroom, are on the yearbook committee, and are LMC and PE helpers. They serve as role models for the rest of the school. Our students learn to give back to their school community in a way they can understand. In summary, we provide many programs and activities that contribute to student successes.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

“Working hard for something we don’t care about is called stress. Working hard for something we love is called passion.” - Simon Sinek 2016

Evergreen’s language arts units invite students to read, write, explore, and connect to real life experiences. For example, second grade students read about budgeting and natural disasters. These topics allow opportunities to connect to current events through discussions and written responses. Students are writing and interacting with complex text and rich vocabulary every day. We believe that daily writing activities improve reading comprehension for all students. Reading and writing go together like breathing, Reading is inhaling and writing is exhaling. At the end of our Language arts units a culminating Performance-Based Assessment is given to all students which allows them to present, reflect and respond to a variety of multifaceted tasks. Students also have opportunities to create a project of their choice showing what they have learned. Our students acquire foundational skills through scaffolding instruction, read alouds, modeling, and small group work. Curriculum mapping supports teacher discussions about implementation and alignment of standards and assessments. This articulation prevents gaps and overlaps in all areas of the curriculum school wide.

The Math Illinois State Standards are the driving force behind our math curricula. Each lesson starts out with a learning objective which informs students what they are doing and why they are engaging in this lesson. The eight mathematical practices are at the heart of the lesson. If students can make sense of problems and persevere in solving them, they are on their way to acquiring and mastering the necessary foundational skills. Differentiated instruction gives students additional practice in identified areas of need. These skills might include understanding math vocabulary, fact fluency, or short written responses to explain how they arrived at a solution. At Evergreen, Amp it Up! takes place three times a week, allowing students at all levels to engage in activities that reinforce what skills they need. At each grade level, explicit instruction, small group work which includes reteaching or enrichment, and partner discussions occur. Exit slips are used as a quick measure to guide differentiation and future lessons.

The adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) has given us direction as to what our students are to know and be able to do. Through problem based learning, our students acquire the foundational skills necessary to be successful, not only in science but in all aspects of their lives. They learn how to communicate their ideas, collaborate as a team, inquire and question, record their findings, and rethink a first attempt at a problem. Students are asked to demonstrate their understanding, find evidence to support their thinking, design a solution or design something new. The excitement that has been generated by our students and parents about science is incredible. Students loved building a lift to rescue a tiger out of a lagoon. They applied what they have learned about pulleys and simple machines to solve, what could be, a real world problem. Expanding content vocabulary while engaging in problem based learning will prepare students for long term success. Implementing STEM based projects has proven to increase student engagement, collaboration, and problem solving. We have found that students who typically struggle in academics shine while engaged in these activities.

The Illinois Social Science Standards at Evergreen are taught in grade level themes centering on citizenship development, geography, economics, and history. Essential questions begin each discussion which leads to group inquiry and a greater understanding of topics. Social studies at Evergreen also focuses on behaviors necessary to become informed and effective citizens. Evergreen students have the opportunity to take part in Club Evergreen which centers on the topics of humans and environment interactions (Recycling etc.). Our students participate in a character counts movement. “Life Savers” are 3rd grade student helpers working in kindergarten and preschool classes. They help students get dressed for recess and support walking quietly in the hallways. They also assist during recess. Some of our students and their families take part in CareFest. On a Saturday these students and families help beautify the outside of our school. Students learn how to make a difference in our community. To support the social studies standards, students also interact with non-fiction text in language arts and science connecting concepts, skills, and themes.

The excitement for learning starts with our PreK students. Evergreen Elementary provides an at-risk PreK and an early childhood special education program for children age's three to five who reside in the district. Teaching Strategies Gold is used to measure student progress in the areas of development (social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive) and content learning in literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies and the arts. These areas are the most predictive of future school success and are linked to state early learning standards. Our goal is to make sure students have a warm and fulfilling experience to set the stage for a successful school career. Students have a choice in what centers they play and explore books and activities to get them ready for the next step in their learning. In the past five years, the programs have served 202 students and 95% of those do not receive any type of specialized services at this time, proving the importance of early interventions. The programs have earned the Gold Circle of Quality from ExceleRate Illinois.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

It is the philosophy of the district that we educate the whole child, which includes non-core subjects. These subjects help students explore concepts that many times cannot be communicated in words or numbers.

Art Education at Evergreen is a choice based curriculum where students learn to work through the artistic process which includes the 8 Studio Habits of Mind. They are responsible for coming up with an idea of what they would like to create in response to an artist or technique they have learned about. Students create a plan and choose the materials that will work best to represent their idea. Students reflect and write artist statements about their project and present their work to the class. Students in grades 1-4 participate in art class once a week for 50 minutes.

At Evergreen Elementary school, the SEL standards and Erin's Law Mandate are met using curricula from two sources. The Second Step curriculum addresses pro-social behavior, problem-solving, and coping skills. Personal safety is addressed with the nationally recognized Be Safe At Last curriculum from the Sexual Assault Center in Nashville, TN. These curricula are taught by the district's behavioral health staff, composed of two social workers and a psychologist. Students from preschool through 4th grade receive 20 to 24 twenty-five minute lessons from Second Step depending on grade level. These lessons include didactic instruction, videos, songs, role-plays, and student participation activities. They then receive 3 to 4 twenty-five minutes lessons regarding personal safety. Staff members have access to classroom posters that reinforce lesson concepts to increase student understanding and skill use. Students have responded positively to this curriculum and are cued to use the strategies they have been taught. Many students report that they use the strategies at home or in the community.

Music Education is available to all students PreK-Fourth grade at Evergreen Elementary School. Classes for grades Kindergarten through Fourth grade are 30 minutes twice a week. PreK classes are co-taught 30 minutes once a week. Music at Evergreen develops better language and reasoning skills and training the left side of the brain through singing and chanting. Students have increased hand-eye coordination by learning to play Orff instruments and the recorder. Students in music are better able to fine tune their auditory skills by listening to a variety of musical styles taught in units and through composers of the month. Note reading skills, rhythm, and many of the elements of music help to develop math and pattern recognition in an exciting and different format. Students are provided an opportunity to perform in a musical presentation in front of a community audience. This performance develops better self-confidence, responsible risk taking, teamwork and creative artistic thinking in our students.

There is a strong connection between healthy bodies and the ability to learn. Evergreen Elementary School's physical education program services PreK – 4th grade students and is designed to educate and promote a healthy lifestyle. Every day students participate in activities which foster great potential for improving the capacity of their minds and bodies. Our program seeks to develop competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns, knowledge of concepts, the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, and the importance of teamwork and nutrition.

The Evergreen Library Media Center assists students and teachers to be effective locators, users, and

evaluators of ideas and information. We foster a love of reading, provide support in all areas of the curriculum, and provide guided access and instruction in the use of Library Media resources in all formats. The library is also open during the summer at designated times.

Preschool through 1st grade students visit the library once a week where they learn about the works of various authors and illustrators, respond to literature, check out books, and participate in the Illinois Monarch Award. Students in 2nd – 4th come to the library on a flexible schedule to check out books, research projects that support classroom curriculum and library skills including organizational patterns of the library. Students also participate in the Illinois Monarch and Bluestem Awards Program.

Kindergarten through second grade students have iPads and laptops in their classrooms. Students in grades three and four have been 1:1 technology users for 4 years. All classrooms are furnished with interactive whiteboards and document cameras. The accessibility of technology allows teachers to differentiate instruction and access programs to support all skill levels. In addition, students in first through fourth grade at Evergreen visit the tech lab twice a week, and kindergarten students visit once a week. The tech curriculum is aligned with the National Education Technology Standards. Students work on proper keyboarding, use web resources to enhance learning, and develop the necessary skills to use productivity tools like Microsoft Office Suite. All levels engage in coding and STEM activities in the Makerspace and learn digital citizenship. Our goal is to provide the students at Evergreen the technology and computer skills they will need to succeed in school and beyond.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Several effective learning factors, based on John Hattie’s research findings, are part of the instructional methods used at Evergreen to improve student achievement. As a staff, we have studied meta-analyses relating to achievement and we make a conscience effort to apply Instructional Quality, Teacher Clarity, Reciprocal Teaching, and Spaced vs. Mass practice into classroom lessons. During classroom discussions, students are invited to “Turn and Talk” with their neighbor to share additional thoughts and reflections. “Turn and Talk” is a routine for active reasoning and explanation. It encourages students to make connections as well as comparisons. Students are able to listen to the perspective of others, practice turn taking, and generate new ideas.

During a lesson many concepts are reviewed and taught. When teachers share the lesson objective with their students, it highlights what the student is to learn at that time. Students are able to give a concrete answer when asked, “What are you learning about right now?”, or when their parents ask them, “What did you learn in math today?” Students graph their progress in reading and math fluency and are proud of their improvements. Monitoring their own progress is motivational for them to try to do even better next time. Timely and informative feedback is also given to students consistently.

Students work in learning groups where instruction is differentiated based on individual needs. Reading specialists, interventionists, and classroom teachers provide targeted instruction within the context of the subject taught in the classroom. For example; reviewing vocabulary and paying close attention to graphs, tables, and illustrations provides connections for deeper understanding in social studies, math, and science.

It is a common practice for our specialists to support classrooms during guided reading instruction, allowing two groups to be implemented at the same time. This strategy gives students additional practice with text at their instructional level, while building confidence and a passion for reading.

AMP It Up! is an intervention block of time we use for all students in Math. This program serves two purposes; both reteaching and enriching the curriculum. Reteaching provides an opportunity for students to work with the skill in a different format to develop mastery. Students who already have demonstrated proficiency in the skill delve into deeper thinking skills and projects.

Our higher performing students are invited to participate in the Enrichment Program where they are engaged in problem based learning projects. These students will often work in the Makerspace to continue their learning under the guidance of the technology teacher, tech coach, and LMC director. Makerspace projects

provide real life experiential opportunities for problem based learning for K-4 learners.

Evergreen has a variety of research based interventions identified to target specific skill deficits. Some of the interventions include online programs monitored by a staff member to assure fidelity with implementation. Others are prescriptive in nature such as My Sidewalks, SLANT, and Reading Mastery. Additional staff provide further differentiation along with the classroom teacher. They include EL teachers, reading specialists, LMC director, two interventionists and trained educational assistants.

Many systems are in place to enhance the instructional approaches that help students reach and exceed their potential. These systems include a highly collaborative environment where grade level teachers discuss all students; a problem-solving team who address the needs of specific students; and a special education team who addresses the needs of those with additional challenges. Benchmark teams reflect on the success of all the interventions and problem solve to improve implementation.

To close the achievement gap, teams of teachers meet every six weeks to study student data and ask questions about the purpose of the intervention, integrity of delivery, and success or lack of in student performance. Specialists are asked to join the team depending on needs of the student. Parents are kept informed and are considered part of the team supporting our students.

Progress monitoring student achievement guides instructional and intervention decisions. When interventions are implemented we provide ample time and give the interventions a chance to make a difference. Over time, our Benchmark team has learned which interventions target specific needs best.

Assessments give us a comprehensive picture of student achievements and include; PARCC, STAR Enterprise, AIMSweb, Cog-At (2nd grade), and common assessments in Math which are given and used to direct math instruction and identify curricular gaps. Formative and summative assessments are also used at the classroom level to guide instruction in reading and math. Students are aware of their own performance and set personal learning targets to track progress. All assessments are used to provide essential data which makes all stakeholders accountable for student achievement and success.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

When individuals enter the doors of Evergreen, one of the first things they see is a banner that states, “Through these doors walk the world’s greatest kids!” More true words were never spoken, but these are more than just words to us. It’s a statement conveying our beliefs and daily practices. We refer to ourselves as a school family. We are the Evergreen Eagles, once an Eagle always an Eagle. This statement is a testament of community support. We have second and third generation Eagles living in this community who continue to connect to Evergreen through their actions. A referendum was recently passed to update our school building for safety and to enhance flexible learning methods.

Just outside the office is a giant bulletin board of the Character Counts Theme for the year. This year our students are showing “Monstrous Character” and are recognized with a character slip displayed on the board. It’s not just a name on the bulletin board; fourth grade students created posters to promote a coat drive where 107 coats were collected and taken to a PAD’s location in the area. Even our mail carrier contributed. Students also collected pop tabs for the local Ronald McDonald House. During the holidays, gifts and non-perishable food items are collected for the fire department to distribute to families in need.

In the mornings, visitors and parents checking in at the office enjoy our opening day rituals. After the bell rings a message of kindness and learning is spoken. Students take turns sharing fun facts, singing the school song, saying the pledge, and even acting out a commercial for an upcoming musical. A positive outcome of this practice is student pride overcoming their fear of public speaking.

Our 4th grade students are great leaders of the school, and act as role models for the younger ones. Students run the school store where they learn money management skills, serve as safety patrollers, kindergarten helpers, and flag tenders, just to name a few. Students contribute to a safe, accepting, and fun environment.

Our investment in students is high. With the low teacher turnover rate, celebrating student achievement year after year is rewarding. Mentors are assigned to new staff members to add a layer of support that is encouraging and informational. This program gives new staff comfort and allows experienced members to renew and grow professionally.

The wellness of our school begins with the wellness of our staff. We have a “Wellness Committee” who encourages us to take care of our mind, body, and spirit. The committee offers activities to support good eating, schedules walking times and yoga classes, facilitates book clubs, shares inspirational notes in mailboxes and around the school, and most recently created a coffee bar in the lounge for all to enjoy.

For 10 years, childcare is and will continue to be housed at Evergreen for staff members. The program has been presented at state and national conferences. It is comforting for staff to know their children are close by and at times catch a glimpse of them during the school day.

Students, staff, and parents are happy and thriving because of the positive environment which fosters high expectations for character and achievement.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We thrive because of the successful partnership with families and the community. The partnership is inclusive, meaning it includes relatives, stepparents, and community groups. It’s not unusual for grandparents to surprise their grandchildren as the mystery reader for that day. Halls are learning zones where “Hallway Helpers” can be seen sitting outside classrooms working with students on reading fluency, vocabulary, writing, math fact accuracy and math concepts. All of these volunteers are participating in goal-oriented activities linked to student achievement and school success.

A strong PTA and Education Foundation support Evergreen. Using the relationships they've built among parents, teachers and community, our PTA is able to create committees to support the needs of students. Organizing book fairs and author appearances have enhanced our reading and writing programs. In a presentation by Jud Winick, students were eager to find out what inspired his writing. A student told the principal, "It looks like the author wrote about his experiences when he was a young boy. I think I could do that!" With the PTA's help we are supporting local businesses while earning funds to support our school. PTA volunteers schedule and advertise fundraisers with restaurants. Last week teachers worked McTeacher Night at a nearby McDonalds. Teachers were behind the counter delivering orders, keeping track of receipts, and making ice cream cones. Students and parents love seeing their teachers in a different environment!

Trivia Night is a special event the Foundation holds every year. Parents and friends come together to support our school and District. Many of the surrounding businesses donate gift certificates and items which allow attendees to bid on to raise money for teacher grants to support curriculum. This year, a portion of the proceeds was used to purchase materials for our new STEM science program.

Field Day is a favorite event where parents spend the morning running sporting games for our students. Students recognize and appreciate parents have taken the time out of their busy day to spend it with them. Students encourage and cheer for each other to do their best when competing.

With the generosity of the school community, we were able to help those who experienced a loss or hardship because of natural disasters. Two schools in Texas were appreciative of the supplies we sent their students. They have pledged to help us if we are ever in need. Students learned that donating ordinary school materials can really make a difference to the greater world.

3. Professional Development:

"In order to create a purpose-driven organization, leaders must also have deep and abiding passion for that purpose." - Doug Reeves

Professional development is focused and continuous at Evergreen and presents itself individually and collaboratively. Our theme this year, "Dream Big and Think Positive to Grow and Prosper" fosters our philosophy of lifelong learners. It connected our work to the goals that we set to improve student achievement.

The leadership team video-conferenced with Doug Reeves where we discussed his book From Leading to Succeeding. Our discussion centered on how we use the effective elements of leadership in our District and schools. Sharing the powerful conversation we had with all staff highlighted the use of the elements (stay focused, give feedback, and build trust, and capacity) which apply to the classroom and communicating with parents as well. Our discussions also emphasized the high impact strategies based on John Hattie's research.

Each year, administration and staff reflect on student achievement, possible gaps in curricula and teaching methods and strategies. The discussion reveals a clear pathway to place our focus. Teachers are involved with all aspects of planning, generating enthusiasm and ownership in the process.

For the past six years, Evergreen has been updating its math, reading, science, and technology curriculum to improve student achievement. A similar professional development process was executed for each area. A timeline of implementation was created, which included visiting schools to observe implementation, researching experts to assist our trainings, and developing agendas for each training day.

With the adoption of a new reading series, teachers took part in "shoulder to shoulder" training. An expert modeled for each grade level whole and small group writing and reading lessons. Each teacher then had an opportunity to teach a lesson while other team members observed. Collaboration meetings were held that same day discussing effective teaching strategies noted during the lessons. Teachers giving each other feedback was powerful.

During Institute Days, Early Releases, and Teaching and Learning meetings we meet as a faculty, then as grade level teams to continue the discussions specific to their needs. It is a common practice for teachers to visit schools implementing the same curriculum to support their own learning which often resulted in additional resources when questions surface.

Teachers are always creating and updating materials which they place on a shared drive for all to use. The sharing of ideas across grade levels continues to be a valuable practice. Two years later, Evergreen teachers have become our in-house experts for our school's reading/ELA curriculum. Teachers from other schools are now visiting Evergreen to observe our teaching methods and strategies.

Educational assistants at Evergreen are provided professional development as well. They attend our Institute Days at the start of the school year and meet regularly with their classroom facilitator, and meet as a group three times a year. During these times they share articles and teaching and behavioral strategies that were used with success. Our assistants also visit special education classrooms in other schools to learn additional strategies. These visits affirm the practices they use in the classroom. All staff at Evergreen are actively engaged in professional development. They are truly lifelong learners.

4. School Leadership:

There is an African Proverb that illustrates the leadership philosophy at Evergreen. "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Leadership at Evergreen is shared by all. The principal, assistant to the principal, teachers, parents, and students work together towards common goals building capacity. Our mission is to provide each child with the best educational opportunity to become a lifelong learner, achieve the highest personal growth and be a contributing member of society.

Shared leadership is utilizing the gifts and expertise of the individuals and systems in our school community. For example, Evergreen School is made up of many teams/systems. These include; grade level teams, special education teams, data teams, lunch supervisor team, student safety patrol team, custodial team, office team, a PTA team, a Foundation team, a Building Leadership Team (BLT) and an administrative team. All teams are equally important because of their unique contribution to the school. The principal has gained the trust of all teams through collaboration and cooperation and being true to the goals of the school.

Decisions that are made always have "Is it best for kids?" in mind. The BLT team is represented by a member of each grade level and special area subjects. Discussions center on the practices that run the school and curriculum related items like pacing and alignment between grade levels. They are the sounding board that offers a distinct perspective of the area they represent. The special education team are the experts for our IEP students and make sure goals are met and problem solve when behaviors come up. The lunch supervisory team implemented several incentives to improve behavior at lunch time. One incentive had students work together as a team to receive banners for daily classroom recognition and another incentive was an invitation to eat lunch at the eagles nest.

At arrival one Monday morning, a group of third grade students helped Benny, our head custodian, clean up newspapers that had blown all around Evergreen's playground. Later that day, this same group of students came to visit the office. To help the environment, they wanted to make sure our playground stayed litter free and thought a garbage can placed in the back could help. They investigated the cost and drew a poster identifying where the can should be placed on the playground. They identified good reasons for this addition to our playground. We now have a garbage can placed on the blacktop with a sign saying, "Thanks for Keeping Our Playground Clean!"

All these systems/teams help make Evergreen the effective and efficient school it is. Evergreen teachers, students, and parents work together to make ideas become a reality for the good of our students. All are

empowered and have ownership in our school creating a positive environment and a culture that fosters student achievement.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One of the most influential practices that takes place at Evergreen is its Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for all students, including high achievers. High quality research based instruction and a philosophy that all students can learn is our belief. We believe early identification for academic and behavioral needs is key for students experiencing challenges. We also believe we need to increase the skills of those students who are already proficient in the standards. MTSS encompasses our Response to Intervention (RtI) practice, which includes behavior and social concerns.

Three times a year we benchmark all our students in reading and math to get a baseline of achievement and then monitor growth. Benchmarking data is recorded identifying students who are and who are not making expected growth goals. We rely on our problem-solving system to identify areas of need so that teachers and enrichment facilitators can differentiate instruction to support these students.

Each grade level team of teachers meets with our Benchmarking team to use data collected to problem solve and decide what interventions and strategies should be used to improve and advance student achievement. During a six-week benchmark meeting, grade level teachers check-in on the progress and make adjustments, if needed for those students. If students are not making progress during the six week time, we ask the question why. When a student does make progress, gradual release of support takes place to allow time for the student to build additional confidence. Monitoring student progress and providing them with feedback has proven to be instrumental in their academic success.

Every Tuesday our Problem Solving Team (PST) meets to discuss student progress, behaviors, and social concerns. At this time we schedule co-plans, where a teacher will join the PST team to problem solve the challenge. The teacher leaves the meeting with a plan of what she/he can do to support their student in the classroom.

Evergreen's enrichment and technology facilitators meet with grade level teachers to develop projects to enhance the learning standards and engage their students in discovery and exploration. The goal is to challenge all students and promote opportunities in more complex ways to think about what they are learning.

Evergreen's benchmarking data indicates that fewer students are needing intense interventions, and the duration of time students are spending in an intervention is shorter. This data allows us to conclude that our MTSS process is effective, and our benchmarking process and interventions implemented are effective. MTSS enables us to provide support and set higher expectations for all students at all levels.