

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Dr. David B. Sherman  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name South Park Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1421 Hackberry Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Deerfield IL 60015-4071  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Lake County

Telephone (847) 945-5895

Fax (847) 945-5291

Web site/URL  
ark https://www.dps109.org/South%20P

E-mail dsherman@dps109.org

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\*Dr. Anthony McConnell  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail amcconnell@dps109.org

District Name Deerfield S D 109 Tel. (847) 945-1844

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. Nick Begley  
(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**

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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

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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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban
  - 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
<b>PreK</b>	28	17	45
<b>K</b>	23	28	51
<b>1</b>	36	23	59
<b>2</b>	22	36	58
<b>3</b>	27	32	59
<b>4</b>	42	42	84
<b>5</b>	34	42	76
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	212	220	432

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 8 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 84 % White
  - 8 % 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.

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	432
(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: 6%  
24 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Russian, Spanish, Korean, Telegu, Mandarin, Bulgarian, Romanian, Bosnian, Japanese, Hindi, Lithuanian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1%  
 Total number students who qualify: 5

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %  
88 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>4</u> Autism                   | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>12</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>25</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>7</u> Emotional Disturbance    | <u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</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: 13
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	18
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	13
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 19:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	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.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

To educate the whole child and ensure student growth.

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**

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South Park Elementary School educates 432 pre-K through fifth grade students. Located in Deerfield, Illinois, a suburb approximately 25 miles north of downtown Chicago, South Park has, since 1959, been the beating heart of a proud, hard-working community that believes strongly in providing a solid, well-rounded public education for all of its children. The South Park community treasures its history of academic excellence and philanthropic endeavors. Ask a South Park alumnus what he or she remembers about elementary school, and you will hear about the caring and inspiring teachers and amazing “Helping Hands” philanthropy projects.

Visitors who walk through the front doors immediately see a mural of The Penguin Principles, the guiding principles that the South Park community embraces both in and out of school. They also see a beautiful illustration of South Park’s mascot, Parker Penguin, “riding the waves to success” on his surfboard and a video monitor with images of the energy, effort, and enthusiasm of the South Park students and staff.

Serving the needs of South Park students are 70 full- and part-time staff members working together with the mission “To educate the whole child and ensure student growth.” This mission, developed in a thorough process that included all South Park stakeholders, provides the focus to encourage well-rounded, empathetic, and highly engaged citizens. It begins with the youngest students in Deerfield. South Park is home to District 109 Helping Hands Preschool, which prepares the earliest learners to succeed in kindergarten and beyond by offering instructional support and activities that focus on pre-academic, problem-based learning, STEM, social-emotional, motor, and language development in the most authentic and rich learning environment. South Park offers extras not provided in a typical preschool such as access to a gym, library, upper-grade helpers, and connections to the District 109 kindergarten curriculum.

Out of the mission came a vision statement and action plan. South Park’s vision is “to develop a collaborative learning community and a positive school climate in which students and staff will feel safe to grow academically, socially, and emotionally, and where innovation is encouraged and proliferated.” This vision, initiated in August 2017, includes four important action plan goals:

1. Special- and general-education staff will collaborate regularly, efficiently, and effectively to ensure student growth.
2. General-education staff will improve students’ academic experience by setting weekly team meeting agendas that focus on developing student success criteria, setting assessment benchmarks, and building cohesive units of instruction.
3. Staff will create a safe learning environment in all spaces inside the school by adhering to a consistent set of expectations that address the needs of the whole child.
4. The South Park staff will continue to grow as innovators in their field, providing a progressive educational environment for all learners.

Through a staff-led visioning committee, weekly staff meetings, numerous professional development activities, book studies, and weekly team meetings, the South Park staff members work diligently to live by the mission.

In the fall of 2016, South Park was one of only five schools to receive the prestigious Illinois ASCD Whole Child Award. Winning this award confirmed that the South Park community is committed to educating the whole child, dedicated to meeting the social-emotional and academic needs of children.

South Park’s Penguin Principles guide the staff and students on a daily basis. These simple yet powerful rules are: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Helpful, and Be Safe. They are taught, modeled, and positively reinforced through classroom lessons, school-wide assemblies, and constant reminders. They provide students the common language and tools to lead positive, caring, and productive lives, in and out of school.

The Penguin Principles are personified in South Park’s long history of philanthropy. Each school year, South Park staff and students participate in numerous philanthropic projects, including assisting the local food pantry, creating sack lunches for people in need throughout the Chicagoland area, and assisting others

throughout the world in many ways through generous fundraising. The student council sponsors two or three drives each year, collecting food, toiletries, books, shoes, coats, hats, gloves and other essential items for those in need. Many projects require hands-on work by the students. Students have created blanket squares for Project Linus, sorted clothing for Cradles to Crayons, packed lunches for Uncle Pete's Lunch Program, and jumped rope for hours to raise money for the American Heart Association. To culminate each year of service, South Park School holds Helping Hands Day, when students participate in a school-wide activity to raise money or collect items for student-selected causes.

South Park is a very special place for students to learn and grow. The students, staff, and parents are proud of the focus on the whole child, on the positive principles our students personify, and the philanthropic projects that connect the school to the greater community.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Teachers at South Park Elementary School embrace a team approach to developing curriculum that is driven by the Common Core State Standards. Using the District-provided scope and sequence, teachers craft units of instruction using a variety of open educational resources and use formative and summative assessment data to make decisions about what materials best meet student needs. The core curriculum at South Park has become increasingly personalized, allowing students to move at their own pace through grade-level content and beyond. This rigorous, flexible instructional program fosters limitless student growth.

South Park advocates for a balanced approach to literacy instruction. Students engage in a Common-Core aligned program that includes 60-75 minutes of daily practice of independent and small-group reading instruction, writing about reading, and word study. Using a variety of long and short texts, students learn to read closely, analyze, and think deeply about text. They are challenged to ask questions and make claims about what they read, supporting their ideas with evidence from the text.

Teachers use a variety of materials to support students in learning to read and reading to learn. In kindergarten and first grade, students receive daily instruction in foundational skills in a co-taught environment with the school-based interventionist. This rich, differentiated instruction results in huge growth and provides students with a strong skill base as they progress through the grade levels. Students practice phonics and phonemic awareness using the Foundations<sup>®</sup> Wilson Language Basics program and the Phonemic Awareness Curriculum by Michael Heggerty, Ed.D. in small groups to develop early literacy skills. Teachers use the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, MAP for Primary Assessment, and other tools to determine each child's independent and instructional reading level. Then, teachers integrate digital tools such as Raz-Kids, Epic!, Reading Eggs, and classroom libraries to provide a range of leveled text for small-group instruction and independent practice. Students are challenged to respond to reading in a variety of ways, both in writing and digitally using Seesaw.

In the intermediate grades, teachers utilize a variety of long and short fiction and nonfiction texts to continue to develop students' literacy and analysis skills. Students work together in partnerships and book clubs to deepen comprehension and connect text to their own lives. Students are regularly exposed to direct instruction, independent and small group practice, word study, and response to reading.

Students in grades K-5 receive 45-60 minutes of daily writing instruction during writing workshop. Teachers follow the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Units of Study for Writing program. Students practice narrative, argumentative, and informational writing across a variety of genres. The Writing Units of Study emphasizes a gradual release model, providing direct instruction in daily mini lessons and giving students opportunities to practice writing independently. This program is rigorous; units often challenge students to standards beyond their grade level. Teachers have noted a marked improvement in students' writing skills and stamina. Grammar instruction is authentically interwoven throughout the units so concepts are taught in context rather than in isolation.

Math instruction at South Park is guided by a District-provided Common Core aligned scope and sequence, based on the Model Math Curriculum from the Illinois State Board of Education. Teachers access a variety of open educational resources to create a program tailored to the students in their classes. Students are not restrained to grade-level standards and teachers are encouraged to expose students to content beyond grade level when they demonstrate readiness. Teachers build in weekly time to focus on the application of mathematical concepts to real-world problems. This problem-solving work attends to the mathematical practices laid out in the CCSS. In addition, teachers integrate opportunities for structured math talk, including standard "Number Talks" and the routines in High-Yield Routines Grades K-8 by McCoy, Barnett, and Combs. Teachers foster a growth mindset in their students, particularly in mathematics and problem solving.

Teachers use a variety of resources to integrate science and social studies. Social studies content is

intricately woven into the fabric of literacy instruction. Students are exposed to historical and civics topics through literature and non-fiction text and complete social-studies focused research as a part of their work in writing workshop.

Every three to four weeks, students complete six-day modules in the state-of-the-art SmartLab where they work on STEM projects under the guidance of the Library Media Center director and classroom teacher. In addition, teachers make use of the TCI Interactive Science Curriculum, supplemented with modules from Mystery Science. Teachers at South Park always find ways to make science instruction inquiry-driven, problem-based, and hands-on.

District 109 Helping Hands Preschool develops school readiness skills in the District's youngest students with a robust foundation in language arts, STEAM, fine and gross motor development, and social-emotional learning. The inclusive program, which integrates students with special needs and their typically developing peers, provides access to the resources of an elementary school, allowing a seamless transition to kindergarten in District 109. Preschool staff collaborate with elementary colleagues to ensure developmentally appropriate academic and social-emotional instruction aligns with elementary standards-based instruction. District 109 kindergarten teachers indicate students who come to them from Helping Hands possess the academic and school readiness skills to be successful learners.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

The South Park staff believes in educating the whole child. Students at South Park participate in a variety of classes outside of the core subject areas. In order to educate the whole child, students receive instruction in the visual and performing arts, physical education, Spanish, library, and STEAM education. These classes challenge students to create, collaborate, communicate and use critical thinking skills on a daily basis. The teachers of these various subject areas meet on a regular basis to discuss student progress, concerns, and possible interventions so that each and every student can be successful in every setting.

South Park's visual art classes encourage students to think like artists. Students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade receive an hour of art instruction each week. South Park's student artists are encouraged to explore a variety of media, topics in art history, and techniques. Students are engaged in exploration, play, and collaboration as they create their work. Students in older grades engage in a studio workshop that encourages them to generate their own ideas for their artwork and create work that has personal connection and meaning. Students receive individualized feedback and differentiation based on their progress, and they are free to make choices on the subject matter and media that is represented in their work. South Park artists are creative, curious, reflective and engaged.

Every student receives at least an hour of instruction in music every week. Curriculum in music education includes activities for students to create, perform, respond, and connect to the musical world around them. Students use this class to explore their roles as musicians in our world. In fourth and fifth grade, students are given opportunities to add instrumental music instruction into their weekly instruction. South Park also offers an extracurricular choral ensemble that promotes the value of singing. All of these performing art offerings involve a performance for the community. These performances help build a positive and community-focused climate.

The Spanish program at South Park promotes global citizenship to students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Students work towards proficiency through speaking, reading, writing and listening activities. Students receive Spanish instruction for 60 minutes per week. They use books, songs, games and other interactive activities to build confidence and love of the language.

The South Park Library Media Center program encourages students to be lifelong readers, enjoy various authors and illustrators, become responsible digital citizens, and utilize research skills to find and evaluate sources. In a space that promotes collaboration and offers room for large- and small-group instruction, it provides instruction to all students in grades pre-kindergarten through 5th grade. Students have access to an online library catalog, eBooks, databases, and online encyclopedias. The LMC is a hub of technology for the

school, supporting students' use of both iPads and Google Chromebooks, and encouraging students to use various applications, including iMovie, Padlet, and Google Classroom. The Library Information Specialist also coordinates the school's SmartLab, which provides exciting, hands-on STEAM instruction to all third, fourth and fifth graders with lessons on coding, graphic design, circuitry, digital communication, mechanics, and structures.

South Park students receive a comprehensive physical education curriculum and are given daily opportunities for physical activity and health/nutrition concept acquisition. Students learn how to apply health-related fitness components to PE lessons and daily life. They learn the benefits of lifelong fitness through a wide variety of activities and work on the skills that can help lead to confident and successful participation in an active lifestyle. The PE program builds values in sportsmanship and focuses on fun while teaching students about how to control their bodies and different equipment while participating in sports and activities. While participating in group games and activities, older students focus on teamwork, stressing the use of strategy and proper skill form, to increase their chances of success. These students also use the Fitness Gram as a way of assessing and monitoring their levels of fitness across the different components. This emphasis helps students focus on how they can choose a healthy lifestyle, monitor it, and take ownership of their day to day choices about nutrition and fitness.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

South Park Elementary School is a community of educators who strive to provide high-quality instruction to all students. Common Core State Standards-based instruction is differentiated based on the varying needs, abilities, and interests of each student. All teachers participate in ongoing professional development, which allows them to employ a variety of strategies to support the learning of the whole child. Classroom teachers deliver daily whole-group and small-group differentiated instruction in English language arts and math. Project-based learning (PBL) activities allow students to utilize communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. For example, the fifth grade students participate in a PBL activity by creating a household budget based on a hypothetical salary for a self-selected future profession. In third grade, students planned an architectural redesign of a local water park and submitted the plans to the corporate office.

South Park is a 1:1 school; each student in grades kindergarten through second has an iPad and each student in third through fifth grade has a Chromebook. This technology-rich environment fosters ongoing collaboration between teachers and students, and among students. It allows teachers to develop, discover and share valuable resources to enhance student engagement and learning, and it embeds instruction and assessment opportunities, both in and out of the classroom. District 109 tracks the value technology adds to teaching and learning by administering an annual survey from research partner BrightBytes. South Park staff regularly review the data from the survey to improve staff and student use of technology.

Student assessments are integrated into the daily work with students. Teachers use the data gathered from formative and summative assessments to create flexible groupings. This process provides data for the Response to Intervention (RtI) team when a student is not showing progress or needs additional support outside of the classroom. The RtI team, which includes two instructional coaches, administrators, school psychologists, and a National Board Certified interventionist, collaborates with the general and special education departments to design and provide individualized and explicit interventions.

Teachers use a variety of sources, including the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), and AIMSweb Plus, to collect multiple data points throughout the school year. Students who are performing below the 40th percentile on nationally normed measurements may qualify for tiered intervention in reading and math as additional supports to the differentiated instruction in the general education classroom. The team also decides if additional screening is warranted to make a decision to move a child from a tier 1 into a tier 2 intervention. The progress of students receiving a tier 2 or 3 intervention is monitored every 10 days through the use of AIMSweb Plus. At the end of a 40-60 instructional day cycle, the RtI team meets again to go over the data.

The interventionist meets with classroom teachers, reaches out to confer with parents, and develops a new plan moving forward based on the data collected. All interventions are delivered with fidelity and the team

collaborates on a weekly basis to discuss students who are in need of additional support. The South Park interventionist pushes into kindergarten and first grade classrooms on a daily basis to provide a systematic approach to phonics to all students. The focus on early intervention has helped to decrease our number of students needing additional tier 2 and 3 support for early literacy skills.

Students who do not demonstrate adequate progress may be referred for a case study evaluation. If a student is found eligible for special education services, a team consisting of specialists and parents develop and implement a tailored, appropriate, and rigorous educational plan for the student. Specialists can include but are not limited to cross-categorical resource teachers, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, and occupational therapists. Students who qualify for English Language Learning (ELL) instruction may also receive RtI and special education services if indicated.

An accelerated curriculum is available for students who significantly exceed grade level expectations. To encourage higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills, eligible second through fifth grades students participate in gifted programs through pull-out instruction. In the general education classroom, District-level and building instructional coaches support classroom teachers in designing enrichment activities to maintain high levels of achievement and growth.

South Park Elementary School effectively integrates high-quality instructional strategies, intervention, and assessment so that all students are provided with an educational environment that supports their learning and growth.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

South Park’s positive school climate begins with trust and open communication that builds connections and community. The school has developed a culture of respect where students, teachers, and parents feel safe sharing their ideas to improve all aspects of the school.

South Park’s primary mission is: “To educate the whole child and ensure student growth.” Students, educators, and families work together to live this shared school mission. Sustaining a positive school climate is an ongoing process, and the South Park community is committed to the work it takes to ensure fun and productive teaching and learning. Older and younger grade classrooms buddy up and form cross-grade-level learning communities that foster the development of social, emotional, and academic learning.

The students and educators are engaged in their work, motivated to grow, and mutually respectful, in large part due to the school’s “Penguin Principles,” which include being responsible, respectful, helpful, and safe. These principles, which are promoted throughout the school daily, help cultivate trust, which contributes to our positive and motivating learning environment. Students and educators also come together in assemblies to promote a positive school culture. Singing our South Park song, practicing the Penguin Principles, and recognizing the many achievements of the students at South Park during daily announcements all help to cultivate a positive school climate.

Students know their voices matter and are always willing to share their knowledge and talents. Student choice and voice are active in school-wide philanthropy projects, student-created morning video announcements, participation in District and school-wide surveys, student participation in the interviewing process for administrators, and annual Helping Hands philanthropic projects.

Educators have a voice in choosing and leading professional development, and they are encouraged to take risks in the teaching and learning taking place each day. Teachers are given the chance to apply for District-wide innovation grants with a focus on an area of education that individual or groups of teachers feel most passionate about, improving the overall climate of the classrooms and school.

The teachers at South Park feel valued and supported. The PTO provides luncheons that allow teachers to be recognized for their continual commitment to the students at South Park. In addition, teachers are showered with love from their students in parent-organized activities, like letters to teachers and student-created gifts to show appreciation for all that teachers do. Teachers are also given financial support from the PTO, which purchases items beyond the school budget to enhance instruction.

At South Park, teachers, students, and parents are a community of learners committed to educating the whole child and ensuring student growth.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

South Park Elementary School brings together a community that strongly supports students and teachers through a strong Parent Teacher Organization, direct parent involvement in the classroom, clear and consistent communication, and philanthropic efforts.

From the back-to-school ice cream social to the bike rally to Bingo and movie nights, the PTO keeps parents connected to the school. The organization provides financial and volunteer support for classroom activities and offers enhanced learning opportunities with speakers and assemblies. The PTO donated generous funding for South Park’s SmartLab, a hub of student learning engagement.

Parents serve as guest readers in classrooms, and teach students about influential artists through the Art in Action program. Parents also are involved in the South Park STEM Club. Parents who work in STEM fields teach students about ways to use science, technology, engineering, and math in their everyday lives.

Parents also coach Destination Imagination teams.

At South Park, teachers, administration, and students use a variety of resources to engage and connect with families and community members. The principal's weekly "Friday Focus" newsletter offers parents and grandparents timely updates on school events and activities. South Park staff members use Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, using #sp109 and #engage109 to share exciting, innovative, and creative things happening throughout the school.

Seesaw, a student-driven digital portfolio, connects parents with their students' daily academic experience. Parents login and view student videos, pictures, and essays. This digital journal allows families to "like" posts, provide comments and feedback on student work, as well as receive important updates from teachers.

This year we held a parent town hall meeting with the Deerfield Police Department on the topics of digital citizenship and online safety. The event was very well-attended and much appreciated by the parents, and the police and school administration shared their expertise with the parents.

The South Park community participates in many local, national and international philanthropy projects, and has become widely known for its culture of caring. The spring Helping Hands Day is a much-anticipated tradition when students create and organize a school-wide philanthropy project to benefit organizations such as the Make-a-Wish Foundation, Heifer International, Katrina assistance, and the Ronald McDonald House. Each February, South Park contributes to "Project Linus," which provides blankets for children who are seriously ill and in the hospital. Every South Park student decorates a quilt square that is sewn into quilts for children. South Park also participates in the Uncle Pete's Lunch program, which delivers sack lunches to the needy in the Chicago area, and holds regular collections for the local food pantry, as well as clothing drives for children in nearby schools. These activities not only benefit the organizations and people who are recipients, but also give the South Park community an opportunity to come together to provide students with meaningful service-learning experiences.

### **3. Professional Development:**

Professional development at South Park Elementary School is guided by the school's mission and vision. The vision is "to develop a collaborative learning community and a positive school climate in which students and staff will feel safe to grow academically, socially, and emotionally, and where innovation is encouraged and proliferated."

After staff members read George Couros' *The Innovator's Mindset* this year, South Park's professional development immediately flipped and grew. Couros suggests that teachers should have the opportunity to pursue their passions and grow themselves professionally without being subject to one-size-fits-all professional development. Thus, South Park launched "Learning Leader Cohorts" (LLCs), designed and guided by staff members themselves. Teachers selected their topics, set their goals, and collaborated to reach those goals. Once their work was complete, LLCs shared out their progress to the larger staff, enriching everyone professionally.

The schedule in District 109 supports this model, with "Early Release Wednesday." Each Wednesday, students are dismissed an hour early to provide consistent, focused collaboration time for staff.

South Park School is fortunate to have two instructional coaches who offer job-embedded professional development to all staff. The instructional coaches design and deliver personalized professional development in large groups, grade-level teams, and one-on-one with teachers. As part of the adoption of the Lucy Calkins Units of Study writing program, every classroom teacher recorded a video of himself or herself teaching a writing mini-lesson. With the guidance of the instructional coaches, they critiqued their instruction and worked to improve and fine tune it. This PD was well-received by staff, and markedly improved instruction.

South Park teachers have numerous opportunities to receive professional development from the District's educational partners. This year, teachers received training regularly from TenMarks, Edmentum, ECRA,

Apple, and Nearpod.

Teachers and staff at South Park are encouraged to seek out a wide range of outside professional development opportunities including reading professional books, attending conferences and workshops, and building their Professional Learning Networks through social media (internally, with #sp109 and externally). Many teachers pursuing advanced degrees, with District financial support. Last summer, teachers were offered six book choices for summer reading, paid for through school funds. Over the past year, teachers have attended professional development such as The Lower Elementary Interventions Workshop, the Illinois Association for Gifted Convention, The Responsive Classroom Workshop, Practical Co-Teaching Strategies for ELL Students, The Illinois Council of Instructional Coaches Conference, and The Midwest International Band and Orchestra Conference.

At South Park, teachers embrace the role of lead learners.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

South Park's leadership team includes a principal, assistant principal, and director for early childhood. In addition, two instructional coaches are members of the instructional leadership team. The leadership framework that shapes the administration at South Park comes from Kouzes and Posner's book, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*. The five practices of exemplary leadership outlined in the book are Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. These practices influence the daily work of the leadership team, and ultimately the culture of the entire building.

At South Park, leadership opportunities abound for staff members. Teacher-leaders led the School Mission Committee, which was charged with developing a new mission statement, and the Visioning Committee developed a school vision statement and accompanying action plan for the next three to five years. A Building Advisory Committee, comprised of multiple staff members, provides every staff member a voice in the improvement of the school and in addressing staff concerns. Two other very important committees are the Social Emotional Learning Committee and the Behavior Management Committee. Teachers and staff on those committees are invested in improving the climate and culture of South Park School. For the last two years, The SEL Committee has researched numerous programs to meet the needs of the whole child, and they have made a recommendation to adopt Responsive Classroom as a whole-school philosophy; that implementation will happen in the 2018-2019 school year. The Behavior Committee has revised and updated the Penguin Principles school-wide behavior plan and has collected and reviewed data on student behaviors.

Student leadership is important and omnipresent at South Park. Students involved in Student Council learn governance and representation, hold fundraisers, and develop and run philanthropic projects. Fifth grade students take on important responsibilities throughout the school day including raising the American flag, collecting recycling, saying the Pledge of Allegiance over the intercom each morning, creating monthly video announcements, and working with kindergarteners and first graders to model good citizenship.

South Park's shared leadership approach fosters an environment where staff and students contribute to the climate, culture, and daily learning to fulfill the mission to "Educate the whole child, and ensure student growth."

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Instrumental to South Park’s success is the school’s mission to educate the whole child and ensure student growth. Teachers, staff and students implement effective strategies to achieve that mission.

Special education and general education staff collaborate to ensure academic success of all students. Staff members participate in self-directed Learning Leadership Cohorts (LLCs) to grow their professional learning about problem-based learning, social-emotional learning, growth mindset, and technology integration. LLCs then share their work with the entire staff to further spread their learning. Grade-level teams regularly review Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and PARCC data to identify opportunities for student growth and to plan curriculum work that will support this growth. This collaboration includes staff who work with South Park’s earliest learners in Helping Hands Preschool.

Grade-level teams also meet weekly with South Park’s instructional coaches. Agendas focus on developing student success criteria, setting assessment benchmarks, and building cohesive units of instruction.

Academic success requires a positive, safe, respectful environment and social-emotional support for every child. The South Park community follows the Penguin Principles: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Helpful, and Be Safe. The school’s behavior plan helps students to connect their behaviors and choices to these principles. Students particularly shine in displaying those behaviors during the many activities that pair students of preschool and primary grades with those of intermediate grades. The Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee explored various SEL school-wide programs; South Park will implement the Responsive Classroom program for the 2018-19 school year.

South Park teachers and staff strive to grow as innovators to provide a progressive educational environment for all learners. Staff is encouraged to take risks with their instructional design so that students in turn can become innovators and risk takers. Every day, students participate in problem-based learning, inquiry, and activities highlighted by student choice. South Park students have the opportunity to participate in Destination Imagination, along with an annual Spelling Bee and Geography Bee. After several years of working with 1:1 student devices, school and district staff continue to explore and utilize technology tools and resources that redefine learning. All students participate in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) activities in their classrooms and/or in the SmartLab™ and beginning in 2018-2019, all students will participate in a bi-weekly STEAM class (STEM, with an arts component). The strategies for academic success will continue to evolve and grow as students continue to achieve and grow.