

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Deann C. Logan

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

Official School Name George Bibich Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 14600 West 81St Avenue

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

Dyer IN 46311-2633
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Lake County

Telephone (219) 322-1185

Fax (219) 864-2381

Web site/URL http://bibich.lcsc.us

E-mail dlogan@lcscmail.com

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. Larry Veracco

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail lveracco@lcscmail.com

District Name Lake Central School Corporation Tel. (219) 365-8507

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. Don Bacso

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 10 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	26	11	37
K	47	38	85
1	45	37	82
2	43	50	93
3	36	35	71
4	37	45	82
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	234	216	450

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 20 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 71 % White
 - 3 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 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.

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	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	12
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	455
(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: 3%
15 Total number ELL

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

Spanish, Punjabi, Polish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Tagalog, Hindi

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 21%
Total number students who qualify: 93

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
74 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>3</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>8</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>74</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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: 9
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.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	17
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 22:1

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%	97%	97%	97%	97%
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.

Bibich provides a safe, positive learning environment for students to become self-directed learners who achieve their personal best and become responsible, contributing citizens.

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

Dyer, Indiana, is a suburban community with a population of 15,941 residents. It is located in the uppermost, northwest corner of Indiana on the Illinois state line and 15 miles south of Lake Michigan. This is a quiet community comprised mostly of neighborhoods where Bibich Elementary School students enjoy the natural setting of trees and wildlife outside its windows and doors. The students and their families also benefit from being a short 30-mile trek to Chicago. This allows families to take advantage of the many cultural, athletic, and recreational opportunities that exist in that urban environment. These amenities are perhaps some of the reasons why Dyer was ranked one of the “Top 100 Best Places To Live in the Nation” in 2005 and one of “The 20 Safest Cities in Indiana” in 2017 (The Times of Northwest Indiana).

Bibich Elementary, home of the “Bulldogs,” is one of six elementary schools in the Lake Central School Corporation and is located at 14600 W. 81st Avenue. It is one of two elementary schools in Dyer. Along with the elementary schools, Dyer has one of the three corporation middle schools that feed into a tri-town high school shared with Schererville and St. John. The total pupil enrollment of Lake Central School Corporation is 9,586 students.

Bibich School was named after George Bibich who was the first superintendent of the Lake Central School Corporation. The student population of our school has increased since the original building of 22 rooms was constructed in 1978. To meet the needs of our growing community, eight additional classrooms, a cafeteria, and two computer labs were added, one in 1991 and a second lab added in 2012.

The total configuration of our school population has changed. We originally housed students from kindergarten to fifth grade, but our corporation has now included all fifth-grade students in the middle school buildings. Bibich currently serves four half-day pre-k classrooms, one half-day kindergarten, 14 full day general education classrooms including kindergarten through grade four, four high ability classrooms, and one special education resource room. There are also dedicated music and art rooms as well as a gymnasium and a large cafeteria.

We are an aging community where many people love our area and are remaining in their homes after their children reach adult age and move on. This has affected our enrollment and total student population, which has dropped by over 100 students since 2010. In addition, the homes that have turned over are bringing a changing demographic to our area; therefore, our free and reduced lunch eligibility has increased over eight percent. We have students receiving English language learner (ELL) services representing seven languages. Even with all of the changes, our school has stood the test of time and is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

Bibich School has an overarching theme of “Kids First.” This philosophy explains our jigsaw puzzle analogy describing the full picture of student success. This puzzle requires all team members working together with a vision to develop all students’ full potential whether it be physically, emotionally, socially, academically, or culturally. The reassurance of physical safety is achieved through our commitment to planned drills and our partnership with the Dyer Police and Fire Departments. The emotional piece is achieved through our professional development on social and emotional needs and the subsequent positive student interactions that result from careful implementation of those learned student support skills. Students are encouraged to participate in a variety of social experiences including school activities such as chess club or walking club or one of our family activities such as the family dance or fun fair. We are fortunate to have a strong Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that hosts several fundraisers each year that not only bring school and families together, but also provides the necessary funding for extra supplies, assemblies, and grade-level programs.

Bibich teachers follow the Indiana Academic Standards and utilize best practices to drive our instruction. Lesson plans with research-based objectives, differentiated instruction, higher-level thinking skills, and an inquiry approach to all subjects keeps students motivated, on task, and fully engaged. Bibich teachers believe that analyzing data impacts student success. We utilize a combination of formative and summative assessments to highlight student strengths and identify deficiencies. We have a strong intervention team that

collaborates to make data-driven decisions which help produce positive student outcomes.

Our faculty and staff support each other by collaborating on educational endeavors and celebrating personal achievements. This linking of our puzzle pieces is encouraged by our principal who maintains an open-door policy where the staff feels comfortable to seek advice, share experiences, or gain moral support. This overwhelming cooperative atmosphere empowers teachers to constantly self-reflect to ensure that pieces are not lost or moved and that the puzzle remains intact.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Bibich teachers use Lake Central School Corporation designed curriculum units addressing the Indiana Academic Standards. Content area committees exist for each subject and grade level including teachers from all schools.

Bibich utilizes a totally integrated literacy program which incorporates reading, phonics, vocabulary, writing, grammar, and analytical skills within two 60-minute blocks. Standards for individual subtopics are deliberately interspersed throughout these blocks, so students understand the concepts are interconnected and dependent upon each other. Teachers use grade level and differentiated complex texts to support the continuum of skills necessary to be successful throughout all subject areas. Grade levels have constructed thematic literacy and Lucy Calkins' writing units that tie in reading skills with pertinent science and social studies topics; therefore, informational text is incorporated into the reading block. Students experience Response to Instruction (RTI) flexible grouping based on daily assessment data and subsequent groups.

Our math program is inquiry-based and relies on inferential skills with an emphasis on multiple solutions that need to be proven using all modes of learning. Students need to not only be able to produce an answer, but also to show their metacognition both verbally and visually in a math congress. Our 60-minute math block ranges from number talks, understanding patterns and games, to real world problem-solution tasks which address the growing math student. We believe that math should be "caught not taught" starting in kindergarten. This idea is fostered throughout the curriculum sequence. Our whole math approach revolves around students understanding concepts rather than only one method of success.

As we transition from the previous Indiana State Standards to the new Indiana Academic Standards for Science 2016, students are exposed to hands-on, real-world science investigations. This begins with the Scientific Method which stretches into every science unit. Each classroom transforms into their own science lab where experiments are performed using a comprehensive materials kit that is provided to each classroom. These meaningful Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) activities not only introduce students to new academic experiences, but also foster a collaborative spirit that results in new solution-based products that bring our students to the next level of being producers and not just consumers of knowledge.

Our social studies curriculum begins with the end in mind by making sure that our students understand the importance of being productive and informed citizens. Through the materials and units of study, our students understand where they fit in society today and who paved the way to get them there. Teachers employ various Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies (CRISS) lessons into the curriculum to access all modes of learning. Research projects, current events, cultural celebrations, partnerships with community leaders, and presentations to both parents and other classrooms are the backbone to understanding that our world has always been and will continue to be a work in progress. Through these projects, we encourage acceptance, diversity, and a willingness to be open-minded.

Special populations, including high ability and special education students, have their own curriculum that matches the needs of the individual student. Pacing, level of difficulty, and the specific social needs of each group is addressed. High ability classes or clusters exist in grades one through four and are instructed by high ability licensed teachers. These students are identified based on the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) and the Iowa Assessment.

Our special education program focuses on individual foundational skills with a strong emphasis in supporting the students in their general education classrooms. Likewise, our English language learners are assessed through the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs and supported based on those results. Our special education early childhood teachers implement a readiness curriculum that follows the Early Foundations of Learning Indiana Standards. All pre-readiness skills for kindergarten are encompassed within this curriculum. Students are assessed using the Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Recording of Kindergarten Readiness

(ISTAR-KR). This report provides updated information on pre-readiness skills for entering kindergarten. Students are immersed in language to develop their vocabulary and communication skills. Fine motor and gross motor skills are also integrated into the program. Speech services, language services, and related services (occupational and physical therapy) are delivered into the classrooms.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Bibich believes in educating the whole child by offering various methods of learning within other curricular areas. Other curriculum areas, including art, physical education (PE), music, technology, and library, provide students with opportunities to develop into well-rounded students. Each special area content class meets for 45 minutes once a week for all students in full-day kindergarten through fourth grade. Students in half-day kindergarten receive 30 minutes of library and technology.

Art classes employ a school-wide, skill-based curriculum focusing on developing fine motor skills and visual composition. Students use these skills to create various art installations to bring awareness to different organizations and events throughout the year. For example, students and staff collaborate through visual art to bring acknowledgement to Anti-Bullying Month and Disability Awareness Month. All grade levels work together to decorate for community events, including the annual Special Persons' Night, student art fair, visiting authors, and One School One Book. Creating interactive art installations gives our students a chance to develop and demonstrate critical skills while connecting with the community.

PE offers students a chance to work at their personal best in a skill-based curriculum environment while participating in team games and cooperative groups. During PE, students are encouraged to set individual goals that promote lifelong fitness. Students explore a variety of fitness activities, such as Jump Rope for Heart, Hoops for Heart, Field Day, and Walking Club. In addition to the classroom health curriculum, Friday Fitness Facts promote the idea that good health is universal.

In music class, students acquire essential skills by singing, dancing, moving, and playing. Through these activities, musicality is developed with the belief that all children are "tuneful, beatful, and artful." These concepts are found in Dr. John Feierabend's works "First Steps in Music" and "Conversational Solfege." The skills taught are developmentally sequenced for musical independence using techniques that are not only research-based, but also foster a sense of community, cooperation, and belonging. In a rich musical environment, students experience the hushed wonder of quality folk songs and music literature. Skills learned in music class have family connections with take-home "ask me" sheets and folk dancing at Special Persons' Night. Fourth graders enjoy extra musical opportunities through choir and folk dancing. The annual Fourth Grade Showcase brings families and friends together to enjoy students' dancing, singing, sharing, and performing alongside one another.

Students are immersed in technology throughout the entire school. All students participate in a weekly computer technology class that exposes them to the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS). These are used for evaluating the skills and knowledge students need to learn effectively and live productively in an increasingly global and digital world. Students practice the use of technology and have the opportunity to foster these technology application skills, keyboarding skills, digital citizenship concepts, and computer science skills. Students practice their coding skills by completing lessons on Code.org which includes participation in the Hour of Code. Students take an active part in a Computer Science Day, incorporating various elements of computer science, such as binary coding, programming, and algorithms. Technology directly supports classroom initiatives with software programs such as Dreambox, Reading Eggs, Touch Typing, and Raz-Kids. The skills learned in the computer lab connect directly to the classroom with the use of Chromebooks and iPads for direct instruction and class activities.

Exposure to books is just the beginning of a visit to the Bibich library. Bibich was a driving force in a district-wide initiative to align library curriculum to Indiana Academic Standards. Weekly library visits incorporate skills to support classroom learning and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) centers. We host best-selling children's authors as part of our visiting authors initiative, promote reading success through Accelerated Reader (AR), and hold two book fairs every year. Other curriculum programs offered to Bibich students include Chess Club for students in grades one through

four, Student Council for third and fourth grade, Talent Show for students in kindergarten through fourth grade, Spell Bowl, and Robotics Club.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Bibich teachers follow the Indiana Academic Standards to drive instruction. Teachers use the school corporation pacing calendar for all subject areas that were developed by the district elementary teachers including grade-level representatives from Bibich. Lesson plans with research-based objectives are clearly stated and include differentiated instruction, higher-level thinking skills, and clear measurable assessments. Our belief is that students should be active learners. We use an inquiry approach to all subjects where students are actively engaged. When you walk through the halls of our school, you will not see students involved in continuous direct instruction, but instead involved in project-based learning or cooperative learning groups. In these situations, the teacher acts as a facilitator instead of the leader of the lesson allowing students to take ownership.

Teachers use technology to address the various needs and levels of students, including remediation, enrichment, and enhancement of skills and concepts. We are fortunate to have over 500 technology devices available to our student population of approximately 450 students. There are several websites and programs designed for skill remediation and enrichment which teachers utilize regularly. Differentiation opportunities, depending on the skill, are utilized through technology as one student may be remediating while their neighbor is simultaneously working on enrichment. Canvas is a learning management system that teachers can use to give assignments, send students to specific websites, and administer assessments. District technology trainers visit classrooms to integrate technology into lessons, support teachers through co-teaching, and assist in student project presentations.

Bibich teachers firmly believe that analyzing data impacts student success. Teachers utilize formative and summative assessments to gather data. Formative assessments include: standards checklists, exit tickets, pretests, and quizzes. Summative assessments include: benchmark tests, Curriculum Embedded Performance Assessments (CEPA), Pivot, Text Reading Comprehension (TRC), unit reading, language arts, math, and content area tests. Teachers, principal, dean of students, school psychologists, interventionists, and school service provider (SSP) meet and analyze the data to determine if students need additional interventions. We have daily differentiated RTI groups where paraprofessionals provide support in every classroom depending on the needs of the children. Every child is included and receives support at their instructional level. These groups are data driven and change continuously depending on the mastery of the skill at hand. There are two levels of next step intervention. The Student Assistance Team (STAT) is a professional collaboration of teachers to suggest tier one methodologies to be implemented in the general education classroom. The Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) process is similar but involves parents, and sometimes the student, to determine if tier two interventions and a goal plan are needed. This can include individualized reading or math interventions, social or behavioral plans, and parent/home involvement. Student input is considered and encouraged so that personal ownership for success is validated. Students who do not make appropriate progress based on the IAT team's recommendation are referred for special education testing.

Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination (IREAD) is administered to grade three. This is a statewide high-stakes test which is an initial determiner for promotion to grade four. If a child does not pass IREAD, they are immediately referred to the IAT process. Bibich annually administers Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) which is the state standardized assessment in grades three and four. We analyze the data to look at the subgroups to make sure no groups are performing below the school average. Teachers utilize the data from these tests to adjust materials and pace of instruction for the following years to ensure high levels of annual achievement.

Bibich provides several opportunities for educational enhancement and support. We provide before school support for 30 minutes twice a week for students in need of extra instruction or enrichment on any given concept. We recognize the importance of smaller student to adult ratio by having all available staff members assist daily during core instruction. Our reading specialist meets daily for 30 minutes with small groups of students to provide targeted instruction using Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), Wilson Phonics, and individualized interventions. Dreambox and AR goals are closely monitored and personalized to the level of

the individual learner. Our high levels of achievement are a direct result of our rigorous expectations for student success.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our school focuses on instilling a long-term effect on each student’s social and emotional growth. This positively affects our overall school culture and leads to an academically successful environment.

We begin each day by greeting our students by name with a welcoming smile as they exit the bus. Our principal leads a daily character development program, which includes a Random Acts of Kindness component where students are entered into a weekly drawing. She reads a daily words of wisdom piece which ends with “Make it a great day, or not, the choice is yours.” This sets the tone for a positive start combined with a sense of personal ownership for each student’s mindset.

Every Tuesday we begin our day with the Bibich Bully Pledge. This works in tandem with our Buddy Bench on the playground where students can go to build peer relationships or gain peer support when needed. This promotes the tolerance and acceptance of others. This idea is also embraced through school-wide celebrations of differences such as Disability Awareness Week and heritage presentations.

The entire Bibich staff inspires our students to have a passion for success by offering motivational and confidence-building programs with attainable goals. These programs acknowledge effort, achievement, kindness, positive behavior, leadership, growth mindset, and tenacity. Whole class and individual success is acknowledged through the use of sticker charts, classroom wall charts, online behavior tools, and positive notes/emails/phone calls.

Our SSP addresses social skills, self-regulation, and coping strategies through the Superhero Social Skills Program. She presents social and emotional learning groups dealing with anti-bullying and growth mindset and facilitates a Changing Families program for students experiencing parental separation or divorce. These programs are in addition to her daily provided services which are recommended by either the school psychologist, teachers, or parents.

The faculty and staff of Bibich are a cooperative group who support each other professionally, emotionally, and socially. We are a congenial staff who collaborate on educational endeavors as well as personal achievements. We have a social committee that supports staff members who experience loss, health issues, and hardships. We host celebrations for impending nuptials, births, retirements, or teacher acknowledgements. During the school year, we have a Sunshine Committee that arranges themed lunches surrounding holidays. In addition, our principal and dean provide a holiday luncheon, remember each person’s birthday, and recognize personal achievements during staff meetings and in weekly staff newsletters.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging families and community is an overarching theme of our school environment. We begin each school year with new student orientation. We hold grade level “Back to School” nights where teachers, the principal, and the PTO introduce their programs, policies, and curriculum to their parents. Skyward, the online grade and reporting system, allows parents to have access to attendance and grades. These grades are uploaded on a weekly basis so parents are immediately informed. This is in addition to parent phone calls, targeted emails, or individualized conferences. Student successes are announced to the entire school and highlighted in the weekly newsletter. Canvas is another online tool where teachers provide announcements, schedules, and individual assignments. In addition, the principal sends a weekly school-wide newsletter along with School Messenger alerts.

Connecting family to school is the key element for student success. Our Student Spotlight Night and Special Persons’ Night offer a chance for students to display their work to extended family while enjoying local entertainment. Math Night serves as a fun, yet informative, evening to assist and engage parents in understanding current math instructional methods. Our PTO hosts a family dance, family movie night, fun

fair, walk-a-thon, and family restaurant night fundraisers. In addition, various grade levels have special events, such as holiday programs, student presentations about the history of Dyer done in conjunction with the Dyer Historical Society, and a fourth grade “wax” museum of famous Indiana historians.

Bibich Student Council participates in our annual Veterans Day Program by coordinating a drive to assemble care packages for local veterans and hosting our honored guests. Local veterans, parents, school board members, Boy Scouts, Bibich choir, and middle school band all come together in a school wide appreciation. In addition, we collect and donate to Bibich families in need, Riley Hospital, the St. Jude Foundation, and the American Heart Association.

Our community supports us in a variety of ways. Several local churches provide school supplies and financial support to our school as well as the Kids Hope USA student mentoring program. Our police department maintains a daily presence at our building during arrival and dismissal. Our local emergency responders maintain a close relationship with the school to review carefully planned safety strategies. Members of our staff reciprocate by attending and volunteering at the National Night Out for Crime and the Dyer Corn Roast hosted by our Dyer Chamber of Commerce.

3. Professional Development:

The district places an importance on professional development by designating 15 days each year to be used for both district-wide and school-based needs. The goal of our professional development is aligned with our “Kids First” mentality which is to enhance student academic and emotional well-being. Current, evidence-based practices and motivating techniques are provided for all administrators, teachers, and support staff for a well-rounded faculty. These practices have recently included promoting a growth mindset, disabilities awareness, and changing families. As our students’ needs change, both teachers and administrators adapt by seeking out and requesting specific training to meet their individual needs. These requests are met with support and financial assistance from the administration. Upon return from their workshops, staff members share their experiences both at staff meetings and with their grade-level teams. This sharing component promotes cross-curricular dialogue to benefit instruction in all grade levels. Bibich is fortunate to be able to use both district funding and PTO restaurant night funds to absorb professional development fees.

District administrators require yearly online Global Compliance Network (GCN) tutorials to educate staff on topics, such as autism, blood borne pathogens, bullying, and professionalism. The district also provides additional training to support newly adopted curriculum materials. Recent examples would include Lucy Calkins Writing, Fosnot Math, and Pearson Investigations.

Staff meetings cover a diverse range of topics which have included differentiation, English language learners, and whole-brain teaching. Our district school resource officer along with local law enforcement periodically attend staff meetings to address safety and to keep Bibich informed of the most current practices. District math coaches and technology trainers come into classrooms to co-teach standards based activities. They also provide staff with monthly resource newsletters.

Every area of the curriculum is very important to the total education of our children, which is why our specials teachers also regularly benefit from conferences. Our music teacher attends the yearly Indiana Music Educators Association Conference, and our physical education teacher attends the conference for the Indiana Society for Health and Physical Educators (INSHAPE). Teachers also attend conferences at the local, state, and national levels to receive the most current best practices being delivered. Smekens Education, The Indiana Association for the Gifted (IAG) High Ability Conference, and Trauma Sensitive Classrooms are just a few of the conferences that have been attended by our staff. Many members of our staff are members of the Northwest Indiana Reading Council, which hosts multiple literacy workshops.

4. School Leadership:

Our principal’s leadership philosophy is illustrated best through the use of the phrase “Kids First.” This philosophy is woven through every aspect of the school structure and is mirrored by our dean of students. The principal realizes that every child needs to feel safe before he or she can begin to learn. Therefore, her

commitment to safety is at the forefront of every decision. Through carefully planned drills, visible safety folders in each classroom, and her strong partnership with our police and fire departments, our students have a sense of security in their school environment. Emotional safety is an equally important component to her leadership philosophy. She attends seminars along with her staff that address the social and emotional needs of elementary students. The information guides her staff in managing their students' emotional needs. Her dedication to emotional well-being is also evident in her staff relationships. She empowers teachers to manage their classrooms with their own teaching styles while providing an ongoing and collaborative relationship. Our principal and dean of students maintain an open-door policy where the staff feels comfortable to seek advice, share an experience, or gain moral support.

Teachers volunteer for impactful leadership positions at both the building and district levels to ensure a voice in the decisions being made for their students. Bibich teachers are visible on district committees like the safety committee and wellness committee. At our building, grade levels lead their own team meetings and communicate weekly with our principal. Providing leadership roles for our students is an extension of the teacher leadership at Bibich. With our strong focus on inquiry learning, lessons are often student led. Students, with support from their teacher, collaborate in small groups and discussions which build concept development. Our student council takes an active role in several community projects. Teachers recommend and assist student leaders as they help with dismissal procedures, run the morning bookstore, raise and lower our flag, help with younger students at chess club, and lead our morning announcements. The teachers feel that these are important life skills that build the responsibility, character, and confidence students need to succeed.

Our PTO supports Bibich by leading several fundraising campaigns that allow for additional classroom resources and programming. This programming enhances our curriculum and student achievement by introducing them to authors, musicians, scientists, and cultural experiences. The experiences gained from these programs play an important role in student achievement.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Bibich Elementary is a school committed to a customer service approach of putting the needs of children first. This “Kids First” strategy is the instrumental practice that guides our school’s success and remains a driving force in all decisions we make. We provide students with a safe and stable learning environment so their emotional needs are met. We look at all of the needs of our students like a complex puzzle with many pieces.

Customer service is the underlying priority that begins each day. A team provides curbside assistance by opening car doors, putting on backpacks, and welcoming students. Staff is strategically placed outside and throughout the building to guarantee all children have a personal interaction before entering their classrooms. Students are eager to see their teacher and start their school day.

“Make it a great day, or not, the choice is yours.” That quote, taken from Project Wisdom, is recited at the conclusion of our announcements every morning to encourage students to make wise choices. The quote follows a daily message that builds character, confidence, and community. This message, along with our weekly Bibich Bully Pledge and the highlighting of classroom achievements, sets a positive tone each day.

Supporting students and acknowledging their concerns is another key to the puzzle. With the help of our SSP, students learn skills to help them take ownership and participate in problem-solving and conflict resolution. Staff members address concerns and communicate with all parties involved to resolve the issues. Students understand they are an integral part of the team.

Our Bibich community is fully invested in our "Kids First" philosophy and help in supporting the emotional needs of our students. We value the support of our Dyer police officers and Kids Hope USA mentors. Former students often return as positive role models. Performing arts groups showcase their talents at school wide assemblies. Students also volunteer at our after-school events. Each year the high school graduating class returns to walk the halls and reminisce.

While we are always looking for new ways to make each piece fit, the pieces interlock and the picture is clear -- our Bibich family works together to instill the beliefs and values needed to achieve our overarching theme of “Kids First”. The pieces come together to work cohesively, and successful student outcomes are undeniable.