

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	13	19	32
4	20	17	37
5	22	25	47
6	16	14	30
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	71	75	146

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 92 % White
 - 0 % 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: 15%

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	11
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	9
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	20
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	135
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.15
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 53%
 Total number students who qualify: 77

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
22 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>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>3</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>3</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</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: 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.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 18:1

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%	93%	95%	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.

All stakeholders at Valley Heights Elementary will prepare students to become lifelong learners and productive citizens by meeting individual needs in a safe and positive atmosphere.

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

Valley Heights Elementary School has an enrollment of 146 students in grades three thru six. We serve students in rural Northeast Kansas from the communities of Blue Rapids and Waterville. The combined population of the two communities is approximately 1,600. The main opportunities for employment in our area are agricultural, manufacturing, and mining. The closest city is Manhattan, Kansas (home of Kansas State University) located 45 minutes south. Within the Valley Heights school district, there is one Preschool, two elementary schools, and one junior /high school building.

Due to our small town atmosphere, education plays an important role throughout both communities. The Valley Heights School District was created 50 years ago when the two towns of Blue Rapids and Waterville consolidated with both towns maintaining their own elementary buildings. In 2002, the elementary schools consolidated and moved grades K through two into the Waterville Elementary and grades three through six into the Blue Rapids building. We are predominantly a Caucasian community with no ELL students at this time. According to our State Building Report Card, 54.5% of our students are economically disadvantaged. Our students with disabilities, percentage almost matches the State average of 14.42%.

Our building was presented a challenge in 2014 when we were placed On Watch, a designation given by the Kansas State Department of Education, due to our State Assessment scores declining for the previous three years. We had experienced a widening gap between the scores of our lower level students versus the higher level students. At this point, we made a decision to incorporate both a new ELA program and the MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) model for reading. The MTSS model, established re-teaching and enrichment groups, where students are placed into leveled instructional groups based on frequent progress monitoring that supplements the core curriculum instruction. These individualized groups have enabled students to be challenged while still working at their level. Due to the success we experienced with reading, we are incorporating the MTSS model in both math as well as with our Social-Emotional and Behavior curriculum.

The Valley Heights Elementary motto is “We Must Believe to Achieve”. Our school mission statement states “The Valley Heights Community will prepare students to become lifelong learners and productive citizens”. To achieve this mission, we have developed a set of collective commitments. These include: Actively involving parents in the educational process. Create a positive learning experience in collaboration with the entire Valley Heights community. Work collaboratively in developing instructional strategies and designing methods of assessments to advance our vision. Use varied methods of assessment to monitor the learning of students and use the results to guide individual instruction. Provide a positive, child-centered classroom with clear expectations, consistent consequences, and specific, articulated academic goals where all students are valued. Model life-long learning through commitment to ongoing professional development and continuous improvement. Improve communication between school and home.

Valley Heights Elementary understands and values the connection between the school and the community. We encourage family members to interact with their child in the school environment with events such as Back to School Night, BEAM Night (Be Excited About Math), and STEM Night. We have an expectation of 100% attendance at Parent Teacher conferences where strong connections are made between teachers and family members. This communication allows the best environment for student learning.

Our community has received both the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and the Kansas After School Enhancement grant. As a result of receiving these grants, our students benefit from an after-school program we call Colts Round-Up. A large variety of services is provided for students through this after-school program. Our after-school program partnerships with Kansas Reading Roadmap (KRR). Both the Colts Round-Up and KRR use our schools existing MTSS data and work to increase reading proficiency. These grants also allow us to address student needs in the summer time by providing a Summer Enhancement program designed for all students, but does include remedial summer school for students who qualify academically. The summer program also provides physical games, nutrition segments, STEM challenges, Robotics Club, to name a few of the special interest activities available, as well as employs a social worker to provide emotional support for students.

Our commitment to our students has allowed us to see much success over the past few years. This year we received the Distinguished Title I School award presented by the National Association of ESEA State Programs. The Kansas State Department of Education selects two school each year. Our school was then recognized at the National Title I Conference which was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania this year.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Valley Heights Elementary in the Valley Heights School District has adopted a core curriculum for each subject taught. Language Arts has recently received updates. Through a rigorous adoption process, teachers analyzed research-based curriculum from numerous reputable publishers. Teachers, administrators, and the Board of Education based their decision on how closely the curriculum aligned with the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards. In addition, this curriculum met our students' needs with differentiated instruction. Through curricular review, the Blue Rapids Elementary adopted Journeys, a curriculum for Language Arts. enVisionMATH was researched and chosen when Kansas adopted new standards. We are currently in the process of adopting and updating a new math curriculum.

Valley Heights Elementary's language arts curriculum is focused on students reaching a satisfactory level of proficiency in the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards. Journeys, our core language arts program, is a comprehensive K-6 program. Within Journey's the five main areas of literacy are addressed; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Journey's provides explicit instruction to create a system for teaching informational texts and literature, receiving foundational skills, and for mastering speaking, listening, and writing skills. At Valley Heights, our teachers have created landmark components, which are the most essential skills to be taught at each grade level using the Journey's curriculum. These landmark components are followed to ensure fidelity to the Journey's curriculum.

Valley Heights Elementary has developed a strong math curriculum. Our core math curriculum, has been in place for six years. Since implementing this curriculum, Valley Heights Elementary teachers and administration have examined more closely the alignment of the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards. The core curriculum and scope and sequence is followed to ensure that all components are covered. This consists of a monthly, weekly and daily planner for each topic and lesson. Areas of need have been identified and additional resources have been acquired to supplement the core. Some foundation components include number sense, fact fluency, estimation and algorithms. In addition, ratios, geometry and measurement units are present throughout all grades.

Science instruction consists of a variety of resources to ensure that we are teaching background knowledge and promoting the Next Generations Science standards. Students are given the opportunities to use inquiry to guide their thinking, as well as, using a variety of strategies, such as hands on learning. HSP Science is the current core curriculum. HSP encourages student-directed learning and exploration. The scope and sequence of each curriculum begins with a grade level and course overview which is followed by all staff. Each unit is broken down into sections according to the Next Generation Science Standards. Each grade level consists of a tripod of topics including Earth Science, Physical Science, and Life Science. Each lesson begins with an introduction of the concept, moves into a skill and concludes with an assessment of the standard. Teachers differentiate to meet instructional and student needs by using supplemental resources, such as; Science Studies Weekly and Mystery Science.

Our social studies curriculum focuses on world communities, states and regions, world history, and ancient civilizations. Students learn through appropriate non-fictions, as well as fictional trade books and texts, hands-on projects and activities. Scholastic News Magazine is a supplemental that is incorporated in third and fourth grades. Fifth and sixth grades supplement the core instruction with World History Studies Weekly. These allow students to investigate further the standards at which they are assigned at grade level. Students are taught to view the world around them by making connections to the past and present. All students and staff participate in Kansas Day activities, such as, Flint Hill Historic Prairie Grassland activities and history of state symbols. Other activities include, Constitution Day, Kids Voting, Veteran's Day and lessons on government structures and civic leaders.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Valley Heights is acutely aware that student success is not limited to academic achievement. Student success is a composite score of grades, attitude, emotional stability, and an eagerness to learn. These factors contribute to a well-rounded individual that contributes to a healthy society. True teaching is not just academics, but molding children to be future parents, citizens, and leaders in the world. It is the understanding of different learning styles that supports the importance of additions to curriculum to ensure connections for all students along with pliability of the brain.

The importance of music and its effects emotionally and intellectually is irrefutable. Research and analysis has proven that students engaged in music programs outperform peers in GPA, graduation rate, ACT scores, attendance, and discipline referrals. Music creates a sense of belonging and purpose for students who participate. They identify themselves as musicians and quite often find that music is an outlet for them to express themselves, whereas others might relate more to sports. A variety of music supports child brain development. Exposure to diverse sounds and rhythms is critical to cognitive development in children. Varied exposure leads to proficiency, spatial reasoning and temporal reasoning. It also increases understanding of moods, emotions, and creates connections to other cultures.

To that end, Valley Heights Elementary Music Program consists of K-6 General Music for all students and 5th and 6th Elementary Bands. K-2 students spend 110 minutes weekly exploring vocal music of all types, percussion instruments, rhythm and basic music notation, a study of all instruments, styles of music, world music, along with movement and rhyme. Third to sixth grade students meet for a total of 110 minutes every two weeks expanding their knowledge of music notation, rhythm, music styles, historical connections and influences of music, music composers, and a brief history of musical theater and its influence on American culture. Fifth and sixth grade bands meet for a total of 225 minutes during every two week period. They also perform at school functions.

The benefits of music focus on social/emotional aspects along with strengthening academic habits. They include: mastery of memorization, improved work and study habits, increased coordination, sense of achievement, students stay in school, greatly contributes to intellectual development, improves pattern recognition, fine tunes auditory skills, builds imagination and intellectual curiosity, relaxes students, teaches discipline, prepares students for the 21st Century workforce, develops creative thinking and problem solving, develops spatial intelligence, teaches teamwork skills, teaches risk taking - dealing with fear and anxiety and helps them become successful in order to reach their potential, increases self-esteem and confidence, and builds pride and develops better communication skills. Reports indicate on standardized testing that students in music score 63 points higher on verbal and 44 points higher on math when enrolled in music courses.

Valley Heights understands that music ignites all areas of child development and skills for school and workforce readiness in the areas of intellectual growth, social/emotional growth, motor and language skills, and overall literacy. Music enables both the body and mind to work together enriching the whole of each student.

The Physical Education Program at Valley Heights is a vital part of keeping students active, healthy, and engaged. We utilize the Spark Training Curriculum with our students; and, as research shows, healthy students are better learners, (<https://sparkpe.org/physical-education-resources/academics-physical-activity/>). Spark research has shown that physical activity positively affects self-esteem, psychological well-being, anxiety and depression as well as many other areas that have an impact on students in the classroom. As a program, we also work with the American Heart Association on Hoops for Heart Programs. Through this program, students learn the do's and don'ts to keep their heart healthy, as well as the joy that comes with knowing by working hard, you help people in need who you may not even know!! We finish up the year by having Pre-K-6th grades students participate in the Charles Steele Play Day. At the Play Day, students compete in track and field events at our local track. It is a day in which parents and community members come out and enjoy watching the children's hard work!

To stress the importance of literacy, Valley Heights maintains library time as part of our Specials rotation.

Students use their time to check out books of interest and have a quiet place to be able to sit down and read. Each class participates in a one to two day checkout session each week and an open checkout time on a daily basis to help with reading beyond the school day. Every student is encouraged to take Accelerated Reading tests at their reading level as often as possible for points towards their monthly goals. At the beginning of the school year, the students participate in the 30 Book Challenge. This challenge consists of reading and passing an Accelerated Reading test in several different genres. In addition, there are a number of “Golden Tickets” hidden in books throughout the library. The tickets are to encourage the children to check out books in different genres, in hopes that they will be exposed to new topics that will spark their interests. If a golden ticket is found, they get their picture taken and posted on the recognition wall. Third and fourth grades students are taught how to use the Dewey Decimal System at the beginning of the year. The 5-6 grades students get a more hands on approach by helping assist in shelving books and keeping everything well organized throughout the year.

In preparing Valley Heights students for the 21st Century Workforce, and to accommodate them with essay portions of State Assessment Testing, our 3-4 grades students learn computer keyboarding. We use online curricula that teach QWERTY board skills, while tracking their progress and assessing proficiency. Keyboarding assists each student in discipline, self-regulating, and eye-hand coordination. These weekly sessions are fun yet challenging as they learn the positioning of the keys while improving their words per minute. Technical skills such as keyboarding enhance the educational process, while helping students in note taking, spelling, and report writing. One more piece in the enhancement of teaching and molding the whole student, not just the intellect.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

In recent years, Valley Heights has adopted the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) model. This new process has drastically changed how we gather and collect data, analyze data, and provide instruction for our students. Through this process we are able to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Within the MTSS model, we have put a large focus on our core instruction. We provide explicit instruction in both core and intervention classes by implementing a universal response signal and providing multiple opportunities for students to respond. Our staff have been provided professional development in these areas from our Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) team.

We currently use FastBridge as our universal screener. We benchmark our students using this program three times a year. After collecting the benchmark data, our Building Leadership Team and Professional Learning Community analyzes the data to determine the instructional needs of our students. We then use this data to group the students into appropriate intervention groups. We have what we call “Colt’s Time”, which is a walk-to-intervention. At this time, all students go to either an enrichment or enhancement group for reading. These groups meet four days a week for thirty minutes. Those students, who the data has identified as tier three, are given an additional twenty-five minutes of intervention, five days a week for reading. This year is our first year of implementing math interventions. Similar to reading, we provide enrichment and enhancement interventions. Those students, who are above the math benchmark according to the FastBridge data are provided an additional time of enrichment. Those students, who do not meet benchmark and are not identified as tier three in reading, receive an additional thirty minutes of math enhancement. We monitor our students who are in intervention groups by progress monitoring them weekly and biweekly, also using FastBridge. The progress monitoring data is used to adjust instruction within intervention groups as well as to determine movement in and out of groups.

Within the classrooms, teachers assess their students using the core curriculum benchmark and weekly assessments. They use this data to determine those students that would benefit from extra instruction and reteaching.

Along with participating in the Kansas Assessments, we also take part in the predictive interim assessments. These assessments are given three times a year and provide a prediction on how the students will do on the summative assessment. The teachers in our district also give formative interim assessments to determine skill area strengths and needs.

Since we give national, state, and local assessments, we use the results to triangulate our data. This data is then used to inform instructional decisions and set goals for the building as well as the district.

Along with collecting and analyzing student data, we also began implementing the eWalkThrough system. This system is a quick observation tool that administrators and instructional coaches use to collect and analyze instructional data. This data will be used to identify best practices and identify areas for improvement. Professional development will then be planned around the results of the data collected.

At Valley Heights we feel that the main reason we are a high achieving school is due to the School Improvement Plan we created while “on watch”, and the MTSS process. Due to the implementation of both the MTSS process and the School Improvement Plan in the past four years, we have been more conscious of the decisions we make and how they impact student success. Our professional development has shifted to focusing on those areas that we see as a great need for improvement.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Valley Heights Elementary School, we recently adopted the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to help support students academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. The data we collect, we use to help motivate students to improve. With this process, our students receive weekly social/emotional and behavior instruction with their homeroom teacher and classmates using the Second Step curriculum and the Olweus Anti-Bullying program.

At Valley Heights, we have teachers that care about our students. Our number one priority is their success. Our teachers form individual relationships with students that creates a mutual respect and encourages students to want to work hard and seek success. Every classroom strives to be inviting and promote a safe environment that kids want to be a part of.

Building celebrations are held quarterly in which we celebrate students' achievements. Homeroom teachers give students awards based on academic performance in the classroom and their character outside of academics. Daily, teachers are looking for behaviors that go above and beyond and students receive a shout out. These shout outs are displayed in the office window; and a student is chosen at the end of the week for a prize. This helps motivate students to be "caught being good." Teachers make it a priority to recognize desired behavior often to encourage those types of behavior.

Our district has provided us with support staff that is available not only for academics, but also for social and emotional needs. Students are given the opportunity to visit with a social worker or counselor to discuss what is going on in their life. The counselor also meets with whole group classes every 2 weeks.

Additionally, the district has created a wellness committee to help support our staff. We have been given access to the EAP (Employee Assistance Program). This includes a 24/7/365 call center, short term counseling, legal referrals and financial referrals. They have also provided healthy snack options in the workroom as well as tea and filtered water.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Valley Heights is in a small rural area where two communities value, support and encourage involvement from families and community members. Teachers initiate communication with families early in the school year. Before school starts, we have a Back to School Night in which students and their families can come in to meet their teachers and drop off their school supplies. This eases anxiety for the first day of school by meeting their teacher and not having the unknown of the first day of school. Teachers give their contact information at this time.

Every teacher in our building has a classroom website that can be accessed from our district website with information about the classroom. Classroom teachers use ClassDojo, which tracks both positive and negative behaviors in the classroom. Families are encouraged to sign up for an account as well to be able to track how their child is behaving at school. This is also a place for teachers and families to communicate through a messenger. Teachers also post to our district Facebook page with updates about what is going on in the classroom. Our district has a phone app to send out notifications to families and community members. This app is also a place to post news, events, notifications, etc. Some teachers send home newsletters with information about what is going on at school as well as upcoming dates and events to keep them informed about what is to come.

In both fall and spring, we hold school-wide parent/teacher conferences where we strive to meet with 100% of the families from our classrooms. Here, teachers share data and academic information with parents as well as have conversations about how we can better meet the needs of their child. Valley Heights has a Site Council that is composed of teachers, families, administrators and community members. The Site Council plays an important role in decision-making, and helps develop, review, and evaluate school improvement

programs.

Teachers at Valley Heights feel it is vital to provide data based on student achievement as well as tools parents can use at home to help their child. A lot of times these tools are games and activities that make learning an enjoyable experience for everyone. We encourage family engagement by providing data, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), and BEAM (Be Excited About Math) nights. At the data nights, we provide FastBridge data to parents and explain to them what the reports mean for their child. During the STEM and BEAM nights, we create and share games and activities that include math, science and engineering in fun and engaging ways.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development occurs in a variety of avenues at Valley Heights Elementary. Student data is reviewed and discussed during Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to drive professional development. Staff professional development needs are also identified through other means, such as staff surveys, needs assessments, eWalkThrough data, and input from outside assistance teams and individuals.

Collaborative discussions at PLCs are the main core in identifying professional development needs. Student data is examined to direct our professional development. Valley Heights Elementary has sixteen early release days during the school year that are devoted to PLCs. The PLCs are designed to examine Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) assessment data, state and local assessment data, and survey data. Collaborative discussions are held between teachers, staff, administration, and instructional coaches. This collaboration lends to assigning students to interventions that allow for more specific, intense instruction. Benchmark assessment and progress monitoring data are used with the end goal being student improvement. Many teachers and administrators have attended National PLC conferences to learn the proper ways to operate data driven PLCs.

The implementation of the MTSS model has created a great need for professional development. Six days have been added to our school calendar for MTSS professional development. Valley Heights Elementary has partnered with TASN (Technical Assistance Systems Network) to provide staff professional development in the area of reading, mathematics, and social/emotional skills.

Student data showed that there was a need to improve reading throughout the school district. Valley Heights Elementary chose to focus on English Language Arts (ELA). The ELA core curriculum was examined, and a new ELA curriculum was adopted. Professional development was needed and provided so an understanding of the new curriculum could be obtained. Presenters, knowledgeable of the new curriculum, provided professional development on campus for staff. In addition, teachers participated in several off campus professional development trainings. Curriculum and reading specialists have provided on-site professional development of staff. These coaches have been added to the staff at Valley Heights Elementary. Instructional coaches attend webinars, workshops and conferences. The knowledge obtained at these events are then shared with staff to enhance professional development.

Valley Heights Elementary at Blue Rapids is currently involved in an adoption of a new math curriculum. As with ELA, professional development will be provided with the new math curriculum.

To increase our delivery and understanding of the social emotional needs of our students, many staff members have attended workshops on this subject. Teachers attended a poverty simulation at a nearby district. This professional development opportunity provided insight to all attendees on the challenges many of our students face at home and in the community before even stepping onto school grounds. High attendance at Ruby Payne workshops showed the dedication our staff members have to help our students not only in academics, but with social emotional challenges too.

Administrative eWalkThroughs have provided data showing a need for professional development in the area of differentiated instruction. We will soon be implementing professional development in this area.

4. School Leadership:

Valley Heights Elementary believes in a shared leadership philosophy. Students, staff, teachers, administration, site council, Board of Education members and parents all play active leadership roles at Valley Heights Elementary. Each morning begins with students reciting the Five Guiding Principles, their leadership philosophy. During morning announcements a student leads the Five Guiding Principles over the intercom as the entire student body participates. The Five Guiding Principles are: I am responsible for my actions, I show respect and courtesy for myself and others, I contribute to a positive learning environment, I strive for excellence, I leave it better than I found it. . There is a culture among the students that embraces a safe environment in which everyone can learn and help others to learn and succeed.

Teachers are the most important leaders in Valley Heights Elementary. Teachers show leadership by enhancing the lives of their students and their peers. By working cooperatively and collaboratively with each other, teachers become instructional leaders who have high expectations for student success. Teachers first and foremost establish relationships with students. Those relationships extend on into the family unit and even the community.

Administration has a very important part in the overall leadership at Valley Heights Elementary. The building principal, along with input from other staff, develops the agenda and presides over our Professional Learning Communities (PLC). The PLCs are the main hub for collaboration between teachers, staff and administration. At the top of every PLC agenda the Norms are listed that everyone follows to ensure a structured and productive PLC.

The building principal also participates in the MTSS process for academics as well as social and emotional skills.

A well-informed site council works with the school and the Board of Education in maintaining open lines of communication. The Board of Education approves policies that have the best interest of students as their first priority.

Building Leadership Team (BLT) members exhibit leadership by keeping everyone focused on student growth, achievement and well-being. The BLT is the first group to approve new ideas and instructional practices and intervention protocols.

District Leadership Team (DLT) examines recommendations from BLT and sets overarching goals and leadership priorities. DLT members keep the best interest of all stakeholders in mind when considering new or revising existing educational programs.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Implementation of MTSS Instruction

The Valley Heights Elementary School has an intense focus on the achievement and success of our students at all levels. As a result, the benchmarking and progress monitoring formative assessment tools have consistently bridged the gaps among students. At regular intervals throughout the school year, students participate in these assessments, which include collaboratively discussed weekly and unit assessments. From these assessment results, students are grouped according to need, and receive tailored instruction that ranges from intense remediation, reinforcement, extension, and exploratory enrichment. Over the last three years, we have consistently and proficiently implemented these rigorous MTSS strategies among all staff across the board in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Therefore, we have challenged ourselves to achieve a common goal, which was to meet students' needs with differentiated instruction. The entire school schedule is structured to allow for these school-wide interventions, and it is all hands-on deck to provide the interventions. Those who are involved with taking part of intervention instruction include, the school library and media specialists, classroom teachers, special education teacher and paraprofessionals, kitchen staff, and physical education and music instructors. Students enjoy this targeted attention, and because of the flexible grouping, they are never stigmatized by membership in any one group.

We are currently making adequate progress towards our MTSS goal of having 80% of our students at benchmark. We review our benchmark data after each assessment period, and write goals for how to improve our instruction. Our staff also monitors student progress weekly to inform instructional decisions. Using this data, we are continuously reviewing our curriculum and materials to ensure that we are reaching each students' needs.

We believe that these "intervention blocks" via our MTSS instruction are a key piece in Valley Heights' most recent successes. Through our formative tools that are used for grouping as well as our summative assessments utilized during core instruction, the data has shown that these interventions are effective in both the long and short-term goals. It is through these interventions that we are addressing the achievement of our subgroup populations and supporting our already proficient students in their quest to exceed the proficiency standard. One of the biggest lessons learned is when our students and staff work close together it ensures accomplishment of the Valley Heights goal.