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

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 10047 Diamond Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Cadet   MO   63630-9581
City   State   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Washington County

Telephone (573) 438-4982   Fax (573) 438-8814
Web site/URL
https://www.kingston.k12.mo.us/applications/web_cms/index.php?siteid=2   E-mail   mccaul.alex@k-14.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*Mr. Alex McCaul
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)   E-mail mccaul.alex@k-14.org

District Name Kingston K-14   Tel.   (573) 438-4982
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 Mrs. Robin Portell
(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   2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   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

   [X] 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	33	28	61
4	27	30	57
5	42	34	76
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	102	92	194

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school: 0 % Asian
                                           0 % Black or African American
                                           0 % Hispanic or Latino
                                           0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                          99 % White
                                           1 % 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: 24%

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

The Kingston Elementary is a small rural school located in an area that does not offer a lot of job opportunities for the parents of the district. Therefore there are multiple families that reside in the same house due to financial hardships. As the economy changes parents of the district tend to move to locations where they can find employment that does not require them to travel an hour to reach their workplace.

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 *to* the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	24
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	44
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	182
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.24
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	24

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: 100 %
       Total number students who qualify: 194

8. Students receiving special education services: <u>13</u> %

    <u>25</u> 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>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>7</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed	<u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>9</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>3</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: <u>8</u>

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.	10
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1   <u>19:1</u>

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%	95%	96%	98%
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 X

    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 ensure that every student will experience success. We will do that by providing an environment that encourages everyone to keep learning, dream boldly, inspires pride, and offers support to all students, staff, and community members.

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

Kingston Elementary School is part of the Kingston K-14 School District located in Cadet, Missouri, a "town" which consists only of a post office and minimal scattered gas stations with limited convenience supplies. The school is located in a rural area between two small towns ten miles away in either direction. The school has few businesses on which to rely for support: three gas stations, a couple small manufacturers, and the recent addition of a Dollar General. Cadet has been listed as one of the ten poorest communities on, "Only in Your State" in 2015. Parents who work typically commute sixty miles to larger cities to obtain employment that can financially support their family. The Community Eligibility Programs allow all students to be provided with breakfast and lunch free of charge. The district also provides an after-school program for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. At the program, students are provided a safe and secure environment, served with dinner, given homework assistance, enrichment activities, and then bussed home.

The Kingston K-14 School District truly functions as the heart of the community. Established about sixty years ago, there were fourteen satellite schools that came together to form the one and only school in the Kingston K-14 School District; originally kindergarten through eighth grade, the school was referred to as Cruise School. In 1996, a high school was opened on the same campus which allows students to earn a high school diploma from Kingston. Over the years, Cruise Elementary was renamed as Kingston Elementary.

The district has faced many challenges throughout the last twenty years. In 2000, the district faced the loss of state accreditation along with suffering from leadership and community support issues. There have been highs and lows for the district, but with the evolution of change, Kingston Elementary has become a strong component of the Kingston K-14 School District. Over the past fifteen years, Kingston Elementary has faced many challenges. The building has had nine different administrators during the years. The most current administrator has been the leader of the building for the last eight years. Since then, staff turnover has decreased from hiring five new teachers a year to hiring one, or even no new staff per year during the last five years. It is through this stability that the elementary has been able to continue to make true strides in the instruction and achievement of students.

During the last ten years, the elementary building has learned to realize that the curriculum of the building is ever evolving. No longer is the curriculum something to put on a shelf and never looked at except to wipe the dust off of it. When teachers were challenged to become curriculum writers, they become knowledgeable of the curriculum that they were being challenged to teach. It is through that knowledge and understanding that teachers are able to help students achieve academic success.
It has been through this process that the building has realized that students needed more supports than what were previously being offered. In the last ten years, the elementary building has worked to increase tiered support for struggling students. Both Title 1 Reading and Math programs have changed throughout the years. Title 1 Reading teachers have incorporated both writing and test taking skills into the classroom as part of the push-in instruction that is completed. The Title 1 Math teacher offers support to low achievers as well as high achievers during their classes and supportive instruction. These teachers also meet with grade levels teachers and have open, frank discussions to address the needs of these students. Educators then work together not to make their jobs the easiest, but instead to challenge themselves to meet the needs of all students.

With the stability of leadership, new programs have evolved that focus not only on academics, but also addresses the incorporation of emotional,social, and cultural opportunities. The Elementary building has become an active member of the National Elementary Honor Society. In addition, administration established an advisory time for students in the building. To elaborate, students participate in weekly groups that focus on social-emotional topics such as bullying, being a good friend, and anger management. In addition, students can attend the after school program to join clubs such as Future Me, Cooking Club, Girl Scouts, Boys Scouts, and Culture Club. These programs along with others give students opportunities to learn and develop as well-rounded individuals focusing not only for the present, but also into the future as adults in society.

Kingston Elementary has evolved from a time long ago when students experienced competition to just be "average." Since that time, a new attitude prevails such that the school, staff, and students now strive to be trend setters by being the best school not only in our region, but also across the state of Missouri. Students no longer whisper the name of the school in which they attend because of embarrassment, but now proudly announce, "I am a Kingston Cougar!"

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Kingston Elementary has an understanding that curriculum is ever changing and evolving. When the Common Core Standards were introduced in 2009, the school began the transition from the Missouri Grade Level Expectations. The building worked with the district to begin the process of dissecting and investigating the new standards that were addressed by the Common Core Standards. In 2016, the Missouri Learning Standards were approved and the educators of the building have continued developing curriculum.

The teachers work in teams at their individual grade levels to identify the priority and supporting standards, create a pacing guide, and develop lesson plans. The teachers meet with other grade levels in the building and district to ensure all concepts are being taught. During this time, the teachers of the grade levels discuss how to teach the concepts to the students in order to meet the different learning styles of all the students in the class.

As the elementary building, third through fifth grade utilize specific resources for teaching the Missouri Learning Standards. Specifically, teachers incorporate both whole and small group literacy instruction for reading and writing processes. Students who are identified as below level readers through previous state assessment scores, retention, benchmark, fluency, and Lexile scores attend a small group reading class with two Title 1 Reading teachers. The Title 1 Reading teachers also conduct whole-group mini-lessons in each individual classroom weekly to reinforce the writing process.

In order to address the math curriculum, teachers not only reflect on the curriculum process, but also look for strategies on how to make learning meaningful for students. Primarily, teachers look for hands on learning activities utilizing manipulatives that can help students mentally understand the mathematical processes they are learning. Teachers conduct quick formative assessments during instruction and then also include small group instruction for students who needs additional instruction. Furthermore, the building also has a Title 1 Math teacher that is utilized in each one of the classrooms to help with additional understanding of the materials. The Title 1 Math teacher also works with students in small group instruction as needed for the materials that are being learned. Finally, the building utilizes a specific problem solving approach that helps students understand how to solve multi-step math word problems which allows them to identify the question the problem is going to solve and the various operations used to solve the problem.

Science instruction is supported with the science curriculum that has been created by the building teachers. The activities that are completed focus on hands on activities that allow students to conduct experiments that help with understanding the Scientific Method. Students in each level complete experiments and science is also unified with reading and/or math instruction in order to allow for cross-curricular instruction. The third graders in the building also incorporate weekly STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) enrichment activities in their reading instruction to allow students to explore and gain a foundation for the understanding of scientific concepts. Students in fifth grade complete not only science experiments, but also create unique original animals that have a multitude of characteristics that would help them adapt to different environments.

When meeting the needs of the Social Studies curriculum, teachers at each grade level focus on the individual standards of the grade level. Classrooms in the building create a classroom Bill of Rights allowing students to participate in establishing rules within the classrooms. Teachers also utilize technology to allow for students to conduct research and create projects that support what students are learning within the classroom. Finally, teachers integrate reading and social studies together to help students not only understand the history of the country, but also to further address the non-fiction component of reading comprehension.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The development of curriculum at Kingston Elementary includes not only the academic areas of reading, mathematics, science, and social studies but also, the arts and physical education components are included in the school's curriculum writing. Teachers have also met with the other teachers of the district to ensure all the learning standards are being taught in an interdisciplinary fashion. The students in the elementary building participate weekly in the arts, physical education, and library.

All students in the elementary building participate in an arts class weekly. During part of the year, students learn and are assessed on the different components of music including creating music, reading music, and playing music. Additionally, students in the third grade perform a Christmas program for the community. Students also have the opportunity to participate in an Art Choice Program. During the art class, students have the opportunity to participate in an art center of their choice: sketching, painting, collage, sculpture, or fiber arts. Students pick their selected center and then work on an art project to show their understanding of art concepts which have been studied and display mastery of those skills.

The physical education/health teachers have also taken on the endeavor of revamping the curriculum utilized within these classes. Students in third grade have physical education including health lessons twice a week, while the fourth and fifth grade have physical education/health class three times a week. The lessons emphasize on teaching the importance of exercise, health, and nutrition. Teachers focus on not only the mechanics of specific sports such as basketball or volleyball, but also what it means to be part of a team showing positive character whether winning or losing. Furthermore, the health and nutrition component is addressed by studying the different systems within the body and learning how each system depends and works with each other. In addition to these classes, the building also works with the local college extension office which provides a guest speaker who reinforces the importance of nutrition. The guest speaker provides students opportunities to create healthy and nutritious foods during the presentation.

Another equally important extracurricular component for students in the elementary is participating in a library class weekly in the third grade and bi-weekly in the fourth and fifth grade. The librarian incorporates the importance of reading comprehension and exposure to other reading genres including: fiction, poetry, non-fiction text, drama, and plays. The librarian provides students opportunities to complete research and create projects using the new-found knowledge the students have discovered.

Another significant instructional component involves the implementation of technology. The elementary building has ten classrooms: with three classes each in the third and fourth grades and four classes in the fifth grade. Each of these classrooms have class sets of Chrome books. Classrooms in the building also have four stationary student computers. The building also has a computer lab with an additional computer cart that can be utilized by any teacher, whether classroom, arts, or physical education. Though there is not a specific technology curriculum, through the daily utilization of technology in the classroom, students are learning different aspects of technology programs. Students are practicing keyboarding skills to increase their speed when working on projects and daily tasks. Students are also learning how to use Google applications including Forms, Sheets, Slides and Docs. Students are also conducting research over topics to incorporate the integration of technology with the core areas of math, English language arts, science, and social studies. The luxury of having so much technology within the building is the amount of independence and exploration that students can experience in conjunction with their education.

Students in the building also participate in a program called Cougar Connections. This is a student advisory time for all students that allows students to interact with their peers and teachers from other grade levels. The students have the same advisory teacher throughout their time as an elementary student. During the advisory time, teachers utilize lesson plans provided by the school counselor that focus on teamwork, friendship, respect, bullying, communication, and goal setting. Those lessons are then further enhanced and supported by the school counselor who teaches counseling lessons to the students in each classroom monthly.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

When trying to ensure academic success for students, educators have to determine the most effective ways to meet the needs of the students. Educators have to reflect on instructional methods, interventions, and assessments when determining how to help each child reach success.

Kingston Elementary takes pride in utilizing multiple approaches to ensure the students maximize academic growth.

The teachers in each of the classrooms provide many different instructional approaches to meet the needs of each student. First, teachers begin lessons with an opening question or problem to gauge students' prior knowledge before teaching the lesson. Once that part of the lesson is complete, teachers introduce the new concept and build upon the students' prior knowledge. During this instructional time, students are not just sitting at their desks, but become active participants in their learning and the class. To stimulate engaged learning, students utilize individual dry-erase boards, small group discussions, and technology programs such as Kahoot. These methods, along with many others that are utilized, allow teachers the opportunity to continually assess students throughout the lesson to check for student understanding.

Once teachers have completed whole group instruction, they assign students either individual or small group practice activities. It is during this time that teachers work with groups of students who need further interventions to reach mastery. These small group lessons allow teachers to assess and give immediate feedback on work that is being completed. Students who need further interventions to attain success may attend tutoring either before school, after-school, or both.

The elementary building involves daily interventions for students which are provided by the Title I Reading and Math teachers. For reading intervention, students who are reading below grade level leave the classroom and attend a class supported by two Title I Reading teachers. This intervention supports ten to twelve of the lowest readers at each grade level by utilizing small groups in the Title I classrooms. One of these teachers reviews word decoding skills, phonetics, and pronunciation usage of language. The other Title I teacher focuses on vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension strategies. As students make improvements, new assessments are administered and students are re-evaluated to determine if they still need the additional support.

In math, students are also served through a Title I teacher. This teacher works with each classroom to push into the classroom to help with small group instruction and support other students in the classroom. If students continues struggling, the Title I Math teacher will work with those students individually. The Title I Math teacher is also utilized to support high achieving students. The teacher will pull these students out of class and work with them on challenging mathematical problems that tie to real-life situations.

Further interventions are also in place for students who continue to struggle after receiving specific instructional support. Students who need further instruction are referred to our special education department. Students who meet the requirements for Individual Education Plans (IEP) are supported through our special education department. These students are taught grade level curriculum by a Special Education teacher with additional support from a paraprofessional.

Additional procedures are in place to accommodate high performing students who are referred to the school's gifted program. Once students are referred, testing is completed to determine if they qualify for the program. Students who qualify attend a weekly class with a specific teacher. This teacher challenges students to think differently and incorporate technology into their learning. Students are presented real-life problems to address and for which they create solutions. Furthermore, students generate other creations such as informational school videos and projects which display their research results and individual areas of interest.

In order to help to ensure success for the students of the building, teachers also utilize the concept of mastery learning after each topic or unit assessment. As a grade level, teachers analyze student assessment scores and then group students according to those scores. Students who have shown mastery are grouped

together and complete enrichment activities that build upon the topic assessed. Teachers incorporate STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) into challenging tasks and encourage students to complete activities such as designing models of houses built to sustain hurricane strength winds, creating roller coasters, or the landing gear on a space shuttle. Meanwhile, students who did not show mastery are retaught by the other grade level teachers and receive specific feedback addressing the specific skills students were lacking so they too can feel success and show mastery of the skill.

At the beginning of the school year, students complete many different reading assessments. Students complete the Scholastic Reading Inventory, the Fontas and Pinnell Benchmark, a fluency test, and the Pearson beginning of the year assessment. Once these tests are completed, the building principal, Title I Reading teachers, and grade level teachers determine the lowest performing students at each grade level. These students are then selected for the Title I Reading class. Students are then reassessed quarterly to determine student growth and make adjustments to the class roster as needed. Students who are identified as below grade level are placed on reading improvement plans and meetings with parents are held throughout the year.

When analyzing the math program, all students complete a Pearson beginning of the year math assessment. This assesses students' mastery of concepts that were taught during the previous school year. This data is then utilized to help determine math tutoring groups and small group math supports.
In order to maintain Kingston Elementary as a high performing school, teachers actively reflect upon and improve their instructional practices. Teachers consistently analyze their teaching methods looking for ways to keep students actively engaged in learning.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

Kingston Elementary works hard to motivate the students in the building. First and foremost, the staff of the building make connections with students to ensure that students know they are loved and accepted into the school family. Staff members assume roles besides being teachers; they substitute as parents, counselors, beauticians, or cheerleaders who encourage students to reach and feel success. When the students succeed, the staff succeeds.

Motivating students begins with teachers of the building actively reflecting on how their instructional practices impact and engage students on the learning process. For example, teachers incorporate technology daily to give students methods to direct their own learning. Another strategy to inspire motivation is to utilize other students for peer-tutoring and give them the opportunities to not only be the student but also be the teacher. Additionally, teachers also use manipulatives and classroom tools to engage students. For instance, using dry erase boards actively engages students in lessons and allows teachers to quickly assess a student's understanding of the objective being taught.

Through connections that are made with the educators of the building, students strive to reach success. Goals and challenges are set for the students to help push them to achieve the greatest individual potential. Specifically, when setting goals for students in the building, students are given two options: to reach the goal by meeting a minimum option, or a beat the goal option for which they must reach a higher minimum requirement. This helps students at all ability levels reach their own levels of success and pushes others to reach a little higher and not just settle for the minimum. In the classroom, teachers have set a proficiency level for students to show mastery on assessments. Students who show mastery with a score of 80% or higher are given enrichment activities to complete, while those who did not reach mastery are retaught the concepts and reassessed. Further instruction is also provided before and after school to help meet the individual needs of the students. Besides establishing goals, student successes are celebrated with incentives such as trips to see the principal, other teachers, special lunches, fun activity time, or positive phone calls to parents. Lots of positives with support for success truly motivates our students.

The school culture creates an environment where teachers feel valued by making them an important part of the school. The building has currently started professional development on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The building had been through this process ten years previously. With the reestablishment of PLC's, teachers have the opportunity to have their voices heard. It is through these opportunities that teachers are able to work together, consider each other's opinions, get to know each other, and create a supportive culture.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

Although the school is between two other towns, each town is miles away and have their own schools in the community, therefore the school functions as a support for the community. The school has established programs to not only help the students but also to provide resources of support for parents and the community. Staff members support family literacy nights, an after-school program with an adult education component, and parent communication about community events and resources.

The school provides Family Literacy Nights for the parents and the students. During this time, students and parents come to school after school hours and complete activities relating to English Language Arts, Math, and Science. This time provides parents with opportunities to interact with their children as well as with the staff of the building. Using enrichment, teachers explain to parents the importance of the activities and also how to help their children understand the different methods of achieving independent academic success through such activities. The school also works with district partners such as the county library, Parents-As-Teachers, and the local college extension office to provide parents with further supports of library, literacy, education, and nutrition.

Students of the school are also provided a free after-school program. The district has had an after-school program for the past fifteen years and received a grant this year which will extend the program for five more years. The students who attend the program are provided a dinner, homework assistance, remediation, and enrichment activities. Additionally, the program partners with the local community college, library, state park, college extension office, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts in which periodically each partner provides supplemental activities for students. Significantly, the program staff consists of regular school day teachers who are well qualified to provide students with extended instruction. When the program ends for the evening, students can either be picked up by guardians or use the bus transportation that is provided.

Another key function of the after-school program is to provide support for the parents of the community. First, the program provides a safe environment for their children. The program also has guest speakers to provide support and learning opportunities for parents. Besides that, parents have access to the computers in the library and may receive assistance with computer skills, resume writing, or other needed areas as indicated by parents. Furthermore, parents have opportunities to work with teachers so they can have assistance in helping their children with their homework. Specifically, there is a teacher available to help parents understand the different homework assignments of the children. Parents are also invited to serve on the advisory board for the after-school program to allow for parental input.

The building communicates with parents and the community in many different and ways. First, the building makes use of different methods of social media including Facebook and Twitter. The district has a webpage along with sending publications in to the local papers. The building also publishes a weekly newsletter that is sent home with all students, which includes important upcoming events, lunch menus, and learning objectives that will be taught in each grade level for the upcoming week. Students in the building also have a three week progress report that is sent home in addition to quarterly report cards. Finally, students are provided with a planner that allows for daily communication between parents and teachers to support strong relationships.

All these equally important components are factors working to engage community members to be more involved with the school. Subsequently, families are more directly involved with the overall educational processes of their children.

3. **Professional Development:**

Professional development is an important means of support for staff members of a school. At Kingston Elementary, administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals have opportunities to sustain active learning in their own educational growth. In order to support the professional development of the staff, there are multiple opportunities provided consisting of Professional Learning Communities, attending conferences, and furthering educational growth through book studies and team projects.

The building actively participates in a Professional Learning Community. To elaborate, a group of seven staff members participate in trainings throughout the school year. The sessions focus on revisiting the mission, vision, and values of the building and district. As staff subsequently participate as members of different professional learning teams throughout the building. These groups have identified SMART goals to help improve specific aspects of the building. Teachers can then attend conferences, webinars, and book studies to improve student learning and the building culture, as related to social skills and emotional development.

Not only do teachers focus on SMART goals as a group, but teachers also create individual professional development plans. These plans are created by each individual teacher and are monitored at the middle and end of the school year to track teacher and/or student growth. Teachers attend conferences, webinars, and complete book studies in collaboration with other staff members. Teachers also schedule quarterly observations of other teachers within the building and district to experience the use of other instructional methods, engagement strategies, and classroom management. Finally, teachers have opportunities to teach at other grade levels or classrooms to model and peer teach new methods or other instructional methods for teachers.

New staff members of the building, whether administrators or teachers, participate in a two year mentoring

program. Administrators meet monthly with mentors and discuss learning practices, culture challenges, and other educational aspects. New teachers have mentors who meet with the teachers to discuss challenges, instructional practices, and behavioral strategies. Teachers are also invited to attend new teacher training each month with other district teachers as well as with the curriculum director. These meetings provide new teachers the opportunities to gain support and receive professional learning sessions.

The building teachers are given opportunities to attend conferences provided by the regional professional development corporation. Teachers can also attend conferences held by larger organizations. In order for a teacher to attend professional development, there is a specific process that must be followed which begins with submitting a professional development request to the district's professional development committee. There are guidelines in place stating that the request should support teacher growth, instructional practices, classroom management strategies, and support the district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. Once teachers attend the conference, teachers come back to the school and share their new-found knowledge with the rest of the staff.

Staff members of the district are also given opportunities to further college credits and attain other educational degrees. The school works with colleges to provide an opportunity for teachers to take college courses held at the district buildings. Teachers are also reimbursed a specific amount for each college credit that is earned.

The opportunities that teachers choose to utilize have to be approved by the district's professional development committee, building administration, and superintendent to ensure that the professional development that will occur will give teachers the opportunities to increase their own learning and continue their own educational growth.

4. **School Leadership:**

In order for the elementary school to ensure that the school functions in a successful and supportive nature for all school stakeholders, the school has a shared leadership philosophy. The underlying premise is that leaders can no longer expect or demand unquestioned subordination from teachers. Rather effective leadership creates an environment where everyone works together to ensure initiatives are being created and fully implemented.

The district of the school has a school board who approves and monitors policies for the district and works to support the school community and stakeholders. The district has a superintendent who maintains the daily operations of the school and implements the policies of the district. Additionally, there is an administrative team which includes a Director of Curriculum and Instruction, building administrators, assistant principals, and a Director of Special Education. These groups work together to support the district's mission and vision while ensuring academic success for the students and staff.

The administrative leader at Kingston Elementary realizes that leadership has many different styles and forms and therefore has established a leadership team. This team is made up of one person from each of the Professional Learning Groups that works within the building. This leadership team discusses the challenges and celebrates the positives events which occur within the building. Furthermore, the building leadership team also meets with the district leadership team which is made up of teachers throughout the district. The teams of teachers work to help create a school culture that is student centered and supportive.

The building principal also collaborates weekly with each grade level team of teachers. During this time, the building leader collaborates with teachers addressing student concerns, whether academic or behavioral. The group also analyzes data from assessments and reflects on grade level assessment scores. This collaboration also provided time to determine desired resources, materials, or teacher training in order to support both teacher and student development. The leadership style of the principal at this time is a coaching style. The grade level teams and principal work together to improve any problem areas which allows the staff to focus on specific needs of each grade level and the building as a whole.

In order for the building to reach high levels of achievement, the building leader has worked to create

shared leadership. Specifically, the established procedures allow teachers to be risk-takers who are willing to make decisions and take action. Consequently, the building functions more effectively with staff assuming leadership roles at all levels and working as one team.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Kingston Elementary works diligently to ensure that students achieve academic success. One practice that the building utilizes is data analysis. This concept has evolved over the last five to six years to help both student and teacher growth. When the building first began analyzing data, staff members analyzed data that was released from state mandated assessments. Teachers would study the data that showed the concepts that were being assessed to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, teachers would then look at pacing guides to compare how much instructional time was being spent for each of the concepts being assessed.

The analysis of this data revealed some shortcomings for the building. Teachers and the administrator were analyzing past data instead of data that could change current instruction and student understanding of the concepts. Therefore, teachers began creating and having students complete benchmark assessments. This assessment allows teachers to assess students over what they have been taught and identify students' strengths and weaknesses.

Once teachers continued gaining confidence and realizing the benefits of analyzing data, they moved into analyzing topic and unit assessments. This is where the building has achieved the most success. When teachers assess students, they now have the ability to look at the assessments to monitor what specific questions were missed and by which group of students. The teachers in the building then utilize this information to determine if their teaching methods meet the needs of not only their whole class but also the individual students in the classroom.

After teachers have analyzed their own classroom data, they then collaborate with the other teachers at the same grade level. During collaboration, they discuss student scores and the concepts for which the students showed mastery or lack thereof. This leads to reflective conversations where teachers evaluate student performance as related to the individual classroom instructional practices of each group member. If a specific classroom has outperformed the other classrooms, the teachers discuss various methods used to teach the concepts in each of the classrooms.

Once teachers have met as a grade level, they then determine together as a grade level how to meet the needs of individuals within the whole group of students based on those assessment scores. Once the analyzation of data is complete, teachers identify students who have mastered the concepts taught and those students then complete enrichment activities. Students who did not reach mastery are retaught by the teacher whose students performed at the highest level, and students are then reassessed to check again for comprehension of concepts for which they previously lacked understanding. These students are also offered the support of before and after school tutoring.

Data analysis has proven to be an invaluable strategy employed by the building. It has helped teachers identify or recognize know their own individual teaching strengths and weaknesses which helps ensure they meet the varied needs of the students in a grade level. Teachers of the grade level no longer look at only the results of their self-contained twenty students, but rather focus on the results for the whole grade level of sixty students.