



## **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):
- 17 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 6 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 4 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 27 TOTAL

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

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	50	40	90
<b>1</b>	40	43	83
<b>2</b>	52	33	85
<b>3</b>	38	59	97
<b>4</b>	48	45	93
<b>5</b>	54	48	102
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	282	268	550

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 8 % Asian
  - 11 % Black or African American
  - 12 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 8 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 35 % White
  - 26 % 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.

Our mobility rate at Evergreen is over 15% due to two factors. Some Evergreen families find themselves in situations that forcibly remove their family from their home. Some of the factors that attribute to this are a shortage of jobs, poor living conditions, drug and/or alcohol abuse, or eviction due to not paying rent. Many of our families come from a home where multiple families and/or generations are living together in order to make ends meet. They often will stay with a family member for a short period of time until they are asked to leave and/or find more permanent housing of their own. There are also those situations that draw a population to a new place. Some of our families will receive job prospects including military transfers, improved living conditions, or family ties that pull them toward a new place and away from our community.

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	56
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	70
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	126
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	522
(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: 18 %  
101 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Moldovan, Filipino, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Russian, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 65 %  
Total number students who qualify: 355

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
56 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>9</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>5</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>23</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>13</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: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 16:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	92%	90%	91%	91%	92%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

Our philosophy is embodied in the belief that every student will be successful. Our mission states: “Every student without excuse and without exception will be proficient in reading, language, and math.”

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**

---

From the moment Evergreen students enroll to the moment they transition to middle school, our mission statement is routinely conveyed to students and their families. Our mission at Evergreen Elementary states that, "Every student without excuse and without exception will be proficient in reading, language, and math."

From the school's inception, Evergreen has been the hub of a very tightly knit community. Originally built in 1979 for a neighborhood of single family starter homes, the school has gone through many changes in the last forty years; however, it has continued to be the glue that holds the community together. Located just south of Tacoma, Washington, Evergreen is situated in an unincorporated suburban area of Pierce County, approximately ten miles from Joint Base Lewis McChord. Spanaway is mainly comprised of densely populated, low income housing, which includes many multi-generational families living together. Our community consists of a very diverse population due to race, socioeconomic status, and languages spoken. Sixty-five percent of our student population identify as a race other than caucasian. English is not the primary language for nearly 20% of our population.

In 2005-2006, Evergreen Elementary was a school that had thirty-three cells to meet standard on our Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Report. Never being able to meet all thirty-three cells, the building was in its third step of AYP. Building decisions were made by administration only, there were divisions among staff members, and trust was at an all-time low. We housed special programs including English Language Learning and self-contained classes, our free and reduced lunch rates were above seventy percent, and we used these challenges to make excuses for our failing school. We were ranked fifteenth out of fifteen elementary schools in our district, and staff morale was at an all-time low. Knowing our staff was tired of working hard but not effectively, a group of staff members attended a No Excuses (NEU) conference in San Diego, California. The mindset of NEU struck a note with the staff who attended. While waiting at the airport to return to Washington, we developed a plan to implement school-wide changes based on the NEU systems we had just learned. By spring of that year, the leadership team worked collaboratively with 100% staff consensus to earn Evergreen the first No Excuses University designation in our school district.

Of all the changes we have implemented, the creation of our eight exceptional systems has proven to be the most significant to our school. The exceptional systems are the catalyst for all decisions within the building.

**Culture of Universal Achievement:** The foundation of our systems lies within the belief that all students can and will be successful when staff, students, and parents work together. Our belief that all students can learn impacts our teaching and the students' learning.

**Collaboration:** We began a process of routine, purposeful collaboration based on data driven decisions. As we worked collaboratively, students sensed the program coherence and consistency of expectations, which lead to improved behavior and achievement.

**Standards Alignment:** We realized that curriculum and pacing guides alone could not provide students with the rigor necessary to meet or exceed standards. We placed an emphasis on aligning all lessons to Washington State Common Core State Standards. Teachers looked critically at every moment of instruction to maximize instructional time and remove all non-standard related activities.

**Assessment:** Common formative and summative assessments, based on standards, became the foundation for teaching and reteaching. Teachers created these assessments collaboratively, across grade levels, to ensure consistency in teaching and learning.

**Data Management:** Transparency with data is of major importance at Evergreen. Data is displayed within the building, so students and visitors can see growth. Students know their levels of achievement and have set goals to meet or exceed the standard. Teachers use data in collaborative meetings to develop individualized and grade level plans for student growth.

Interventions: Through our effective use of data, Evergreen has created a three-tiered intervention plan for English Language Arts and Math. Twice daily, students participate in response to intervention (RTI), where they receive specific instruction geared to their level of proficiency. RTI is structured so every student, no matter their level of proficiency, receives challenging instruction to increase levels of mastery.

Character Counts: Along with our push for students to be academically successful, Evergreen implemented a system to increase the character of its students. It's a six-pillar system that includes trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

Building-wide Discipline Plan: We created a school wide discipline plan because lack of consistency and predictability was a sure way for many students to fail. Individual, grade level, and building behavior plans all tie together and work as one tiered system to support and encourage a positive culture at Evergreen.

Becoming a No Excuses University (NEU) has brought the staff of Evergreen Elementary together to celebrate successes and plan together for challenges. NEU serves as a stimulus for teachers to unite for a common goal - to make sure that every student meets or exceeds grade level standards. NEU encouraged us to create systems and provided a way for coordinating our efforts towards refining and expanding those systems to make them exceptional. Since the implementation of our eight systems, we have seen continued success with the number of students showing proficiency on building, district, and state assessments. By the end of 2013, we became the highest achieving elementary school in the Bethel School District, and we are proud to say that we have continued this success to this day. Some of our awards include the Washington State Achievement Award (2012, 2014, 2015, 2016), the School of Distinction Award (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016) and the National Title I Award (2017-18).

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

---

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

We at Evergreen Elementary use Bethel School District's Core Curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. Teachers have been trained to use materials incorporating the instructional shifts needed to meet standards. Our staff has been trained to use the adopted core curriculum for English Language Arts, which is the Pearson ReadyGen Literacy Program. Students are engaged through the use of balanced fiction and non-fiction books, close reading with appropriately complex text, small group and independent practice with student on-level text and connecting reading and writing. Foundational skills in kindergarten through fifth grade are supplemented based on student need and addressed in Response to Intervention at all levels. Data analysis of program assessments, district screeners and state assessments allow our teachers to embrace backward design and customization of core lessons to meet the needs of individual students. Realizing that independent reading wasn't valued by our students and families, but completely necessary to create lifelong learners, Evergreen adopted the use of Renaissance Learning's Accelerated Reader program to encourage a love of reading. All students have an individual goal based on their results from Renaissance's Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR). Students read at their individual levels and take tests on the books that they read. This has been a great way for us to promote independent reading and a way for us to acknowledge student growth and success through awards and recognition.

In 2014, we began using Eureka Math, also known as EngageNY, as our core math curriculum to support the teaching of the Common Core Standards. Teachers are highly knowledgeable regarding Common Core Standards and use assessment data to inform their instruction to meet the needs of all students. Lessons are prepared and customized based on both summative and formative student data. Lessons are sequenced to build students' concept development with increasing complexity and move from concrete to abstract models. Teachers and administrators participate in professional learning to advance our mathematical understanding and gain successful teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners. As with reading, we have Response to Intervention (RtI) where students receive specific instruction geared to their level of proficiency. RtI is structured so every student, no matter their level of proficiency, receives challenging instruction to increase their level of mastery.

In 2016, Teachers Curriculum Institute (TCI) Bring Science Alive was adopted as the the core curriculum for science. It was adopted to create an engaging science environment where students are able to have a hands-on approach to science. It is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards. Teachers improve comprehension of a variety of scientific topics using science textbooks, online exploration, and engaging activities.

In addition, our social studies curriculum has a focus at each grade level: Kindergarten-My World, 1st grade-School and Families, 2nd grade-Neighborhoods, 3rd grade-Communities, 4th grade-Washington State History, 5th grade-United States History. Our social studies program is integrated within our reading, writing and science curriculums. Each year every student in grades 3rd-5th participate in a Classroom Based Assessment that broadens their civic awareness. This classroom based assessment is a valid way to assess the learning of the standards and help students gain the knowledge and skills authentic to engaged, informed citizenship.

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

Although Evergreen's focus is on reading, writing and math we recognize the value of other specialized curriculum in the social, emotional and academic development of each child. These areas can also be highly motivational for some students. For these reasons Evergreen prides itself in offering enriching extra curricular experiences.

The music program at Evergreen is an opportunity for students to explore their creativity and world cultures through instruments, movement, and a wide assortment of activities. Additionally, music is a place where

students get to make choices, allowing for artistic freedom, which is an important part of learning development. At Evergreen, every student goes to music at least once a week for forty-five minutes. Our students may begin playing a band or orchestra instrument in fifth grade, studying with a highly qualified orchestra or band specialist. Students usually begin their band experience on the flute, clarinet, trumpet, or trombone, and their orchestra experience on violin, viola, cello, or string bass.

Through a district partnership with the Broadway Center for the Performing Arts in Tacoma, our school offers an after-school theatre program called The LENS Project. LENS offers our students an arts-centered, extended after-school program that empowers them while developing empathy, negotiation, and self-esteem to improve relationships and personal growth. LENS classes gives our students an opportunity to articulate their hopes and concerns and to develop their personal voice, fostering respect among participants, and using innovative content and delivery by professional teaching artists. The program is supported by the Pierce County Community Services' Youth Violence Prevention Grant.

The elements of art and the principals of design are taught in art classes by highly qualified visual arts specialist for forty-five minutes a week. Through drawing and other mediums our students learn concepts and skills in a concentrated way. Each year our students participate in a building and district art show.

Evergreen's library and technology specialists work in a collaborative effort to fully integrate into the school's curriculum, ensuring that the entire educational community effectively uses and produces information and ideas as well as develops a life-long desire to read for pleasure and knowledge. These specialists provide information and technology instruction, reading advocacy, and information management twice a week for forty-five minutes. With rapidly developing technologies and vast amounts of information available, it is vital that our students become critical consumers and producers of information. This includes the ability to evaluate and analyze the credibility, relevancy, and currency of information. Students learn to use these emerging technologies in a way that is productive and in a safe, ethical, and responsible manner.

Each year our students participate in Battle of the Books, a fun academic based competition. The program is designed to encourage and recognize students who enjoy reading, to broaden reading interests, to increase comprehension, and to promote academic excellence. Battle of the Books encourages students to read a variety of Sasquatch Award and Young Reader's Choice Award books, remembering information about plots, characters, settings, and themes.

Finally, Evergreen students receive physical fitness for forty-five minutes a week under the guidance of a highly qualified health and physical education specialist, focusing on cardiovascular exercise, core body work, yoga relaxation techniques, and games. Classroom teachers also lead students through short activity breaks during the school day to improve concentration skills and classroom behavior. Physical activity sparks biological changes that encourage brain cells to bind to one another, increasing the capacity to learn. We believe that having the ability to educate children on the many benefits of physical fitness gives them the tools and knowledge to continue to be health conscious throughout their lives.

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

Each year, the Evergreen staff begins the school year with a sense of academic urgency. Shortly after students have learned classroom procedures, staff administer a series of benchmark assessments to gain an understanding of student achievement in reading and math. These assessments include, but are not limited to, the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading, Math and Early Literacy, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, district curriculum benchmark assessments, prior state testing results, classroom screeners, and teacher judgement. After testing is complete, grade level leaders facilitate team analysis of the data to identify students as Above Benchmark, Benchmark, Strategic, or Intensive in reading and math.

Level 1: Well Below Grade Level Standard (Intensive)

Student performance is well below the knowledge and skills expected at his/her grade level.

Level 2: Below Grade Level Standard (Strategic)

Student performance demonstrates a partial understanding of the knowledge and skills expected at his/her

grade level.

**Level 3: At Grade Level Standard (Benchmark)**

Student performance demonstrates an understanding of the knowledge and skills expected at his/her grade level.

**Level 4: Exceeds the Grade Level Standard (Above Benchmark)**

Student performance demonstrates a mastery of grade level standards and working on standards beyond his/her grade level.

Through our effective use of data, Evergreen has created a three-tiered intervention plan for English Language Arts and math. Twice daily, students participate in Response to Intervention (RtI) where they receive specific instruction geared to their level of proficiency. RtI is structured so every student, no matter their level of proficiency, receives challenging instruction to increase their level of mastery. Grade levels have daily RtI time where students are flexibly grouped by skill acquisition and/or ability level in order to remediate, accelerate, and/or challenge student learning. These groups change accordingly, as students are progress monitored regularly. In addition to RtI during school, before school opportunities are provided for third, fourth, and fifth graders to improve their reading and math skills twice weekly.

There are always a few students who don't make adequate academic progress through classroom RtI. For those students, we work to provide strong academic and social interventions utilizing our Student of Concern Team (SOCT). All interventions are initiated, implemented, and monitored by our SOCT. The intervention team, comprised of classroom teachers, Title I coordinator, social worker, English Language Learner teacher, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, special education case manager, school nurse, and an administrator, meets weekly with grade levels to discuss identified students as "Students of Concern." The information these meetings generate is kept on a live document that is updated throughout the year and follows the child from grade level to grade level, so classroom teachers may access academic and social interventions used for students throughout their time at Evergreen. Once a student has been placed on a plan of improvement, the team meets every six weeks to discuss progress and further interventions necessary. This process ensures that students are looked at through a variety of lenses and takes the burden off the classroom teacher as the sole evaluator of a student.

At Evergreen there is an achievement gap of ten or more percentage points between the test scores of all students and the test scores of our students enrolled in our special education program. Students who are performing two or more years behind their grade level, qualify for special education. When they are state tested according to their grade level, and not their academic level, they are rated as not making the necessary achievement level for their grade. Our staff works together with the special education teacher to help close this achievement gap by striving for growth from year to year as opposed to meeting current grade level standards. Our goal with each student is that they make more than a years growth each academic year in order to close the achievement gap between their performance level and their grade level.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Evergreen Elementary is a school that has taken a lot of pride in the display of powerful symbolism. When people in the community drive by the school, the sign in front of the school reads, “We Are College Bound.” That sign is a reminder to the community that our students are going to college. Upon entering the building, there are two signs that hang from the ceiling in the entrance that read, “After High School Comes... College” and along the walls are several college pennants and a map with teachers' photos identifying where staff members went to college. In the main office, posted on the wall are parent, student and staff pledges signifying everyone's commitment to Evergreen's mission. Damen Lopez of No Excuses University taught us that, college readiness is not the idea that every student will go to college. It is the idea that every student deserves the opportunity to be prepared to enroll in college if they so choose to attend. Furthermore, beginning in elementary school, it is the responsibility of educators to make this concept come to life for each student regardless of their academic or social background.

During the morning announcements, the principal says “After High School Comes...” and then the students shout “College.” The students are reminded that the staff believes in them and are committed to creating a school that knows no limits to the academic success of each student. Individual classrooms select different universities to partner with in an effort to expose students to the concept of college. Powerful symbolism helps to unite students, families and staff members. Each classroom also has a college cheer that is chanted at varying times, including at every assembly and on announcements. Another example of powerful symbolism is each year, every class makes tie-dye t-shirts to match their college colors. These are worn every Friday and at every assembly.

Our staff recognizes that our students need positive peer relationship skills. We adopted Steps to Respect, an anti-bullying program, which focuses on these relationships, recognizing bullying, and responding to inappropriate behavior. The entire staff was trained and teachers began implementing lessons and interventions. In addition, we also support our students through the use of Character Counts to provide a unifying message, positive focus, and behavior interventions.

One of the most impactful pieces of motivation for our students is the use of our pride necklaces. Students are recognized with charms and tags when they are caught doing something well, such as meeting a goal, or displaying our character traits. Each month, students who have followed all school rules, are recognized as being a “Self-Manager” and are awarded a prize. Students are recognized at honors assemblies for academic and social successes. Students possessing outstanding character are recognized monthly with Pizza with the Principal.

At Evergreen Elementary, all staff members feel valued and supported through the joint leadership structure. Our Leadership Team consists of a staff member from each grade level, a support specialist, administrator and paraeducator. Each team member acts as a leader for their building assignment. They then report back to their constituents to gain input and address any concerns that one has. All items are then brought back to the Leadership Team for final decisions. This ensure that all members of the staff have a voice and are an integral part of the decision making process.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

While the neighborhood we serve at Evergreen has changed over the years, our families continue to struggle with poverty which carries over to our students' success. Realizing that many of our parents have had little to no positive school experiences in their lives, we work hard to create an atmosphere that changes their view of school. We find, creating partnerships has been the most successful strategy in working with family and community members. The first thing we do is create a welcoming environment so parents feel encouraged to be a part of the school community. We establish relationships with our families through three avenues: support, communication and mentoring.

We offer support to parents in a variety of ways in order to meet their needs. We partner with the community in order to provide essentials. Our community partners provide our school with resources, so our families have food, school supplies, clothing, holiday baskets, Christmas presents, gas cards, and other daily necessities. Other resources include eye exams and glasses, counseling, continued education, and English language support.

Ongoing communication between home and school is paramount, and communication methods vary to meet all parents' needs. Communication includes student planners, emails, classroom communication applications, phone calls, classroom newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, school websites, weekly family bulletins, a Facebook page, bulletin boards, the Great Schools website, Back-to-School Night, Parent Handbook and our school's Site Council. No one way stands out as the most effective way to communicate with parents, rather we have found having assorted ways in which parents can communicate with the school to be most advantageous.

When mentoring parents on how they can support their students, we endeavor to immerse them in Evergreen's culture. We encourage all parents to take part in a daily conversation with their children, referred to as "Take Five." These five conversation starters prompt parents to have meaningful dialogue while reinforcing Evergreen's expectations. The prompts are: 1. What is your student goal? 2. What did you do today to achieve your goal? 3. How did you make your character count today? 4. What can you do tomorrow to conduct yourself as a self-manager at Evergreen? 5. Encourage your student in a specific and genuine way. We also frequently invite families to evening events, where we provide strategies and tools for them to better help their child in addition to making them feel part of our school family. These programs include Health & Fitness Night, Story Nights, Title I events, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math), music performances, a talent show, and a variety of Parent Teacher Association events. At parent-teacher conferences twice a year, we provide more individualized suggestions to help students academically, socially and/or behaviorally.

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

At the district level, Bethel School District is committed to ensuring success for all students through high-quality professional development opportunities. Our program for district employees is based on the belief that staff members are learners who continually improve their performance. District support has given teachers and administrators opportunities to attend yearly professional development classes, such as Summer Institute which is a week-long compilation of classes that meet the needs of staff throughout the district. Learning Improvement Days are full days provided by the district for buildings to offer teacher training that supports the building's Strategic Plan. In the areas of reading, math, and science, the Bethel School District has a cohort of teacher leaders that bridge the gap between the district and individual schools. These leaders offer support and training provided by the district to staff at the building level. Lastly, new teachers are supported and mentored by Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs). TOSAs help new staff understand the curriculum and how to align it directly with the standards in their classrooms.

At the building level, the professional development plan for Evergreen Elementary is a vision of adult learning that is collaborative, continuous, and embedded in daily practice and focused on universal achievement. Above and beyond the district offerings, there are multiple building opportunities available for staff throughout the school year that are aligned with academic standards and school improvement. One such opportunity is Learning Improvement Training (LIT), which is offered bi-weekly to all staff. This professional development is centered on a core topic requested, and typically taught by the staff of Evergreen Elementary. We believe the most powerful staff development comes from within our own learning communities. Evergreen is also blessed with teacher leaders who mentor teachers/staff new to Evergreen. These teacher leaders help support new teachers in a variety of areas, such as discipline, teaching strategies, organization, and following Evergreen's systems. Mentors are assigned based on strengths, necessary areas of growth, and subject area. Another strategy for professional development, is the use of book studies. The goal of the book studies is to create dialogue that is centered around increasing student achievement and to construct a common language among all staff.

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

Evergreen's Leadership Team is the driving force of our building's success. The model for our Leadership Team was restructured when our eight exceptional systems were put into place. At that time, we recognized that all staff members needed a voice on the Leadership Team, and that the team needed to be responsible for all building decisions. Year after year, the Leadership Team is comprised of a representative from each grade level, specialists, paraeducators, and administration. Representatives serve on the team for two years before new representatives fill the role. The Leadership Team works from an ongoing agenda that is available for all staff input, and meets bi-weekly to address staff concerns and building systems. Items on the agenda are discussed and key points are taken back to constituents for discussion. The Leadership Team then reconvenes to make decisions based on the input of all staff members.

At Evergreen Elementary, every staff member is responsible for developing strategies that ensure the academic success of all students. We are not micromanaged; instead our principal supports us and helps clear any roadblocks that may exist.

Specific leadership roles include our Title I and special education leaders in addition to our building administration. Our Title I teacher oversees the Title I and the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) and ensures the smooth implementation of our RTI model. Our Special Education Case Manager is responsible for ensuring all Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) and 504's are written, implemented and reviewed. This person is also responsible for meeting with these students on a daily basis to meet their educational needs. Our Administrative Assistant is the leader of the Student of Concern Team, and is the point person for our Building Discipline Plan. Our building administrator is in charge of ensuring that all of our building systems are running fluidly.

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

---

If we had to choose just one practice that contributes to Evergreen’s success, it would be the vision of students and staff as a family rather than the traditional teacher student relationship. When studying successful, highly effective teachers, we found they were the ones who supported the social, emotional, and cognitive capabilities of their students. We learned from these teachers that we need to create an environment that recognizes all aspects of the child. We know that approaching their social, emotional and academic development benefits each and every child and in turn helps them to become more successful learners. To do this at Evergreen, we model the routines, support, and high expectations you would typically find in a family.

At Evergreen, we instill the routines and structure often missing in our students’ homes due to circumstances beyond their control. Our daily classroom schedules are posted and students know what to expect on a daily basis. Our building-wide discipline system is consistent across the entire building and students know the expectations are the same from one room to another. We have found that having this high level of consistency makes our students thrive. Our building-wide reward and recognition systems have helped to motivate students academically and socially.

Support in our building is shown in a variety of ways. We build relationships with students daily. Teachers routinely go to their students’ extra-curricular events, make home visits, open up their classrooms before and after school, provide a missing meal, and drive students to/or from school. Staff in our building also purchase items our students need, such as a pair of shoes. As a way of further connecting with our students, staff members often tell personal stories of successes and failures. Students relate to these stories and come to see staff members as people who have persevered and become successful. While students usually eat in the lunchroom, it is a very common sight to see a classroom full of students at this time. Teachers use this informal time to have candid conversations with students about many topics.

Within the Evergreen family, high expectations are paramount in the success of our students. The high expectations require accountability for our students and ourselves. We consistently hold each other to a high level of professionalism in the belief that all students can learn. We have candid conversations with each other when we stray from our building-wide systems that support our mission. With our students, we have high expectations for academic achievement, consistently reinforce appropriate behavior, and maximize instructional time to provide an opportunity for universal achievement.

One teacher to another, one year to the next, the daily life of an Evergreen No Excuses University student is designed in such a way that he or she feels important as an individual, but also responsible for the overall success of the school community of their peers. We call that community “The Family.”