

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Mary C. Freitas

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

Official School Name Challenge Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5409 228th Street S.W.

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

Mountlake Terrace WA 98043-3934
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Snohomish

Telephone (425) 431-7482

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Web site/URL https://tp.edmonds.wednet.edu

E-mail freitasm@edmonds.wednet.edu

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Kristine McDuffy E-mail
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) McDuffyK278@edmonds.wednet.edu

District Name Edmonds Tel. (425) 431-7000

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
10. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
11. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 23 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 7 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 35 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	9	3	12
2	27	26	53
3	28	28	56
4	39	23	62
5	41	34	75
6	42	31	73
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	186	145	331

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 29 % Asian
 - 6 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 48 % White
 - 11 % 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: 2%

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	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	8
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	336
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2%
5 Total number ELL

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

Tigrinya, Mongolian, Indonesian, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese-Cantone, Japanese, Hindi, Arabic, Bulgarian, Russian, Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12%
 Total number students who qualify: 39

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %
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>3</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>11</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: 12
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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	13
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.	8
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 26:1

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	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
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.

To create powerful thinkers and communicators by providing intentional, responsive learning opportunities, integrating effective teaching practices, continually monitoring, supporting, and celebrating each student's individual growth.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Challenge Elementary is a school of identified Highly Capable students. Students may be referred by themselves, other students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Written parent/guardian permission is required prior to testing. Referred students are tested using the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). The test administrators and proctors are trained to look for any barriers to a true picture of a child's cognitive or creative ability, especially for the under-served or under-represented populations of our District. Barriers could be emerging English language, cultural background or any other factor that might distort the test. Proctors will make a note of any discrepancy on a student's test and then share with the Program Administrator. If there is a reason to believe that we need to look at the child's ability in some other way, the information will be reviewed by the Multidisciplinary Selection Committee. Students are limited to test four times for the Highly Capable programs from K through grade 7. Private individual testing cannot be used in place of the group CogAT test. All students wanting acceptance into Highly Capable Programs must take the CogAT given by district proctors. The Multidisciplinary Selection Committee (MSC) reviews the performance data for all students tested and identifies students who require services well beyond the normal learning classroom to be successful. The Committee is assisted by the District Assessment Office to compile and understand the student's assessment profile. Student's academic achievement data, district assessment records, parent and teacher referral information, report cards, plus any other available pertinent information will be reviewed in the process. Students will not be affected in a negative way if there is a missing test score or other data.

PART III – SUMMARY

Since 2002, the 1st through 6th grade Challenge Elementary School has been located in Terrace Park School in Mountlake Terrace, Washington as part of the Edmonds School District. Approximately 335 Highly Capable students attend from all over the district. The two schools work together as one learning community where, “Every student deserves to learn every day” is our motto. The Highly Capable (Hi-Cap) Program provides learning experiences in an atmosphere in which talents will be nurtured and new talents will be acquired. We recognize and target students’ multiple intelligences, and work to assist students in extending their learning and increasing their skills. The advanced pace of the curriculum allows us to have more time to focus on projects and in-depth individual assignments; the emphasis is on the quality of work rather than quantity. We assist students in developing accountability for their learning through time-management practices.

In the Hi-Cap Program, we use the same staffing formulas as the general education classrooms. Highly Capable Program class sizes vary year to year but are similar to general education class sizes. Therefore, it is possible that students in the Hi-Cap Program may be in a split class for at least one of their years. There is no limit to the amount of students accepted into the program so numbers vary from year to year. Because most students are outside their schools of residence, and therefore are no longer going to school with their neighbors, participation in these programs can be isolating. Community building for these students and families is especially important. Challenge Elementary is composed of students with unique social, emotional, and learning needs. The staff and parents foster group support and sponsor family social events to help families deal with the challenges they face by having students in these programs.

The teachers in Challenge Elementary require additional training to meet the asynchronous development needs of gifted and talented students, and the curriculum demands differentiated materials and resources. Parents make a difference with their support to ensure these extra demands are met efficiently. Parents offer their voice and participate in discussions regarding specialized needs; they help at school events and at extracurricular activities; they offer their own talents, skills, education, and community connections to help meet the students' needs.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Challenge students are successful, motivated students. Most students are ready for advanced math, humanities, and science. Most students will continue this track through middle school, then enter either the International Baccalaureate program or the STEM program at one of the two local high schools.

First through sixth grade uses a writing curriculum based on Lucy Caulkins' Writing Curriculum. This curriculum employs high-quality performance based pre- and post- assessments to ensure that growth is being attained in higher-level skills and concepts. Reading curriculum is based on three different resources: the CIA approach to reading, Junior Great Books and individual classroom novel studies. Higher level (above grade level) texts in non-fiction, literature, social studies, and science for each grade level are used regularly. Adaptation or replacement of core curriculum ensures that gifted learners master concepts and then go beyond them in key ways. Some standards, like reading, are mastered earlier, while others are practiced at higher levels of skill and concept. Challenge students have found that reading novels are highly effective with enhancing critical thinking, literary analysis, and persuasive writing.

Teachers regularly integrate reading and writing into social studies and science. For example, in sixth grade, connections are made between reading "The Giver" and its totalitarian society with elements of democracy and tyranny that are simultaneously being taught in social studies. Fourth grade uses novel units to integrate studies with Native American studies.

The use of Socratic Seminars for literary analysis and development of critical thinking are commonly used. Using classroom novels, or Junior Great Books, students are introduced into thinking and questioning strategies. Typically, Challenge students read and discuss the text selection, write an essay that is linked to the discussion, and a project or in-class presentation.

Grades 1-5 use the Expressions Math curriculum as a basis for scope and sequence. All Challenge students work one grade level above (first grade does second grade math, second does third grade math, etc.). Sixth Grade uses 7th grade Glencoe math; almost all of the Challenge students go on to Algebra as 7th graders in middle school. Students historically have been very high in math. Additionally, students are taught problem solving strategies using Continental Mathematics League. Both math and reading skills are improved when students participate in CML. They learn how to analyze a problem and solve it using their reasoning capabilities. While Expressions is used as a base for the curriculum, teachers have developed their own questioning, research, and project-based assignments to deepen understanding.

Teachers are using project-based learning for science using Foss Science kits and adapting instruction to meet Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Our district curriculum is being aligned to the NGSS for the 2017-2018 school year. The curriculum is used just as a base for scope and sequence; teachers use the same project-based inquiry and higher-level thinking skills to move and inspire students into the study of science. The sixth grade has integrated high school students from the IB program once a month for science demonstrations and lessons to encourage scientific thinking and inquiry. Once a year there is an all school STEAM Night where students prepare a self-selected project to the local community and parents.

For gifted students, social studies and history is an opportunity to explore and think about the world around them. Teaching the importance of being a good citizen and what that looks like is a goal of our elementary program. Connections are made between the past and the future, using guided discussions, projects, inquiry, and non-fiction text based writing assignments. Each grade level has a different emphasis; for example, our first graders study their community and ride the local community transit. Our third graders do a research project on a famous person of their choosing that has made a positive contribution to society and then take on the role of that person and deliver a speech to parents about their person. The 6th grade studies the ancient world: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome and their culminating project is to construct interactive exhibits that is shared with the school and parents.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The other curriculum areas are effectively integrated into Challenge Elementary for our first through sixth grade students during the day and before or after school. Quality instruction is provided by arts specialists and classroom teachers and supported by partnerships with professional organizations and parent or community programs. This partnered instruction enhances both student literacy and meaningful, purposeful, and enjoyable educational learning opportunities. Each student has a Chromebook and Google account. Computer Science and technology is taught in the core classroom, the library, and music. Students learn coding with Code.org and in the higher grades use a 3D printer. Students are taught several different software programs such as PowerPoint and use all types of computer programs such as MobyMax and Raz Kids.

Students have either music, physical education or library with a Specialist every day of the week. A student's music-education experience includes general music and beginning in fifth grade, students can participate in choir, band, and orchestra. Students in Challenge Elementary are often ready for more rigorous music with music theory, technology composition, and song writing. They spend time learning about percussion instruments including the marimba, drumming, and xylophone. Students study multi-cultural and historical music. Typically, students participate in a classroom musical in the primary grades. Fourth graders learn to play the recorder and fifth and sixth grade focuses on composition using Chromebooks and ensemble playing.

The goal of our Physical Education program is to empower students with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to be physically fit and make healthy choices for a lifetime. Students study all types of games & activities ranging from sport-specific (soccer, baseball, basketball, volleyball, etc) to warm-up, fitness, team-building, dancing, and yoga. The goal of all of these activities is to get students moving and enjoying learning skills in the gym.

A student's visual arts-education experience is taught in the classroom by the classroom teacher. It could include drawing, painting, ceramic arts/pottery, 2-D design, 3-D design, printmaking, graphic arts, media arts, or textiles. Students have a portfolio of their art created throughout the year and then in the spring each student in the school chooses one piece to display in the annual Art Walk. Additionally, some of the pieces from the Art Walk move forward to a community event, The Edmonds Arts Festival. A student's theater-education experience may include, but is not limited to classroom productions, talent shows, and after school clubs. Once a year, the Missoula Children's Theatre, comes to our school and conducts a one week rehearsal process culminating in multiple performances for parents and the community.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Using the strong, Common Core Standards-based, regular Edmonds' School District curriculum, we offer enriched and accelerated content in all subject areas. Additionally, students are challenged when demonstrating mastery. We provide an environment which allows students to identify and solve complex problems, explore concepts in greater depth and complexity, and to develop and create unique products. Students in the program are one math level ahead of their same grade peers, therefore they will have skipped one grade level of math during the summer, they can access the math level that they will be skipping via the Think Central website that is part of our Expressions Math Curriculum. The main difference between the Hi-Cap Program and a general education classroom is the depth, pace, and complexity of the curriculum. Students in the Hi-Cap Program are challenged by studying topics at a faster rate and also get the opportunity to study specific concepts more deeply. Students in the program are one math level ahead of their same grade peers. The basis for all curriculum are the Common Core State Standards. Within the standards, teachers in the Challenge program interrelate within key core strands, and differentiate using critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, inquiry, research and concept development.

Teachers of the highly capable program have received professional development support within the area of teaching gifted learners. In addition, the teachers themselves are highly motivated educators who strive to keep their instructional methods up to date and progressive. One of the core instructional methods focuses on conceptual understandings, higher level thinking and advanced content knowledge with respect to

assessment. Teachers differentiate by increasing text complexity while assessing same grade level standards. Assessments are often open-ended and performance based. Differentiated instruction for highly capable learners involves giving a variety of texts, both at grade level and above grade level for discussion and analysis. Problem-based learning and project based learning are a cornerstone of the highly capable program. Our school is one-to-one Chromebook to student ratio; therefore, student research and responses are used daily in the classroom. Teachers of intermediate grades use google classroom to post assignments and grade student work. Instructional interventions often happen when students are considered “Twice Exceptional” which means they are Highly Capable and have a second designation such as Autism. This often results in either a 504 plan or an IEP. These students receive accommodations and modifications of assignments that are determined by their plan.

Challenge Elementary uses classroom based assessment, district assessment, and Washington State Assessment or Smarter Based Assessment (SBA). We looked at each student group on the SBA and determined the percent of students successful and established goals. We found that our male students in grades 3-6 had 74% at Level 4 as measured by classroom and SBA ELA summative assessments. Our comparison group was our female students in grades 3-6 who had 86% at Level 4 as measured by classroom and SBA ELA summative assessments. Therefore, we used this data to determine our area of focus and our School Improvement Goal which was to have more students (especially males) achieve a Level 4 on the SBA ELA summative assessments.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Challenge Elementary we believe in promoting a climate of social and emotional wellbeing that develops student character and leadership. Including all staff in this process is essential in creating a culture that supports the academic success of all students. Students are intentionally taught what it means to be a good citizen and student of our school. Our mascot is the “Terrace Park Wolf” and students are given “Paw Prints” when they demonstrate they are safe, responsible, respectful, and ready to learn. We recognize and celebrate students during Wolf Pride Assemblies.

Our academic climate is one where all stakeholders feel supported in their efforts to learn and instruct. Staff are part of this decision making via our Instructional Leadership team and our Climate and Culture team. Each meets monthly to discuss ways in which the school community can work together to promote a learning environment that is intellectually engaging and which builds leadership capacity in students of all grades. Teachers lead and plan community events such as S.T.E.A.M. Night, Art Festival and an annual Multi-Cultural Celebration that highlight our student’s work and diversity. Student participation in our STEAM and Art events is very high and provides an opportunity for family and community members to see the end result of the rigorous learning which happens daily at our school.

Our teachers are extraordinary and we provide multiple opportunities to support their teaching practice throughout the year. Our teachers are invited to participate in the annual Washington Association for Talented and Gifted conference. They take advantage of professional development opportunities such as S.I.O.P. to support ELL students, The Responsive Classroom to promote Social and Emotional learning in the classroom and Code.org to build skills in coding and technology related instruction. Ninety five percent of our students are meeting or exceeding standard on the annual Smarter Balanced Assessment, reflecting that Challenge Elementary is a place where students and staff feel safe, supported and engaged in the daily act of learning and instruction.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging families is a priority for Challenge Elementary. Before parents have their students tested for the gifted program they are invited to an evening with our principal to learn about our program and to ask questions. Once students are offered a place in the school they are invited to another Q and A as well as a tour of our school. They are also introduced to our parent support group for our gifted students known as the Challenge Parents Association or CPA. CPA exists specifically to support parents of highly capable children. Because our student population comes from throughout a large district, CPA works with the school to promote social events which facilitate families and students getting to know each other. They also offer our parents and families quarterly lectures from experts in the field of gifted education. Our PTA and CPA work together to promote fund raising efforts as well as numerous social events throughout the school year.

We invite parents to be part of the daily life of their children here at Challenge. “Watchdog Dads” is a program at our school which encourages fathers and other male role models in our students’ lives, to volunteer at the school for a day and help wherever they are asked. Perhaps our most robust parent program is our After School Activities. Run by our parent volunteers, the After School Activities program offers a wide variety of after school activities for students to choose from that include a running club, cake decoration, sewing, coding, and drama. Each activity is run by an adult from the school community and may be an engineer from our local Boeing plant, a teacher, a para educator or parent. This program is so popular that students must choose 3 differing activities to ensure something they enjoy is available.

Our parent and community involvement results in an academic program where students are meeting academic standard 95% of the time as measured by our state test scores. Challenge School is a community which invites and encourages all stakeholders to be active participants in the academic lives of our students.

3. Professional Development:

Three years ago our district adopted a new writing curriculum. As we were planning to write the coming year's School Improvement Plan we were reviewing data and saw that our boys in Challenge struggled the most in writing. As we looked even further at our State testing data, it was clear that in the area of writing our boys as well as those students who spoke a second language, (though officially registered as ELL), were showing the least amount of growth from year to year in writing. This led our school to make writing instruction the focus of our School Improvement Plan.

In the last two years all of our building Professional Development has been devoted to improving our student's skills as writers. We started with studying how the writing curriculum aligned with Common Core Standards. Further along in our PD we worked on aligning both the writing curriculum and the Common Core with our program's standards for gifted education. Finally, we have worked as a building in grade level teams to develop writing anchor sets for each grade that are rubric exemplars for each writing form taught in the curriculum.

Parallel to the Professional Development centered on writing, has been targeted PD to develop greater understanding around teaching a more diverse group of gifted students. Our student population is becoming more diverse both ethnically and economically. This leads to insuring that our instruction is culturally responsible. Our teachers have accessed training that supports English Language Learners, (S.I.O.P.) and they have also taken advantage of district offered training in Responsive Classroom. As we finish year two of this Professional Development plan, our data shows a strong improvement in writing scores among our boys as well as our ELL students. Teachers report feeling more comfortable with the new writing curriculum and overall there is greater instructional capacity on the part of staff with regard to writing instruction.

4. School Leadership:

Challenge Elementary's leadership philosophy is based on building a community that works collaboratively around a central vision. All stakeholders look at the data, are brought into the discussion and identify strengths and weaknesses. We analyze data for the improvement of instruction for all students. We communicate and we have a shared vision for students. The Principal leadership style is collaborative, open-minded, and all-inclusive. Many personalities and work styles exist among the adults in a large school staff and the human and fiscal resources are directed to the improvement of student learning. To do that, positive, collaborative, and visionary leadership is needed. The Leadership Committee is comprised of teacher representatives from primary and intermediate grades as well as the Administrative Team which includes the principal and vice-principal. This Committee provides direction and support for staff to achieve their goals. Instructional Leadership is one of the most important roles of the Administrative Team. The Leadership Team leads staff to work collaboratively in professional development opportunities and building a strong learning community. They plan, develop, and provide staff opportunities for professional development. They attend meetings, conferences, and training to maintain current knowledge of curriculum, assessments, and best practice.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Challenge Elementary established goals for student achievement and growth based on assessment data and research along with school and community expectations. Our data revealed that our biggest area of opportunity was in writing instruction and further revealed a gap between the achievement of boys versus girls. We saw a need to develop a growth mindset among all of our learners, understand the gifted learner, and help students develop better writing skills. Seventy-nine percent of our students exceeded standard and 21% of our third through sixth grade students met standard on the Smarter Balanced Assessment (WA state assessment) in 2016. As Highly Capable students we believed that more students should exceed standard. Approximately 10% more female students were exceeding standard than male students. Our focus for the year was in improving student writing achievement and the strategy or approach was to use our professional development time for staff to engage in Professional Learning Communities. Through high level of collaboration, the teachers completed several cycles of inquiry on different writing styles such as narrative writing and opinion writing. The cycles of inquiry included studying writing instruction, developing lessons and prompts together, calibrating rubrics and assessment, reviewing student work, and developing a set of anchor papers for each grade level. The outcome of our practice has been a high level of collaboration and discourse between staff members focused on instruction and this has been instrumental to our school's success.