

U.S. Department of Education
2019 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 Mrs. Mary McCutchen

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

Official School Name City Heights Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 301 Mt. Vista Boulevard

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

Van Buren AR 72956-3341
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Crawford

Telephone (479) 474-6918

Fax (479) 471-3139

Web site/URL <http://www.vbsd.us/schools/city-heights-elementary-school>

E-mail mmcutchen@vbsd.us

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. Harold Jeffcoat

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail harold.jeffcoat@vbsd.us

District Name Van Buren School District Tel. (479) 474-7942

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 Candice Settle-Beshears

(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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 10 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	24	19	43
1	30	31	61
2	28	36	64
3	34	34	68
4	36	31	67
5	26	28	54
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	178	179	357

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 11 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 76 % White
 - 5 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 25%

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

City Heights is located in an area with a large number of low cost rental homes and apartment complexes resulting in a higher number of students who move on a more frequent basis. In addition, we have migrant students who transfer schools as their parents move for new seasonal jobs.

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	33
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	54
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	87
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	346
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.25
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	25

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7%
24 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 50%
 Total number students who qualify: 180

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
40 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>24</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: 14
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.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 21:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	96%	95%	95%
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 2018.

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.

Our mission is to create a student-centered learning environment rich in literacy, math, technology, and character education that will prepare students for their future in an ever changing world.

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

Located at the foot of the Ozark Mountains, City Heights Elementary is one of six elementary schools in Van Buren, Arkansas, first opening its doors to students in 1962. Over the years expansions have been made to the school including building two additional wings, the first in 1973 and the next in 1979. In 2005 a new gymnasium was built, as well as the purchase of three large lots in order to build a second, well shaded playground. Van Buren is a community oriented city located in the northwest part of the state with our school boundary lines stopping at the state of Oklahoma. As the oldest public school in Van Buren, City Heights enjoys a rich history of community support and educational excellence. With 347 students enrolled in grades kindergarten through 5th grade, City Heights celebrates 57 years of service to our community. With a population of 23,509, Van Buren has a vast number of hardworking families yet has a poverty rate of 32% for children under the age of eighteen. City Heights students are at 52% economically disadvantaged, 7% English Language Learners, and 12% receiving special education services. While our students come from diverse backgrounds, our mantra is the same, “Every Student, Whatever It Takes”.

City Heights is a special place, where a caring and dedicated school community is committed to the success of all students and strives to develop the whole child by meeting their needs socially, academically and emotionally. This is clear with our mission of serving the community by educating and nurturing the children in our care. We create a student-centered learning environment rich in literacy, math, technology, and character education that prepares students for their future in an ever changing world. Our goal to provide an effective, enriching, and engaging education for all students is met by being purposeful in all we do, by the student focused decisions we make, the curriculum we implement, and our passion for the profession. Our staff collaborates to improve instructional practices, provide daily intervention, goal set with students, and assist students in reaching the high expectations we have for each one who walks through the doors of our school.

City Heights Elementary is committed to developing all aspects in the lives of our students by creating an environment where students can grow and reach their potential. By having a family like atmosphere, students feel safe, enjoy coming to school, are willing to take risks, fully engage in their work and strive to do their best each day. Focusing on our student’s social and emotional well-being is a large factor in our success as a school. We provide meaningful opportunities for students to grow and experience high levels of engagement throughout the day. We start the day with a Rise and Shine assembly where we celebrate birthdays, student work, class goals being met and participate in community building activities. Music playing outside before school starts is also another way to start the day off in a positive manner and helps set the tone for the school day. Many other opportunities exist for students to develop leadership skills, interests, positive character, and communication skills including Student Council, K- Kids, Club Day, Class Ambassadors and greeters, Drama Club, Kindness Challenge, digital citizenship, anti-bullying campaigns and community service projects. These opportunities promote the social-emotional growth that effect the students’ academic growth.

In addition, City Heights Elementary challenges and supports all students to develop to their academic potential through setting goals, making a plan of action and reflecting on their goals. This continuous cycle ensures students continue to grow as learners, taking responsibility and developing a sense of pride in self. The staff assists by providing timely, ongoing assessments to track student's growth and determine their immediate needs. Our intervention plan, WIN (What I Need), allows all staff (principal, assistant principal, counselor, paraprofessionals, media specialist and classroom teachers) to work daily with small groups of students on their exact needs in order to continue moving forward on the learning continuum. Progress monitoring every three weeks leads to the regrouping of students. Our small groups range from struggling students to students receiving enrichment during this daily WIN time.

City Heights Elementary has and will continue to focus on “Making a Difference” in the lives of our students. While City Heights traditionally receives high test scores and has received award money the past two years for being among the highest test scores in the state, our true reward is the love students have for learning, the care they show each other, the work ethic they develop, their motivation to succeed and the positive impact we know they will make on society in the future.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

City Heights Elementary focuses on student needs while having high expectations of all students through utilizing the Arkansas State Standards. The standards provide clear learning goals for students and teaching expectations for teachers. Teachers work continuously to develop engaging lessons with evidence-based instructional strategies to provide every student an opportunity to master the curriculum. Teachers develop plans for instruction, reteaching, differentiating, and extending the thinking of students. Although grade level standards are used to drive instruction, assessments help to pinpoint instruction for each student. This is where the expertise of our staff comes in to play by designing instruction to support the learning for each student. The ultimate goal is to prepare students for college and career readiness. Our state assessment, ACT Aspire, provides students with a college and career readiness score based on their elementary score, thus placing them on a needed path of growth in order to be college and career ready

Our language arts standards are broken into reading, writing, listening and speaking, and language. Teachers focus on creating a classroom community where students acquire complex reading skills, produce high quality writing, utilize effective speaking and listening skills. Teaching language arts is a school wide expectation regardless of whether students are in their homeroom, or non-core classes- all staff have a responsibility to develop language arts skills through speaking activities, acquisition of new vocabulary, developing comprehension strategies and responding through writing. We believe if we can instill the love of reading in students then they are willing to overcome barriers and fully commit to being successful, confident readers. We do not use textbooks, but utilize leveled books so as to match readers to their current independent level and scaffold students at the next level to continue moving students to more complex text. Ongoing assessments are used to determine students approximate reading level and to determine needs. Traditionally, we have used a guided reading approach for small groups with a heavy emphasis on comprehension. However, we began noticing a larger gap in reading achievement in our economically disadvantaged students leading us to change our approach to small group instruction. We are currently utilizing 95% Group’s materials for comprehension, phonics and phonemic awareness which places students on a continuum and provides the lessons needed for those skills. Our formative data shows impressive student growth.

1b. Mathematics:

City Heights math curriculum expects students to demonstrate conceptual understanding of mathematical skills. Our math curriculum follows a standards based approach in that we teach, reteach, form small groups, individualize instruction and utilize student partnerships in order to allow students additional time on mathematical concepts until they are mastered. We also provide enrichment for students who need a more rigorous and challenging math curriculum. Our goal for the math block is to provide a depth of knowledge in mathematics with a focused, rigorous curriculum utilizing the Arkansas State Standards and the National Council Of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Standards. Each day the math block begins with students participating in a ten minute math meeting where a “problem of the day” is given, previous skills are reviewed, and students work with a partner to solve problems. Teachers then engage students in a whole group math lesson. All workshop lessons are hands-on and engaging, providing time for demonstration, discovery, partner work, and reflection. In Math Investigations students are expected to have more than one strategy to solve a problem and be able to share their thinking with their peers. Teachers provide immediate feedback to students making this visible learning a powerful tool. Real world math scenarios and problem based learning are utilized to support mathematical understanding. After whole group instruction, students rotate through math centers for learning games that are specifically created for their identified mathematical needs. During this time, teachers also meet with small groups for reteaching skills the students need. In addition to unit assessments, teachers utilize grade level math screeners to identify gaps in a student's mathematical conceptual understanding and then groups students to teach the missing skills. Students who are exceeding grade level expectations are given problem based materials and projects. All students utilize

computer programs that place them at the appropriate mathematical level, then provides tutorials and engaging games and finally assesses their understanding. This keeps students on a continuous learning cycle.

1c. Science:

Walking through the halls of City Heights Elementary, the student conversations will always be about the latest Project Lead the Way Unit (PLTW) they are learning about at school. PLTW pathways are aligned to Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. Our teachers implement four interdisciplinary modules at each grade level which bring learning to life. Teachers also have nonfiction books aligned with the grade level units, so as to further student understanding of the science standards while also focusing on reading skills. A PLTW lab is utilized by students and is under the guidance of our science paraprofessional. PLTW empowers students to adopt a design-thinking mindset through compelling activities, projects, and problems that build upon each other and relate to the world around them. Each unit builds knowledge and skills for problem solving, critical and creative thinking, communication, collaboration and perseverance. As students engage in hands-on activities they become creative innovators and collaborative problem solvers ready to take on any challenge. PLTW taps into students' exploratory nature, engaging them in learning that feels like play and encourages them to keep discovering- now and in the future. During PLTW, students can be found coding with robotics, programming, creating simple machines, designing gliders, creating learning tools, competing in robotic competitions, and many other real world activities. Through PLTW, we utilize a balanced approach for assessments integrating both formative and summative assessments. Assessments are an ongoing activity that provides students with a variety of opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, which allows teachers to monitor student progress and modify instruction accordingly. PLTW students show what they have learned by completing classroom activities, projects, and problems; maintaining logs and notebooks; and evaluating their work through assessment rubrics and reflective questioning in order to deepen their understanding.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Arkansas Social studies standards incorporate geography, civics, history and economic strands for kindergarten through 5th grade. Our school integrates a language arts approach while using the context of social studies as a way for students to make connections and conceptualize content. The overarching goal of all social studies units is being a productive and contributing citizen in society. Each unit is guided by Essential Questions to be answered throughout the unit. Kindergarten through second grade have developed units of study to align with the Arkansas social studies standards, while 3rd - 5th grade utilize Calkins Social Studies Units as guides, aligning them with Arkansas standards. All units are engaging, and include social studies content standards, rich literature, and centers to support understanding. For example, 3rd grade infuses social studies content standards through studying countries around the world. Throughout the units, students participate in online learning, read various leveled texts on the topics, complete research projects, learn about and practice citizenship, and participate in topical learning centers of statistics, photograph investigation, primary sources, maps, and time travel. Teachers teach many literacy skills through the units such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, nonfiction text features, note taking strategies, summarizing and author's purpose. Various teaching methods are utilized during social studies such as mini-lectures, inquiry groups, reading workshop with read alouds, and partnership projects. Throughout each unit, students write about reading in order to deepen understanding. Field trips are utilized to promote student understanding of social studies content such as visiting a nearby Indian Heritage Center and touring the museum of history. Teachers also bring in guest speakers to teach about topics being studied including history professors with expertise on the American Revolution, a Cherokee Indian sharing a tribal dance and the mayor teaching the importance of citizenship. We encourage our students to be productive citizens by participating in community service projects such as food drives for food banks, collecting materials for the children's shelter, making gifts for firemen and police officers, and making cards for military personnel serving overseas.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

City Heights Elementary believes that for students to be successful in life we must focus on developing the whole child. Our non-core curriculum areas such as music, art, physical education, technology, health and wellness, and character education provide meaningful activities that develop students academically, physically, emotionally and socially.

City Heights provides 40 minutes of music each week with a highly qualified music teacher. The music teacher utilizes the Arkansas Music standards as a guidepost for instruction. Each week students set off on a musical journey of playing different instruments, learning elements of music, working on music composition, listening to songs of personal interest, and developing an appreciation for various music genres. In addition, our music classes help to support the academic curriculum by developing fluency, rhythm and patterning. Supporting social studies units, students study music from Brazil or China, as well as from various American time periods. It is a common sight to see students writing lyrics to songs, making up songs on the playground, and watching the staff perform musical skits at assemblies. We know the effect music has on students' attitudes, therefore, we start the day by playing music outside before school so that when students arrive they are greeted with upbeat music.

All students receive 40 minutes of art instruction each week. The art curriculum emphasizes art history, the study of different artists, visual awareness, and art mediums. Utilizing the Arkansas Fine Arts standards, lessons are developed that support content standards for each grade level. For example, while 3rd grade is researching the country of China, the art projects include painting dragons and making Chinese collage masks. By supporting the curriculum in this manner, students both enjoy the art experience and learn content standards at a deeper level. Student's artwork is placed on the Artsonia website so that parents and community members can view it. In addition to art class, students enjoy performing arts by participating in readers theatre and performing for their peers. Our 3rd-5th grade participates in an after school drama club where they are taught acting techniques by two high school drama students. After multiple practices, students perform for the school at a special assembly. Our district supports the arts by bringing in theatrical companies, allowing our students to attend performances such as The Little Mermaid, Cinderella, and Mary Poppins. Although we realize not all students will go into an art related field or become professional artists, we believe providing students with an environment supporting creativity and choice, results in student motivation and growth in all areas.

City Heights strongly supports the need for physical activity throughout the day. Our students attend Physical Education classes two times each week for 40 minutes. Our P.E. teacher utilizes the SPARK Physical Education Program which helps lay the foundation for a healthy lifestyle with curriculum designed specifically for kindergartners to 5th graders. The SPARK curriculum also focuses on literacy, has health videos, and skill cards in both English and Spanish. In addition to the P.E. classes, students receive two 15 minute recesses during the day. During the day, teachers are encouraged to stop for brain breaks allowing for stretching time or participating in a Go Noodle exercise video. Our school also has a brand new walking track which allows our running club to have a solid surface to accurately track their distance. We have multiple cooking clubs where teachers discuss healthy eating and have students prepare healthy snacks. We also host annual events to encourage health and well-being. A few of our special events are the annual "Fun Run", Jump Rope For Heart, American Heart Association campaign, Track and Field Day, the Olympics, and Pacer Competitions.

City Heights utilizes technology to support learning and develop skills needed in our society. Each week all students spend 40 minutes in the library with our media specialist and 80 minutes in our computer lab. While in the library, students are read to, choose books to read independently, and work on computer programs such as I-Station, Classworks and Newsela. Students also spend 80 minutes per week in the computer lab utilizing Typing Without Tears, CODE, I-Station, and Google Classroom.

In addition, we implement counseling guidance lessons through Google Classroom for all students. Character education is an integral part of our school, therefore we recognize students for good behavior through Positive Office Referrals, Clip up to the Principal office visits, and Good character tickets. We also focus on a character word of the month and recognize those students who exhibit that behavior.

3. Special Populations:

Starting a new school year is an exciting time and our staff understands it is critical to give various assessments, interest inventories and parent questionnaires to determine the needs of all students. Beginning of the year assessments in language arts include the Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST), 95% Group Phonics Screener for Intervention (PSI), the Developmental Spelling Assessment (DSA), the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Skills (DIBELS), Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment, and a writing prompt. After teachers administer all assessments, the data is analyzed to determine specific needs of students. We group students according to phonemic awareness needs and phonics/decoding needs. The 95% Group's Phonics Screeners are used to match students to exact phonics skills by using the Lesson Library which provides explicit and systematic instruction supporting the Orton Gillingham approach. We utilize these materials for kindergarten through 5th grade students during our walk to intervention. During this time that we call WIN (what I need) students meet with an instructor to receive instruction and practice following the model of "I do, We do, You Do". With a mobility rate over 25%, having a system like this in place quickly identifies student's gaps in reading and enables staff to immediately provide them with the exact instruction they need on the reading continuum in order to get them on track of grade level expectations. We also have after-school tutoring where we continue to focus on the learning gaps students possess. Take home packets assist parents in working with their children on the same skill the teachers are working on at school. In kindergarten, our intervention begins with phonemic awareness instruction. Teachers use phonemic awareness activities to supplement the phonics program and to provide additional practice for struggling students. If students continue to struggle after intense, systematic and explicit instruction, then we administer additional screeners to check for markers of dyslexia. For our students who show above level skills, we use small group time to continue moving them on their learning progression. Students above level can also qualify for gifted and talented services whereby they are pulled from the classroom three hours per week for extension and enrichment activities provided by the district's Gifted and Talented teacher. Our English Language Learner population fluctuates between 7% and 12% each year. We utilize the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, a comprehensive, coherent, research-validated model of instruction that helps ELL students develop English Skills and master content standards. In mathematics, teachers screen at the beginning of the year with Math Recovery Screeners allowing teachers to see a students' mathematical conceptual knowledge, as well as their misunderstandings. Teachers immediately group students based on the assessments and provide instruction in order to fill the mathematical gaps in understanding. Students scoring above level are challenged through online computer programs that allow them to problem solve, think critically and solve real world problems. While City Heights has between 50% and 60% economically disadvantaged students, there is only a 2% achievement gap in performance on the ACT Aspire test. As a matter of fact, in a couple of grade levels, the economically disadvantaged students out scored the remainder of the group.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The moment students arrive on the first day of school they realize it's going to be a great year! Each year the staff chooses a theme for the first week of school. This year our "Come One, Come All to the Greatest School Year of All" followed a circus theme. As students arrived on campus, they saw welcome banners and decorations. When the bell rang, students walked the red carpet into the building. The remainder of the week students participated in special circus themed activities. This sets the stage for a motivating and fun environment for the year. Our student centered school believes student motivation, a sense of belonging, a safe environment, and strong relationships are what makes our school successful. While our school maintains high academic expectation for students, we want to balance that with activities that support and promote students socially and emotionally. This can be a specialty week, like participating in the Olympic games. Students also have the opportunity to interact with other grade levels by choosing a monthly club they want to be a part of such as photography, cooking, or sewing club. Students also meet together in our morning assembly, Rise and Shine. During this time, students are recognized for their accomplishments, share their work, celebrate their birthday, and compete in grade level games. Our school schedules schoolwide celebrations that help motivate and engage students including: Dr. Seuss Week, Kindness Challenge Month, and School Spirit Days. In addition, whenever the principal notices a dip in motivation, a special day is adopted such as Crazy Sock Day, National Fun at School Day, World Compliment Day, and the staff favorite... National Chocolate Day.

The staff embraces the fact they are molding the lives of our young students. They make each moment of the day count through meaningful, engaging activities. The staff believes relationships with students are the way to ensure success with students. The large banner hanging in our school entry way simply says, "Making a Difference". This is what the staff does on a daily basis- they make a difference in the lives of students, parents, the community and each other. The staff is the backbone of the school and it takes every member pulling in the same direction to meet the needs and develop the whole child. The staff is valued and supported in so many ways including opportunities for professional development workshops, additional time to work together with colleagues, receiving requested supplies and materials, and being served special lunches and snacks. Our staff provides input on all aspects of the school, works with the principal in all areas of planning and implementation, helps determine school goals and budgeting needs, and develops or determines needed change in procedures.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Involving parents and the community in all areas of school life, leads to more engaged and motivated students resulting in higher student achievement. The staff work closely with parents and community members in order to have a thriving school that receives the support of all stakeholders. We are very intentional to make parents feel welcome at school which starts with a warm greeting from our office personnel. We provide activities for our parents to participate in throughout the year such as Fall Family Fun Night, Grandparents Day, Muffins with Mom and Donuts with Dad. We also host "Be a Student for a Day" where we invite parents into the classroom to become a student. This allows parents to experience first hand the rigor of our curriculum and understand what their child's day is like while at school.

Due to the fact we have a high mobility rate, we work to welcome new families to our school. We have a "Welcome" brochure that shares about our school; the principal mails out a "Welcome to our School" postcard; and new students are matched up with a buddy to introduce them to all aspects of our school. We lead our students in serving our community through several service projects including food drives, book and toy donations to the children's shelter, Christmas angel tree, and visiting the nursing home.

Community involvement and citizenship is a goal we have at every grade level. The police department and fire department are on our block, so we are able to partner with them in various ways. Students regularly make cards and cookies to deliver to both stations. During our "Kindness Challenge" the 1st grade made a giant basket of snacks and delivered it to the police station and fire station. Our 3rd grade has adopted the

officers at the police station as their special partners. Police officers come to special events with 3rd grade, play games with them, provide lunch for our students and make cards at the holidays. Students remember our active military serving overseas by making them cards and shipping care packages overseas. We have a large assembly for veterans on Veterans Day so students can show appreciation. Our staff hosts a “Making a Difference” ceremony where we recognize community members who make an impact on our city. We present them with a plaque and then invite them into classrooms to share about citizenship.

City Heights also enjoys bringing community members to work with our students. A local bank comes yearly to a “Dollar and Sense” program for nine weeks. Local dentists and other health care professionals teach about how to be healthy. Our Extension Office provides special science programs.

3. Professional Development:

Research says the classroom teacher has the largest impact on student achievement, therefore, we ensure all staff members receive the professional development (PD) they need in order to develop high levels of student achievement. Teachers must continue growing in their knowledge in order to meet the ever changing needs of students. This can only be accomplished through high quality, job embedded PD. We provide schoolwide PD on initiatives that impact all staff members, as well as individualized PD for teachers with specific needs. Our teachers continuously seek out professional development in the areas of reading, math, science, poverty, character education, health and wellness, and differentiation.

During the week, teachers have common planning time and meet with their Professional Learning Community, along with the principal. A great deal of this time is spent examining student work, developing learning paths for the students, and creating lessons to match the needs of students. We then determine if additional PD is needed in order to implement the strategies and curriculum so that all students will be successful. We remain in a continuous cycle of examining student work, developing a plan, determining what support the teacher needs, implementing the plan and evaluating the effectiveness. This process has lead to both student and teacher growth. Our staff exemplifies what it is to be a lifelong learner, never settling with the status quo, and understanding that when we know better, then we do better.

Each year teachers determine a growth goal they believe will help them become a better educator. Throughout the year they attend PD, read research articles, and seek out other educators who already possess that skill or knowledge. The growth plans help the staff to be more effective working with students. Growth plans can range from classroom management, working with students in poverty, understanding the impact of executive functioning, reading strategies to help struggling readers and character education. We also look at student summative data and choose year long goals that will require PD. This year one of our goals has been on understanding the science of reading and how it impacts student achievement. Our kindergarten- 2nd grade teachers attended six days of PD in the summer, while 3rd-5th received two days. We scheduled high quality presenters to the school to share on the topic and participated in webinars. Our co-op literacy specialists worked throughout the year with us on implementation of science of reading and we held book studies. After each PD, we developed a plan of action on how to implement the new knowledge and understanding. PD always helps us to be more efficient and effective, resulting in higher student achievement.

4. School Leadership:

The overarching philosophy of the leadership at City Heights is servant leadership and leading by example. This philosophy is reflected in the warm family-like atmosphere that can be felt upon entering the building. Believing in the old saying, “A fish rots from the head down”, the principal takes full responsibility for all areas within the building. This includes taking the responsibility when things don’t go as planned and also passing on to the staff the recognition of the many excellent things of the school. The principal operates under a distributed leadership model, encouraging all staff to step up to lead in various ways and times. Leadership capacity is leveraged by including all stakeholders in the educational process. This promotes high levels of trust, deeper commitment and willingness to take a risk in front of peers. Building relationships with the staff is an important goal of the leadership. Therefore, caring about the staff’s personal lives is as important as caring about their professional lives. The leadership constantly reminds the

staff that it takes every staff member doing their job to make our school successful. The level of high expectations causes the staff to rise to the challenge and enjoy the results of a school functioning at high levels in all areas.

Our school leadership structure includes the principal, assistant principal, a counselor and a leadership team comprised of staff members. All staff are expected to be on some type of leadership team such as curriculum, special activities, school improvement, parent involvement, health and wellness, or character education. By having all staff involved in leadership, we operate as a well oiled machine with everyone on board and moving in the same direction. Our number one goal as leaders is to promote student success. The leadership strongly believes in early intervention at the early grades, thus leading the staff in extensive study, PD and implementation of high quality, results proven instruction in K-2. Our belief system is that all students can learn, we just have to determine what each student needs in order to succeed. This type of thinking leads to long hours of meeting together to determine the “how to” for each child. Our leaders lead with an understanding that research shows when students leave the elementary years, their lives are basically set academically, socially and emotionally. This is both a heavy burden, yet also an incredible opportunity to know we hold in our hands the keys to success for the students.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The defining attribute at City Heights can be summed up in a single word, “Heart”. The school leadership looks to hire staff who have heart, as this is something you can’t teach. By having a staff who has “heart” for the education profession, students, and their families, the stage is set to have the kind of school that sets high standards for their own performance and high expectations for students. When a group of individuals who have heart come together the results are nothing less than amazing.

When breaking down the definition of what it means to have heart, it becomes clear this is what truly impacts our school. First, having heart means to be compassionate, caring, and kind. These qualities are revealed through our focus on the whole child. We understand that when a child has physical needs, he is unable to learn. The staff also participates in PD for social-emotional development of children, realities for children living in poverty, children with emotional challenges and students struggling with executive functioning skills.

Secondly, to have heart means to “have the necessary will”. Our staff has the necessary will to do whatever it takes to reach our students. This is why teachers do home visits, spend hours researching new strategies, collaborate with others to determine the best teaching methods, teach and reteach until there is student mastery, and change the way they normally do things if there is a better way. The staff have the will to take a risk and try new things with students, to never give up on a student, to give all they have to the students every day, to get back up when they fall, and to strive for excellence. Lastly, to have heart means “connecting to something beyond ourselves that taps into what really motivates us”. The staff is motivated by reaching our students academically, socially, and emotionally.

Everything we do supports those areas in all children. Academically, the staff remains focused on the cycle of assessment, examining the data, making a plan of action, implementing, and reflecting. Remaining in this cycle leads to job embedded PD, collaboration, differentiation, implementation with fidelity, and reflection of the results. Socially, the staff ensures opportunities to interact and build relationships with each other, as we know we sink or swim together. The staff creates opportunities for students to interact socially within their class, grade level and at other grade levels through turn and talks in class, partnership work, interest groups, Club Days, Stay and Play events, and performances. Teachers focus on the listening and speaking standards to ensure student’s social development. Emotionally, the staff supports students by listening, providing a safe environment, and advocating for their needs. The staff’s desire is for our students to know they are cared for and valued.

The bottom line is that it is not a program that makes a school great, it’s the people!