

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):
- 8 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 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	51	46	97
1	38	46	84
2	60	52	112
3	52	34	86
4	58	65	123
5	0	0	0
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	259	243	502

*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):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 8 % Black or African American
 - 14 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 72 % White
 - 3 % 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: 12%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	35
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	31
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	66
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	529
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 11 %
55 Total number ELL

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

Arabic, Chinese, French, Gujarati, Spanish, Turkish, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 44 %
Total number students who qualify: 221

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
65 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>6</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>40</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 9
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.	25
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	14
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
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	94%	94%	95%	94%	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.

Provide a safe environment, promoting the development of independent, life-long learners. Sequoyah is a H.A.P.P.Y. place to learn. Students are H-elpful, A-ccepting, P-ositive, P-roductive, Y-oung learners.

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

After 2 years of deliberate planning, Sequoyah Elementary School opened in September of 1968 as an innovative, experimental school whose purpose was to improve teaching and learning practices in Russellville and the surrounding areas. Several principles upon which the school was designed were considered controversial at the time. The school was non-graded. Students advanced or were provided additional time and support for mastery at their own pace. An open classroom setting included multi-aged, flexible student groups in each class based upon students' academic needs and interests. Parent-teacher conferences rather than traditional report cards assisted each student's educational team to establish goals for the student. Team teaching was implemented to make better use of teacher time and strengths, encouraging professional growth through sharing of ideas. The school's motto was, "If my approach or method or subject matter is not working for this child, I'll change it." In addition, paraprofessionals were utilized to assume non-professional duties. Sequoyah piloted the first class for special needs children aged 5-9 in the state. We celebrated Sequoyah's 50 year anniversary last spring.

Sequoyah Elementary is a neighborhood school located in the heart of Russellville, a central Arkansas community of approximately 28,000 residents. It is comprised of 545 students in pre-K through 4th grade. Students who attend Sequoyah live in the neighborhood, the greater Russellville area, and surrounding communities. Several students not residing in our zone or even in our community elect to attend Sequoyah through out-of-zone transfer requests and school choice. We welcome and embrace diversity in our student population, 43% of which receive free and reduced meals. Due to increased enrollment in recent years, two additions were added to the building in 2015, which include a new 4th grade wing, state-of-the-art art room, self-contained special needs classroom, physical and occupational therapy room, and two preschool classrooms. Additionally, a makerspace was developed with the student engineer in mind. Equipped with 3-D printers and pens, a wide variety of building tools such as hammers, saws, tape measures, and levels, as well as an assortment of consumable products including cardboard, clay, and bubble wrap are available for project use. Despite our large facility, Sequoyah has maintained its neighborhood school feel.

Although Sequoyah is no longer an open-classroom, non-graded school, many of the premises upon which it was designed are still evident today. Carol Ann Tomlinson had not yet coined the phrase differentiated instruction when Sequoyah opened its doors, yet that was the foundation of the school's instructional practices. Today staff are committed to ensuring every learner realizes his or her potential, providing multiple opportunities for differentiation in content, process, product, and the learning environment. Teachers utilize leveled texts and small group instruction in reading, writing, and math to differentiate content for students. Tiered activities for students based upon need and interest are provided, as well as manipulatives for students who need them. When appropriate, student choice encourages students to express what they've learned in varied ways. At times the learning environment itself is altered for students. For example, a student may receive advanced math instruction at a higher grade in order to best meet his/her needs.

Sequoyah staff continue to develop strong working relationships with students, their families, and the community, understanding the positive impact this collaboration has on student achievement and growth. Parents are partners and integral in developing each child's educational program. We possess an unwavering commitment to our students' academic needs and successes, as well as fostering each child's social and emotional development.

Like Sequoyah's first teachers who volunteered to spend a year researching, planning, and preparing for its doors to open, Sequoyah's current staff are among the most dedicated teachers in the area. They work diligently to provide an enriched, rigorous curriculum employing hands-on and minds-on activities to fully engage our learners. Though not team teaching, team planning occurs at each grade level to ensure that all students have access to the same curriculum and opportunities, varying lessons to meet individual and class needs. Vertical as well as horizontal planning occurs in our ongoing effort to develop the most effective scope and sequence. In addition, cross-curricular planning transpires between specialists and grade level teams.

Sequoyah has embraced and integrated the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) Initiative. This focus purposefully incorporates STEAM curricula into the regular classroom environment. In an effort to prepare students to excel in an ever-changing global workforce, we must intentionally design inquiry-based, exploratory, and real-world problem-based learning opportunities for our students. We believe an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, art, and math will greatly influence the development of critical thinking, foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the arts, and cultivate creativity and innovation within students.

Sequoyah has established a strong reputation for maintaining high academic expectations and top test scores. As a result, we have received Reward and Recognition money from the Arkansas Department of Education multiple times in recent years. The money awarded has been spent on providing classrooms with materials, supplies, and technology which directly benefit our students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Sequoyah fully participates in the Arkansas R.I.S.E. (Reading Initiative for Student Excellence) campaign. As a result, a greater emphasis is placed upon phonemic awareness. Emergent and early readers utilize the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum, Benchmark Phonics, and decodable readers to supplement the district selected Journeys curriculum, the foundation of our literacy curriculum. However, standards and student needs, rather than curriculum, guide instruction. A variety of assessments are utilized to determine students' reading abilities such as Phonemic Skills Awareness Assessments, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and iStation.

The workshop model is utilized beginning with a short and explicit mini-lesson, targeting specific reading skills. Incorporating the gradual release model, students experience new skills together with the teacher's guidance, after which they practice the skills independently. The teacher conducts differentiated, small guided reading groups. Ongoing progress monitoring occurs through observations, anecdotal notes, and accuracy checks. Differentiated literacy centers for kindergarten and 1st grade, and an option board for grades 2-4, are utilized providing students a wide variety of literacy skills practice and student choice. Students are exposed to many pieces of quality fiction and non-fiction texts daily.

Sequoyah has recently adopted the Empowering Writers Curriculum because it provides students more opportunities for daily writing than our previous curriculum. The writing block allows students to apply a newly taught skill to their writing, edit and revise with peers, as well as write for a variety of audiences. Students conference with the teacher or peers for specific, differentiated feedback. Quarterly writing prompts are assessed utilizing a district rubric. Teachers periodically score prompts together in an effort to calibrate their scoring.

Data from writing prompts, classroom assignments, iStation, and ACT Aspire are analyzed regularly to make literacy decisions for individual students, as well as curricular and planning decisions.

1b. Mathematics:

The Eureka Math curriculum was adopted by the district as the primary resource for mathematics instruction. A conceptual understanding of mathematical progressions, incorporating the mathematical practices are included in a series of lessons. An explicit instructional approach, coupled with the gradual release model, provides students an opportunity to explore multiple strategies for solving real world problems. Strategies range on a continuum from concrete representation to the traditional algorithm. Students are taught to analyze the structure of a problem to determine which strategy is most efficient for them.

Students are presented with multiple formative and summative assessments. Application problems allow teachers a point in time opportunity to determine which students need additional support. Teachers pull small groups to provide scaffolded assistance and to address misunderstandings. Formative assessments such as exit tickets provide teachers with information for planning future instruction. Summative assessments such as mid-module and module assessments, iStation, and Act Aspire yield relevant data regarding individual student needs, as well as school strengths and areas for growth. All data sources are analyzed quarterly to identify struggling learners. A math interventionist provides Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention services to students in need.

Eureka Math provides educators with professional development and support materials. In addition, newsletters and videos are provided to assist parents with concepts taught within each module including topics, academic vocabulary, and illustrated problem solving strategies. A supplemental resource that directly aligns is Zearn Math. This digital learning tool is designed to engage students with concrete and

virtual manipulatives. This flexible resource supports differentiation through reinforcement of current concepts as well as providing enrichment for students who are working at an advanced level. Students have access to Zearn both at school and at home.

1c. Science:

Igniting a passion for science is a central element of the STEAM initiative. The Arkansas Science Standards are challenging teachers to make important shifts in teaching practices. Students are challenged as well. Because science instruction is standards based, lessons are taught with explicit connections to the crosscutting concepts, science and engineering practices, and the disciplinary core ideas through real-world scenarios. We feel strongly that science should be less about memorizing facts and instead, focusing on the practices and skills that are essential to career scientists. In addition, the standards integrate engineering content. Students in grades kindergarten through grade four utilize the same engineering design process, yet we encourage divergent thinking as they work to identify solutions to problems. The Project Lead The Way curriculum was selected for its focus on integrating science content within engineering focused learning.

Beginning in kindergarten students are engaged in authentic inquiry experiences for specific scientific concepts. Students develop a testable question, plan and carry out an investigation, collect and analyze data, and construct an argument from evidence. Computer Science is another area of emphasis. Students explore beginner computer programming skills.

We also recognize building students' capacity to construct explanations in science is vital. Classroom teachers explored the text *What's Your Evidence?* to learn how to engage students in writing claims with evidence. This has been an identified area for continued study as we embed this practice into instruction.

Teachers analyze scores from the ACT Aspire Science Assessment. One identified area of improvement is interpretation of data. Teachers are purposeful in creating opportunities for students to analyze and interpret data in meaningful contexts. We are shifting from providing pre-made graph templates to students selecting the appropriate type of graph and constructing the graph themselves.

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

Our district has elected to integrate Arkansas Curriculum Social Studies Framework standards into the curriculum in a variety of ways. Teachers at each grade level work collaboratively to determine when and how social studies standards will be taught. Several standards are encompassed within the science curriculum. Cross-curricular modules such as kindergarten's Structure and Function Module incorporate social studies standards regarding man-made and nature-made resources and products. A 1st grade module, *Animal Adaptations*, includes multiple geography strand standards, which integrate weather patterns, regional climates, and other environmental characteristics affecting life in an ecosystem.

Teachers have developed a variety of interdisciplinary units within the reading and writing curriculum. In addition to fiction and non-fiction texts, a wide selection of books in our literacy library are utilized to develop lessons and units on a variety of social studies topics and content. Second grade, for example, uses *The Lemonade War* by Jaqueline Davies to support an economic unit. They learn first-hand economic concepts such as scarcity, cost and benefits, and market systems. A local bank partners to provide supplementary lessons and materials. Student learning is enhanced through a service learning project as students organize, advertise, and operate their own lemonade stand during recess. Last year's students donated proceeds to the River Valley Imagination Library, providing books to children in our county. The Scholastic News magazine includes a variety of current national and world news stories, as well as holiday traditions.

Arkansas history units have been developed at each grade level utilizing a plethora of resources, including the Arkansas Historical Preservation Society, the Arkansas Department of Education, and teacher-made lessons. Learning is enhanced through engaging learning expeditions to sites such as the Archaeological Toltec Mounds State Park for Sequoyah's 3rd graders and the Historic Arkansas Museum for 4th graders. In

addition, 4th grade teachers receive an annual grant through which students tour Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, showcasing 5 centuries of American masterpieces providing students rich historical exposure.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students experience an enriched curriculum by participating in Physical Education, Library, Music, Art, and Science Lab for 50 minutes weekly with high quality standards-based lessons. School counselors conduct bi-weekly guidance lessons, as well. We are fortunate to have specialists who are highly respected at both the district and state level. They understand their role in fulfilling the school's vision.

Our specialists schedule collaborative planning time with each grade level team to develop true cross-curricular learning opportunities. Specialists are purposeful in supporting units and themes taught in the general education classroom. All staff help students make connections across various disciplines using common vocabulary that takes learning to a deeper level.

The science specialist works collaboratively with classroom teachers to front-load or extend learning in the regular classroom. The science specialist is committed to increasing student interest and participation in science, technology, and engineering. In addition, she has partnered with the art teacher and assistant principal to create a 3-D Printing Enrichment Program. Third and fourth grade students may develop an idea for an authentic need, create their design using 3-D modeling software, then present the concept to a staff panel. If criteria is met, the student prints with the 3-D printer. Student ideas have included can tab opener, popsicle holder, and a device to hold a phone charger cord on a nightstand.

In the art room students explore artists, art history, cultures, drawing, painting, fiber art, mixed media, printmaking, and ceramic methods and processes. Students utilize a printing press, learning relief and carving techniques. They use a variety of clay tools and techniques, prior to going through the firing process with a kiln. Engineering, science, math and literacy are infused into the curriculum. An active student art gallery is continuously displayed in our hallways and library. Our art teacher was recognized as the Elementary Art Educator of the Year in 2017.

At Sequoyah, students receive a strong foundation in the elements of music. Students sing, dance, play instruments, and gain a deeper appreciation for music and its importance in diverse cultures. We have many performing opportunities such as grade level musicals and performances, a talent show, and school-wide assemblies. Students are able to showcase talents and discover an outlet to express themselves creatively.

The art and music teachers created a voluntary Classy Club Fine Arts Program for 4th graders. Students participate in monthly meetings, analyze classical art works and music, and experience a variety of guest speakers sharing their art. Participating students enjoy a culminating event at Arkansas Tech University to visit the theater, art, music, and culinary arts departments.

Sequoyah's library media center promotes the enjoyment of reading while teaching literacy skills needed to become successful readers. Students are introduced to award winning literature over multiple genres. The library media center is also responsible for teaching students to become independent users of information systems. Students participate in a wide range of grade level appropriate lessons and activities, which include using the Big 6 and Super 3 Research Models. A large collection of books and materials are available for student and faculty use, including over 200 eBook titles, iPads, iMacs and OSMO's.

Our physical education teacher's motto is to move, move, move! Students work on developing coordination

and a variety of skills while encouraging good sportsmanship. The goal is to help students learn that exercise is fun so that it becomes a lifelong endeavor. Students engage in a wide range of activities including bowling, basketball, soccer, gymnastics, archery, and golf. All students participate in Jump Rope for Heart. Second, third, and fourth-graders participate in a half marathon, known as Recess Rockers, running their final mile together as younger classmates cheer. In addition, our physical education teacher leads district colleagues in developing district-wide fitness programs for all students.

With a combination of district, PTO, and state Reward and Recognition money, Sequoyah is fortunate to be technology rich. Each classroom possesses iPads at approximately a 1:2 ratio. Our third and fourth grade classes are 1:1 with Chromebooks, utilizing Google Classroom daily. All classes rotate weekly through the Computer Lab. Kindergarten and first grade students learn beginning computer operating skills and practice iStation skills. Second, third, and fourth-graders learn keyboarding skills through the Typing Club program and develop proficiency using multiple Google applications, such as Docs, Slides, and Sheets.

3. Special Populations:

Sequoyah Elementary has a strong Response to Intervention (RTI) process aimed at utilizing multiple sources of student data to identify students needing Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention services. The RTI team is comprised of the Instructional Facilitator, both reading interventionists, the math interventionist, the classroom teacher, an educational psychologist, as well as principals. Our RTI process is essential to creating personalized intervention plans aimed at closing the achievement gap for individual students. This committee has established quarterly, and as needed, meetings to monitor growth and to determine if intervention services require adaptations. Our RTI process has proven to increase the number of students who are successful in the general education classroom.

Students with disabilities have widely varying needs, but the staff at Sequoyah Elementary believe these students can be successful in the classroom when appropriate accommodations and modifications are made. We recognize that most special education students can effectively learn the same content as their peers. One area of focus has been our efforts to improve processes to identify students with characteristics of dyslexia. Through ongoing progress monitoring, we are able to identify students with reading difficulties early. Three staff members have extensive training in providing research-based programs that use an Orton-Gillingham based approach to intervention.

English Language Learners receive a variety of different levels of supports to close the existing achievement gap between the overall school average and the ELL subgroup. A certified English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher was hired this year to provide additional services and professional learning opportunities for staff. The goal is to move ELLs toward proficiency in the communication skills of speaking, reading, and writing. Identified students meet with the ESOL teacher and instructional aide through pull out or inclusion services. In addition, seven teachers have earned English as a Second Language endorsements. These teachers have specialized training to provide more intensive supports for ELL students in their classroom.

Our goal is to provide instruction and opportunities for students who display evidence of high performance capability in intellectual, creative, leadership, or specific academic areas. Gifted and talented students also need support and encouragement from educators to help them realize their potential. It is not enough to just have the talent; students must work to use that talent to achieve at remarkably high levels. The certified Gifted and Talented teacher facilitates both a 3rd and 4th grade pullout GT class for 150 minutes per week. In addition, the GT and classroom teachers provide K-2 students enrichment through specific lessons provided by the district GT coordinator. Students work on a wide array of activities across the affective and cognitive domains.

Students from poverty often lack the background knowledge and experiences that middle and upper class students typically possess. The research has long surmised that students in poverty typically have lower oral language skills which in turn impacts early literacy skills in the educational setting. In 2018, ACT Aspire data illustrated that an achievement gap exists between the overall school average and the low socioeconomic subgroup. To close the existing this gap, teachers have focused on increasing oral language

activities into their lessons. In addition, our school counselor and the district social worker collaborate to meet the most basic of physical needs. School-based mental health services are also provided when needed. Staff have engaged in professional learning opportunities as well. The district has also invested heavily in providing pre-K services for families in poverty in our local community.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Sequoyah Elementary possesses a positive climate and school culture, which promotes students' ability to learn. The smiley face, first used by Principal Payne in 1972, has become synonymous with Sequoyah. Sequoyah is a H.A.P.P.Y. place is not only a part of its mission statement, it has become its motto. It is a significant part of our history. Our strong culture is one of our greatest strengths and a source of pride.

The administration, teachers, and staff maintain a set of shared beliefs and values. It is our goal that Sequoyah is a friendly, welcoming, and helpful elementary school. This begins at the front office. Every student, parent, and community member should feel welcome regardless of their socioeconomic, ethnic, or religious status. This commitment is carried throughout the school by teachers and support staff in their daily interactions with all patrons.

The most essential element of a strong school culture is relationships. Positive relationships with stakeholders are at the heart of the climate we strive to cultivate. At the onset of each year, all staff utilize the 2x10 strategy with an at-risk student. In addition, staff are present and contributing at school evening events and activities. While attendance is never mandatory, teachers attend because of their commitment to their profession and, most importantly, to the students and families with whom they work. They understand the positive affect their relationships have on students' social-emotional well-being and academic performance.

In an effort to enhance our positive culture, we launched a new program called Kids Club designed to cultivate a family atmosphere within our large school and build a stronger sense of community. Heterogeneous k-4 cohorts of students were randomly created and assigned to each licensed staff member, including principals. Kids Club meets twice monthly for an advisory-type class. The cohort group of 10-12 students will stay together with the same sponsor each year. When presented with this idea, staff demonstrated enthusiasm at the onset. As with any initiative, without buy-in, the concept would not have come to fruition. Several staff immediately offered to develop lesson ideas.

Our goals for Kids Club include developing students' affective domain, creating a cooperative learning environment where students value contributions and diversity of others, fostering a strong teacher-student and student-student rapport, providing an opportunity for older students to serve as role models for underclassmen, and to increase kindness and pride in the school. We strive to develop the soft skills we hope to observe in our students as they become adults.

It is important to create an environment where teachers feel supported and valued. Sequoyah staff appreciate authentic and specific feedback, which promotes continuously growth and reflection of their skills and knowledge. An open-door policy exists, allowing teachers to feel comfortable to share their perspectives on a broad range of instructional and non-instructional topics. Furthermore, administrators solicit staff input with the activity and duty schedules, special event dates, and school improvement priorities and actions.

A positive school culture must be protected and nurtured. This is a shared responsibility of all. It is the expectation that students and staff conduct themselves in a manner, which promotes a positive environment.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Much of Sequoyah's success can be attributed to strong partnerships with families and the surrounding community. Staff seek purposeful connections with a variety of local resources. We are fortunate to live in a community that supports and values public education.

Multiple means for effective communication are utilized with parents. Students' academic achievement and

progress is shared via quarterly midterms, report cards, and award ceremonies. Parent teacher conferences are held twice annually. Newsletters, Facebook, and Twitter are important tools. Two-way communication is fostered through Remind and Dojo apps, emails, and phone calls. Parents participate in, and contribute to, our school improvement plan, the school health committee, Title 1 meetings, and the district-level Ensuring Student Success meetings.

Sequoyah benefits from an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), which supports students and staff in a variety of ways. They sponsor many annual community engagement activities, help fund field trips and additional technology devices. In addition, they developed a Community Volunteer Tutoring Program. Former teachers, community members, and parents volunteer to tutor students.

Annual events are planned to involve families and the community. The Great Sequoyah Campout, with its literacy or science-related camping/outdoor theme, provides multiple high-interest stations for families. The Sequoyah Sock Hop is held in celebration of the 50th day of school. The purpose of the evening is to provide a free, family-friendly evening. Families dance and play board games of the era. The Arkansas Tech University (ATU) Softball team volunteers to work stations, allowing staff to mingle and enjoy time with students. Sequoyah hosts other evening experiences such as literacy, STEAM, and coding events. All of these activities, developed and implemented by staff, are designed to be informative and engaging for the whole family.

We are fortunate to have Arkansas Tech University (ATU) in our community. We partner with various ATU student groups, staff, and departments. The ATU Agriculture Department interns assist our after-school woodworking club, collaborating with Sequoyah students and volunteer staff to design and construct a woodworking project of their choice. An ATU biologist co-created activities, which support our animal adaptations unit for 1st graders. ATU STEM Center staff consult with our student-led robotics program.

This is our fourth year to participate in the matching grant with the Arkansas Arts Council's Arts In Education (AIE) Program to enhance the role of the arts in our school. Artists-in-Residence conduct three workshops for each classroom correlating their lessons to state standards. A variety of artists have worked with students such as a singer/songwriter, actress, dancer, and an African American male poet. His workshop supports our school improvement goal to improve the attitudes and achievement of our writers, particularly male writers.

3. Professional Development:

Professional learning focuses on improving staff effectiveness and ultimately student learning. As educators, we have a professional obligation to continuously develop and refine our knowledge and skills. Professional development is planned using a balanced approach. Some topics are directed from state and local levels, such as R.I.S.E. (Reading Initiative for Student Excellence), which has guided much of our professional learning this year. Other topics are initiated at the school level as a result of a thorough needs assessment that focuses on data-driven decision making. We purposefully strive to use the deep knowledge base that resides within our own staff. Many of our teachers have led meaningful professional learning sessions that utilize their own content area expertise, fostering leadership skills within our staff.

The leadership team identified two priorities as part of our commitment to continuous improvement, which has guided much of the professional learning this year. The first goal is to improve students' writing at all grades, closing the achievement gap between male and female writers. Teachers viewed a video produced by children's author Ralph Fletcher titled, *Dude, Listen to This!* They conducted a book study on Fletcher's companion book titled, *Boy Writers, Reclaiming Their Voices*. This job embedded professional learning has resulted in teachers shifting their thinking on how to approach writing instruction with their male students and reshape writing conferences.

The second goal is to cultivate a school-wide culture, which values attendance in an effort to improve students' attendance rates. Using resources from Attendance Works, staff studied the negative impact of chronic absenteeism on achievement, national statistics, and strategies for engaging parents in attendance conversations. Discussions were held to brainstorm how to reinforce the belief that attendance is important

for student success. Staff members implemented the Attendance H.E.R.O. (Here Everyday Ready On-time) theme.

In recent years, we have also provided a focus on science professional learning. As a school that focuses on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), improving science content knowledge for teachers became increasingly important. Ongoing professional development was provided on the new science performance expectations that were recently adopted by the state. In order to implement these standards, teachers needed background on the crosscutting concepts as well as the science and engineering practices that are embedded within the performance expectations. This professional learning was led by a staff member with previous experience as an elementary science specialist. Other science professional development included how to incorporate authentic inquiry experiences into science instruction as well as how to engage students in constructing scientific explanations.

4. School Leadership:

The administrators are honored to serve as building leaders of Sequoyah Elementary, applying the philosophies of both the servant and shared leadership styles. Through service-minded practices, they hope to increase stakeholder engagement, gain trust, and build valuable relationships. Leading by example, they recognize the increasing demands placed upon staff. Principals assume routine tasks such as recess and cafeteria duty, and cover classrooms allowing teachers to observe colleagues, attend meetings or their own child's special event.

Coupled with the desire to demonstrate servant leadership is the devotion to promote shared leadership practices. Building leadership capacity helps empower staff to make great decisions, generating more opportunities for continuous improvement and achievement. When the school first considered the implementation of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) initiative, four teacher leaders traveled with the principal to visit innovative schools in Minnesota, as well as an in-state school. After our year-long study, teacher leaders presented innovative ideas to district administration. Purposeful cross-curricular planning among classroom teachers and specialists would be an essential component for successful implementation. In addition, permission to purchase a problem-based science curriculum for Sequoyah was requested. Later teachers and students presented the positive impact of the curriculum to our school board, who then approved the adoption for the other elementary schools in the district. Staff conducted professional development for teachers across the district. Teacher leaders have presented at the 2017 and 2018 Arkansas STEM Summit Conference. As a result of our STEAM implementation, schools from across the state have visited Sequoyah. Teacher and student leaders conduct tours while describing our ongoing work.

A collegial spirit is present as principals work closely with, and support, a variety of teacher leaders. The instructional facilitator conducts weekly grade level meetings supporting novice and veteran teachers with ongoing professional learning and data analysis of student performance. Our dedicated Response to Intervention team, consisting of the instructional facilitator, literacy and math coaches, educational psychologist, and administrators work collaboratively with classroom teachers to ensure the needs of our struggling learners are met. Grade level chairs work with principals each spring to create the master schedule for the following year. They help make decisions and plan special events for the school. Each grade level has a technology expert to assist staff with utilization of new devices, software, or apps. Our School Improvement Team, with input from staff, develops, communicates, and ensures the implementation of our school improvement plan. In addition, teacher leaders are encouraged to design their own professional learning communities. Currently teachers are participating in a book study on engaging male writers.

A great respect for staff strengths and expertise exists. Staff feel empowered to share openly. One of our most valued norms is no silent discontent. Building consensus from various viewpoints can be a difficult process. Ultimately students' interests are at the heart of every decision we make.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

While an eclectic approach to best practices ensures a school's success, Sequoyah's development of collaborative, cross-curricular planning among staff is notable. A true culture of collaboration exists among staff. While this practice has developed and strengthened over time; it is ever changing. Members of our learning community are dedicated to working together to increase student learning and achievement, our primary focus.

Multiple benefits for students and teachers exist. Students' conceptual understanding deepens when they utilize academic vocabulary in a variety of settings, experience concepts from multiple perspectives, and make meaning and connections across disciplines. All student have access to the same curriculum. Teachers are no longer planning and teaching in isolation. They possess a shared vision and mutual goals. In addition, they share a responsibility for student learning, resources, information, ideas, and expertise. As a result, they design more creative lessons and increase rigor for all students.

A daily planning time embedded within the school day exists for grade level teams. At the onset of each year, teams establish norms regarding how they will work and plan together, which include high expectations and accountability systems. This collegial spirit is built upon trust, fostering a sense of community among staff. In addition, vertical teams meet to discuss curriculum, standards, academic vocabulary, and potential learning gaps for students. We are committed to providing quarterly release time for the art, science, and media specialists to plan with each grade level. Classroom teachers share content standards and units with specialists in order to plan cross-curricular lessons and units. Specialists determine ways to incorporate academic vocabulary and concepts into their curriculum to support student learning.

Kindergarten teachers, for example, developed a cross-curricular unit focused on project-based learning opportunities. Each class plants seeds, observes plant needs, growth, and parts with raised garden beds. A variety of learning occurs in the classroom utilizing writing, science, and math concepts. Teachers also worked with the science and art specialists to plan lessons and activities to support science standards, including the development of a model to demonstrate the structure and function of plant needs. In art students design a model of a flower given a variety of materials to construct plant parts. This model is used in the science lab to create a replica utilizing 3-D pens. Additionally in art, students design clay pinch pots, which are glazed and fired in the kiln. Students plant seeds, as well as their 3-D flowers, in the clay pots. This exemplifies the type of cross-curricular connections we strive to achieve.

Lesson design across multiple disciplines develops a culture of shared responsibility for student learning. Teachers understand that together they are better. They will do whatever it takes to ensure students' success, which advances fulfillment of our shared vision.