

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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	5	10	15
1	11	7	18
2	16	8	24
3	7	7	14
4	10	14	24
5	10	16	26
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	59	62	121

*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
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 48 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 49 % White
 - 2 % 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: 43%

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

Ash Fork is challenged by a high mobility rate, primarily for two reasons. A large percentage of students are Hispanic and have family members living in Mexico. Ash Fork is a year-round school and starts in mid-July. Many of the Hispanic students do not come back to Arizona until late August or September. Some families leave to visit Mexico before school is finished. Frequently such students continue each year, but are not enrolled during the entire year.

The other reason high mobility occurs is, through local newspapers and word of mouth, parents discover the high student achievement at Ash Fork and want to enroll their children. The school has an open enrollment policy so parents are able to enroll them. If students are out of district boundaries, bus transportation is not provided and parents are responsible for transporting them to and from school. Distances generally are from 20 to 40 miles one way and after enrolling parents decide the everyday travel becomes an issue, so they enroll them back into their local district school.

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	27
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	45
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	104
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.43
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	43

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 81%
Total number students who qualify: 98

8. Students receiving special education services: 21 %
25 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>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>7</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 7
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	5
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
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 24:1

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	93%	99%	99%	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.

Vision is "All Students Prepared for College or Career." "Our mission, in partnership with students, home and community, is to create responsible citizens who are lifelong learners ready to succeed in a diverse and 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

A true "rags to riches" tale, Ash Fork Elementary School moved from one of the lowest achieving schools in the state to one of the top academic achieving schools in Arizona. Despite challenging demographics (81% free and reduced lunch, 21% special education, 48% Hispanic, 43% mobility), Ash Fork Elementary has proved that all students can learn at high levels.

Best characterized as intensely focused, the school has a clear vision and mission with all aspects of the school aligned to students' well-being and educational development. The school community, including staff and students and parents, have developed a growth mind set and believe in continuous improvement based on use of data, reflection, and innovation. It exemplifies a learning community that has the desire, support, and freedom to innovate for the betterment of students.

Ash Fork is a small, rural, high poverty community located 57 miles west of Flagstaff, AZ, on I-40 in northern Arizona. The town's population is approximately 759 with an average income of \$26,594 as compared to Arizona's average income of \$50,448. Students from surrounding rural areas also attend the district. The Ash Fork School District is the hub of the small community and had its first graduating class in 1929. It has three separate schools: an elementary K-5, a middle school 6-8, and a high school 9-12. There is one superintendent/principal shared among the 3 schools with a designated lead teacher at each school. This application is in support of Ash Fork Elementary School which has an enrollment of approximately 121 students.

The district's innovative school schedule has extended hours during a 4-day week, Monday through Thursday. This is a typical model for the area's schools because of large geographical areas for busing students. The Ash Fork District uses a modified year-round schedule starting in July and ending in May with 2 weeks off for fall, winter, and spring breaks. This schedule allows the district to use Fridays, intercessions and a two week period in summer for targeted reteaching of core standards that students have not yet mastered.

The teaching structure is a traditional model for grades K-2, with one classroom and one teacher per grade. For grades 3-5 the school uses a blended learning model with one expert teacher for ELA/Social Studies and one for Math/Science. Each expert teacher has the opportunity to instruct a cohort group for three sequential years. This model maximizes the learning time for each student without having time lost to assess student's progress and learning style. The school finds this model facilitates high achievement resulting in a high percentage of students not just meeting the state academic standards, but exceeding them.

The vision and mission for the school district is short, simple, and easy to remember. Teachers frequently refer to them so students understand how their learning will enable them to achieve the district's mission and vision. The elementary school focuses on transitioning students to the middle school having mastered, and hopefully exceeding, the K-5 grade level state standards so they can continually progress to achieve the district vision and mission.

As have many other rural schools and schools with challenging demographics, Ash Fork has struggled to successfully educate its students. During the 2009-2010 school year, Ash Fork was designated as one of the lowest-performing schools in Arizona and was required to develop a school improvement plan. The school board hired new leadership at the district level, needs were assessed, and a 3-year research-based plan of action was implemented. This resulted in a standards-based focus on curriculum and instruction with active student engagement and also more subtle changes that included a cultural shift to high expectations for students and staff and a belief that Ash Fork students could effectively learn, given high-quality teaching, time to master standards, and student effort. A comprehensive professional development plan was successfully implemented and the administrator and teachers were held accountable for changes.

Making drastic changes in all aspects of the school was challenging, but student learning and school culture began to improve as measured by achievement data, classroom observation data, and perception data. At the end of the 3-year school improvement plan, during the 2012-2013 year, Ask Fork District was named one of

the top ten highest achieving districts by the Arizona Department of Education. The accountability model used by the state measured both growth and achievement. From a field of all public and charter schools, the state named Ask Fork as the top achieving school during the 2013-2014 school year. Because of the school's success, teachers and administrators from other schools frequently come to observe the instruction. It continues to be very motivating for the school community to see the success of their intensive work.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Ash Fork District uses a standards-based model for the core curriculum. Like many small and rural schools in Arizona, the district uses a curriculum framework named Beyond Textbooks (BT), developed by another school district in Arizona. These resources are extensive for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics which consist of detailed curriculum calendars, unwrapped documents, formative assessments, and teacher created resources aligned to Arizona state standards.

ELA includes a 90 minute block of instruction daily. Explicit instruction is first taught when introducing a new standard in a whole group setting with students actively engaged. One method of active engagement during whole group instruction is a "turn and talk" learning conversation where a teacher poses a thoughtful question to elicit higher level thinking. For example, the teacher may ask students to describe why they believe a character acted in a specific way. Then the teacher will ask what evidence a student has to support their thinking.

Formative and summative assessments provide necessary feedback for targeted extended opportunities and interventions for both ELA and mathematics. The curriculum framework provides two sets of formative assessments that can be used weekly to determine students' progress in meeting standards.

The school uses two separate adaptive ELA web-based computer software programs (Lexia Core 5 and Achieve 3000) that can differentiate standards based instruction and monitor students progress. Teachers can access immediate results of the personalized instruction to inform future instruction.

The focused teaching to standards, high expectations, real-life applications, differentiated support, and constant monitoring for each student has resulted in ELA state tests showing significantly higher achievement than the state average for Ash Fork Elementary School. For grades 3 and 4, the percentage of students scoring highly proficient in ELA was more than double the state averages of all public and charter schools.

1b. Mathematics:

Mathematics also has a daily 90-minute instructional block. Equal emphasis is placed on areas of conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application for each state standard. Teachers help students make connections as to why learning a specific standard and how they use it in real life. Explicit teaching is always an important part of the instruction. Real problems, interesting scenarios, and short learning videos frequently introduce a new concept to spark student interest and create motivation for learning. In addition, students use adaptive web-based computer software (IXL) for differentiated mathematics instruction.

To build conceptual understanding, many strategies are used to foster students thinking deeply about mathematics. One such method is miscue analysis. Observations during mathematics instruction reveal teachers using this strategy as a game-like activity during instruction. For example, the teacher may be modeling how to solve a problem and then make a purposeful error after warning students to think carefully to see if everything makes sense. As students excitedly "find" errors, and talk about why it is an error, the high level thinking solidifies the learning at a deeper level.

For both mathematics and ELA, teachers use the first formative assessment after initial direct and explicit instruction, then group students for reteaching and enrichment based on the results.

The use of real-life applications and thinking deeply have resulted in much higher levels of achievement for Ash Fork students. For example, 85% of grade 3 students passed the mathematics test compared to a state average of 53% of all public and charter schools with 45% of Ash Fork students scoring highly proficient as

compared to the state average of 22%. Grades 4 and 5 were also much higher compared to state averages. Despite highly challenging demographics, Ash Fork students outperform almost all other students in Arizona.

1c. Science:

Science concepts and vocabulary are embedded in the ELA curriculum to help students develop a conceptual framework. Science standards are also included in the BT framework. Students build a science foundation through reading, discussions, and writing using independent and small group activities. Ash Fork Elementary values and rewards teachers who integrate two different subject standards to help students find meaning and see connections.

To increase student interest and participation, curriculum based on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is used and provides opportunities to apply STEM concepts and skills in integrated and meaningful learning experiences with project-based learning opportunities incorporated. Grades K-2 primarily develop project-based learning through entire class activities and grades 3-5 use whole class and small group projects to facilitate student interest and choice.

Starting with a relevant question for the community, students plan and participate in rigorous hands-on activities to find answers. Current examples include: What healthy food can we grow to feed our families? What are some ideas to save our local bee population? How can my family reduce our water usage by 10%?

An important aspect of project-based learning is sharing what has been learned in a public presentation. Audiences have included other classrooms, parents and/or community members, the school board, or other invited guests.

Teachers empower students in their own learning progress. Students set individual learning goals and monitor their own progress for all core subject areas. A culture is fostered so students are confident they can learn the standards given time and effort, and this creates a safe environment for teachers to post individual progress to encourage and assist students in examining their own progress.

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

Ash Fork Elementary School believes civic learning and engagement are learned at early ages and that school experiences are developmentally important. Beginning in Kindergarten, and each new school year, students develop a social contract outlining how they will behave and interact with each other. Students each sign their names on the social contract, and it is posted in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to frequently refer to it as guidance on how the students have chosen to work together in their classroom. With use of the contract, students have practice in independent and cooperative problem solving to address social, ethical, and personal concerns.

Social studies, history concepts, and vocabulary are embedded in the ELA curriculum to provide background knowledge. The BT curriculum framework includes social studies standards and resources. Strategies are used to actively engage students in social studies concepts including debates, real-life scenarios, role-plays, and project-based learning. Special days such as Veteran's Day, President's Day, Martin Luther King Day, etc are used to teach social studies in context. For example, during the week of Veteran's Day, students brought to school pictures of Veteran family members and shared their stories with the class.

Social studies state standards are incorporated into project-based learning activities. For example, in learning mapping skills students sought answers for the following questions: How can we help new students and visitors locate important areas on our campus? How does the Native American culture impact Northern Arizona?

Teachers develop a weekly lesson plan incorporating the standards from the curriculum map for core subjects. At Ash Fork Elementary School, social studies, history, and civic learning are designed to be engaging, relevant, exciting, and fun.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Ash Fork Elementary has carefully balanced the focus on meeting academic standards with multiple opportunities for students to participate in well-rounded educational experiences including character development.

All students have a weekly art class. The teacher provides art instruction that is suited for the developmental level of each grade/class. Some of the things considered when designing art lessons are motor skills, special holiday/social studies based activities, and art history appreciation. Students explore many types of media and create a variety of objects. Music, movement, and dance are included in art instruction.

Physical Education (PE) is provided on a weekly basis for all students at each grade level. Developing large motor skills and age appropriate physical abilities are considered when planning PE classes for each grade. Instruction promotes a wide range of physical activities and sports to help students build background experience and knowledge in order to facilitate life-long interests.

Addressing the students' health and nutrition needs is vital for the school with 81% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Both a nutritious breakfast and lunch is served free of charge for all students. The school lunch program at Ash Fork has been recognized by Arizona's Department of Education for the quality and nutritional value provided to students.

The school nurse's office is a busy hub for students and the community. For many years the school nurse was the only medical professional other than the EMTs in town. Strong relationships forged during that time period between the community and school continue even though there is now a community clinic. The school partners with the county health department and the local health clinic to offer dental screenings, dental prevention programs and dental education programs in grades K-5. Nutritional programs, safety programs, and anti-drug training are also provided through these partnerships.

Students eagerly anticipate visiting the library each week. During a weekly 30 minute "library time" students are able to choose books to check-out and take home. The teacher provides a read-aloud opportunity for each class and frequently coordinates with the classroom teacher to select books that support current science and social studies classroom instruction. The school sponsors a community Book Fair each year providing literacy opportunities that are limited in the school's isolated area.

Technology is always available in the classroom, and each classroom has a sufficient number of Chrome OS tablets or Chromebooks for each student to have one to use. Every classroom has an interactive SmartBoard to support teachers in engaging students during instruction.

Fostering character development and positive interactions with others, the Capturing Kid's Hearts program is embraced at Ash Fork Elementary. The entire district has been selected as "model schools" for the program. All staff members are required to participate in the training when hired, which helps students be the best they can be in a very consistent and caring way. Other programs, Character Counts and 2nd Step, provide psycho/social development and focus on developing conflict resolution, building empathy, and using anti-bullying tools and strategies. The programs also support effective methods of classroom management.

3. Special Populations:

Twenty-one percent of the school's population is identified as special education students. Ash Fork Elementary students receive both push-in and pull-out services, speech therapy, and occupational therapy as indicated by their individual education plans (IEP). In addition, they stay an extra hour for intervention Monday-Wednesday and also are encouraged to attend Friday school to receive individualized help and instruction.

All students with disabilities attend the regular classroom as much as possible. Several students have one-on-one aides so they can be with their peers in the general education classroom. Differentiated instruction is possible through the online web-based programs that adjust the learning according to each child's mastery of the material. These programs also allow students to master material that is above their grade level and challenge them to exceed expectations. Teachers are provided information to effectively make modification and accommodations. Homework is also adjusted to the child's learning needs.

The school expects both classroom and special education teachers to know where students are at mastering standards and to frequently monitor their progress to determine needed instruction and interventions. Teachers use several methods of assessing student progress. Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) measures early literacy skills using 1 minute fluency measures; Beyond Textbooks' weekly formative assessments measure ELA and mathematics progress in mastering standards; differentiated web-based software (Lexia Core 5, IXL, Achieve 3000) track student progress in mastering standards; and Galileo is used for quarterly benchmark assessments. After analyzing quarterly assessments, students who are not making adequate progress are asked to attend classes during intercessions and summer school. All children, including those with an IEP, that are not at grade level are afforded these interventions. Reteaching occurs in small groups in the classroom, after school, on Fridays, during intercessions, and at summer school. Classroom teachers post charts showing student progress in mastering standards so students can monitor their own progress and set goals.

No migrant children are currently enrolled, but the 7% of students who are English language learners are tested when enrolled into school if they have not had a placement test. These students have individual language learning plans that are updated quarterly and are taught by regular classroom teachers. They have access to extra instruction, pull-out services and programs such as Rosetta Stone and ESL library.com which include videos, worksheets and lesson plans to support English language learners.

The school has found best practices for teaching special education students and English language learners are effective for teaching all students. The school provides training for teachers to use engaging activities, frequent opportunities for students to think at high cognitive levels, and real life applications including project work and scenarios so students see the relevance and importance of the learning. Teachers use short brain breaks during the day so students are up dancing, singing, or exercising to keep their brains functioning at high levels. The school believes all students, including special populations, can learn and progress.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

School climate and culture are an important focus for the school to ensure a safe environment for learning and motivation. Students eagerly anticipate attending school. Each day begins with the Superintendent/principal walking the halls, shaking hands, and frequently interacting with students. As students enter their classrooms during the day, each teacher, with a smile, is at the door shaking the hand of each student.

Students eagerly engage in sharing "good things" that have happened to them during a short 5-10 minute period each day. Other students clap and cheer for one another as they share. This builds a feeling of community and camaraderie between students.

Each classroom of students develops a social contract that provides the vision of how students and their teachers will interact with each other. The purpose is to create high-achieving centers of learning by strengthening students' connectedness with other students and staff. The contract is developed collaboratively with the input of all, and then the teacher and students sign their name to the poster signaling their commitment to act as they have agreed to treat each other. Not only teachers, but students also take responsibility for ensuring class members participate in the positive behavior. If a student does not adhere to the contract, they are taught a non-verbal way of "checking" them as a reminder for them to behave. Classrooms operate as a democratic community, and students have opportunities to both lead and follow.

Teachers, support staff, and the administration also develop a social contract on how they will interact with each other and indicate commitment by their signature. The social contract is used as a means of building meaningful and productive relationships with every student and every colleague. Training includes techniques for dealing with conflict, negative behavior, and disrespect issues.

Yearly, all staff members generate data from an online survey addressing five sections: Curriculum/Instruction, Professional Development, School Climate/Culture, Leadership, and Parent/Community Involvement. It is an anonymous online survey. Consistently, the school climate/culture section is marked high with comments such as, "I feel empowered and respected."

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The school strives to implement all of Joyce Epstein's six types of parent and community involvement. There are significant challenges for Ash Fork Elementary School though. Rural isolation and geographical distances within the school boundaries do not facilitate ease of meetings to communicate or engender on-campus parent involvement. Many parents living in poverty (81% of Ash Fork families) are primarily focused on family survival needs, despite their desire to be involved.

With these challenges the school relies heavily on technology to communicate and involve parents so student achievement can be supported. Handbooks, events, calendars, activities, and newsletters are on the school's website. There is a mobile app for parents so they can access grades and attendance 24/7. Two-way communication with email, messenger, and phone texts are used to communicate group information as well as connecting with individual parents. Teachers also communicate with parents through a communication app used to share and track student behavior. In addition, the app teaches developmental skills through real-time feedback. Regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences are an effective method of communication with families. During the parent-teacher conferences, discussions occur so parents can implement strategies to support their child's learning. This supports higher student achievement.

Striving to involve parents in the decision making, the school has used focus groups to solicit input and propose action steps. For example, one successful parent focus group studied the existing structure of parent-teacher conferences, identified ways to improve them, and developed a plan of action which was

successfully implemented.

To support learning at home and to seek parental involvement, teachers write regular articles posted on the school website highlighting class information and providing suggestions on how parents can assist their children. Parenting and how to support literacy at home are two popular classes the school offers. Encouraging parents to volunteer in classrooms results in regular participation by several parents. Teachers are in front of the school when parents drop off and pick up their students. This facilitates informal opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate.

Addressing basic needs of some Ash Fork families, the school nurse's office maintains donated clothes for a closet to provide families and students in need with clothes, coats, shoes, etc. These families and students are also connected with community, county and state agencies for resources and support as needed. When students' and families' basic needs are addressed, students are able to better focus on learning.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development is key to maintaining high student achievement. A needs assessment is conducted each year, examining multiple measures of data which include teacher and student perceptions, student achievement data, classroom observations, and teacher self-evaluation. Teachers examine the student achievement data, analyze trends, and set Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound (SMART) goals to improve student achievement. These goals drive the schoolwide professional development plan.

The school schedule includes 6 days of early release days for professional development. Additional times are scheduled as needed. Most workshops are held on campus for all instructional staff and administrators and the administrator holds teachers accountable for implementation of the new learning. Examples of schoolwide training for this year include, Beyond Textbooks training, student engagement, classroom management, Balanced Literacy, relationship building, and effectively using reteach and enrichment time. In addition to the schoolwide training geared to improve student achievement, teachers also set a personal goal for growth and are encouraged to attend external experiences that are based on their personal goal. The school coach, trainer, or administrator frequently models and provides feedback for new training.

On occasion, and to maximize resources, Ash Fork has planned professional development with other small school districts. This provides opportunities for grade level teachers to collaborate with other teachers that instruct at the same grade level. The school has shared such training with the topics of differentiation and teaching at higher cognitive levels. The opportunity to collaborate with teachers at the same grade level is highly valued by the teachers in small and rural areas that have just one teacher per grade level.

Peer collaboration is scheduled on a regular basis to provide opportunities for sharing effective strategies and to reflect on challenges. Teachers are encouraged to visit other classrooms, both internally and externally, so they can share areas of strengths and discuss them during peer collaboration.

The school hires an external consultant yearly to come and make unannounced classroom observations to create an instructional profile for the school. This instructional profile is analyzed and compared to last year's instructional profile to ensure new learning is being implemented. All the teaching staff, including teachers and paraprofessionals, analyze the profile and determine areas still needing improvement. This guides the professional development for the next year.

The comprehensive professional development training, shared vision, and articulation of high expectations have been key to success for Ash Fork Elementary.

4. School Leadership:

The structure of leadership is unique given the rural area in which the school operates. There is one superintendent/principal shared with all three of the district's small schools. Keeping administrative costs low allows the district to provide higher salaries to teachers compared to other small and rural districts. The

priority for the school leader is instructional leadership in addition to handling serious discipline issues, evaluating and coaching teachers, and providing resources to meet the needs of the students. Each school has a lead teacher. Their role is to address basic student discipline, handle routine school issues, and meet regularly with teachers and staff to assess needs and the progress toward goals, then report to the principal.

The leadership at Ash Fork Elementary has a clear vision of high student achievement and a belief that all students can learn at high levels. The leadership philosophy is simple yet effective. What is important to the principal becomes important to the teachers and what is important to the teachers becomes important to the students. This philosophy has resulted in high student achievement.

Building a culture of high expectations for staff and students began with the school board hiring a leader they trusted could increase student performance, and subsequently the principal hired teachers he trusted and believed had a growth mind set. Expectations for teachers included a willingness to learn and a commitment to students with statistically challenging odds for learning. Teachers believed in their students, and more importantly, students began to care about their academic progress. A climate of trust continues to exist among the school board, administration, staff, and students resulting in a safe and caring environment.

Data driven decision making is a vital tool for school leadership. Multiple types of data -- perception data from surveys and focus groups, classroom observations, formative assessments, benchmark assessments, and state student achievement data -- is consistently used and analyzed to make improvements. The principal aligns all systems to support high student achievement.

Over time and after many successes, Ash Fork Elementary has leaders and teachers that want to stay, and turnover is at a historic low for the district. The stability reaps great benefits for students including a consistent focus. Ash Fork's administrator was recognized when he was awarded Superintendent of the Year by the Arizona School Administrators Association in 2014.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Although many strategies contribute to student success at Ash Fork Elementary, one that continues to have a major impact is the teacher evaluation system. Recognizing the need for outstanding and highly effective teachers, the teachers and administrator collaboratively studied current evidenced-based research to create an instrument and a process designed to develop a high level of teaching competence.

Believing the evaluation process must evolve to support teachers' practice through an environment built on shared expectations, trust, and a collaborative pursuit of increased student achievement, the school chose to develop its own instrument. The focus is not to judge, but to coach teachers to higher levels of effectiveness. The developed model uses multiple measures and an evaluation rubric delineated on a 4-level document aligned to the InTASC: Model Core Teaching Standards.

The levels include highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective. The instrument was purposely designed to challenge teachers to exceed what is typically expected. The differences between effective and highly effective are frequently differentiated between what the teacher does and what the teacher gets the students to do. For instance, effective is marked if the teacher clearly explains the objective and why it is important. Highly effective is marked if students can clearly explain the objective and why it is important to learn. Another example of effective is the teacher using technology to enhance learning, but highly effective is when students are using technology for high level thinking or original work.

Teachers are evaluated on lesson planning and instruction, professional responsibilities, and student growth and achievement. The rubric consists of 29 indicators. The indicators constitute 67% of the evaluation, with the other 33% based on multiple measures of student classroom growth and achievement.

The teacher evaluation is evidence-based. The rubric is scored based on observational evidence, school records, and teacher evidence. Teachers maintain copies of their lesson plans, testing results, and other evidence to support the final scoring.

There are two announced and one unannounced formal evaluation, each based on observing an entire lesson. Both the teacher and evaluator complete the rubric and collaboratively share their thinking to determine the mark. Coaching is an important aspect of the conference. Informal unannounced walk-through observations also occur throughout the year.

The rubric provides clear expectations for teachers, and from the yearly school survey, teachers consistently indicate the teacher evaluation system helps them become better teachers. The exceptional student achievement data verifies that Ash Fork has highly effective teachers.