

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Chris Lowe

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

Official School Name Corinth Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 8301 Mission Road

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

Shawnee Mission KS 66206-1386
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Johnson County

Telephone (913) 993-2900

Fax

Web site/URL https://corinth.smsd.org/

E-mail chrislowe@smsd.org

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*Mr. Mike Fulton

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail michaelfulton@smsd.org

District Name Shawnee Mission Public Schools District Tel. (913) 993-6200

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 Mr. Brad Stratton

(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):
- 35 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 6 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 45 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	35	29	64
1	37	54	91
2	40	52	92
3	35	38	73
4	34	46	80
5	35	36	71
6	49	35	84
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	265	290	555

*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
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 91 % White
 - 4 % 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: 2%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	556
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
7 Total number ELL

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

Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Telugu

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3%
Total number students who qualify: 16

8. Students receiving special education services: 5 %
29 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>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>14</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: 4
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.	24
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.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 23:1

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%	96%	96%	96%	96%
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. 2001

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

Corinth's Mission is to educate, inspire, and care for all learners every day.

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

Home of the Dragons, Corinth Elementary School is located in Prairie Village, Kansas, a suburb of Kansas City. Thirty-four elementary schools make up the Shawnee Mission School District. With 555 students from kindergarten through sixth grade, Corinth is the third-largest elementary school in the district.

In the late 1800s, settlers in the community wanted their children to receive a high-quality education. They founded a school and named it Corinth, making Corinth one of the oldest schools in the state of Kansas. The current school building was built in 1996 and expanded in 2009 to add six classrooms.

Most Corinth students reside in Leawood, Kansas, in single-family homes. Only 80 students travel by bus to and from school, while the remainder walk, ride bikes, or are driven by family members each day.

Prior to the beginning of every school year, Corinth’s principal visits all incoming kindergarteners at their homes, welcoming each student with a water bottle and a smile. This face-to-face interaction assures students and parents that they are part of a caring and connected community—a message reinforced by every staff member when students arrive in their classrooms.

The community is directly involved at the school throughout the year—attending Grandparents’ Day lunches that fill the entire gym and cafeteria, investing in hands-on learning opportunities through a community-funded Makerspace, and dedicating time to a PTA that’s 366 parents strong.

Corinth’s leadership team has further unified the school community by setting a “north star” for all involved. As part of a two-year process, Corinth collected input from faculty, staff, students, families, and other community stakeholders to create a mission statement, a vision, and a list of shared values, finalized in January 2019.

The mission: “to educate, inspire, and care for all learners every day.”

The vision statement: “Corinth is a united community where we set goals, believe in ourselves and others, and achieve our highest potential to make a positive impact.”

The shared values: “We are respectful to all. We focus on relationships. We show kindness and are caring to all. We are welcoming to all. We put students first and focus on a growth mindset. We value creativity.”

In accordance with the school’s mission, vision, and values, Corinth’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system celebrates behaviors that demonstrate students are respectful, on task, acting safely, and responsible (ROAR). ROAR provides a framework for each classroom’s management system. Students earn “Dragon Tickets,” a schoolwide reward system for positive behavior. Students can receive Dragon Tickets from any adult in the building who notices their exemplary ROAR behavior. Students save their tickets to earn a variety of rewards, such as a special lunch with a teacher or time with the principal.

Additionally, during each day’s morning announcements, the principal recognizes two “Students of the Day” who have displayed outstanding ROAR behavior. The principal personally delivers a sticker, pencil, and handwritten note to each Student of the Day, making them feel celebrated. During quarterly assemblies, teachers recognize two students from each grade level for their outstanding, sustained ROAR behavior, further encouraging positive behavior throughout the school.

At Corinth, the faculty and staff agree that students come first. John Hattie’s Ten Mindframes for Visible Learning shows that high collective teacher efficacy increases student success in schools. With this in mind, the Shawnee Mission School District encourages schools to implement professional learning communities (PLCs). Corinth supports this initiative and prides itself on its high-functioning, highly active grade-level PLCs. Teams of passionate teachers analyze and evaluate student work samples to collaborate and improve their practice, and in turn, break down barriers to student success.

Teachers extend this enthusiasm for collaboration and critical thinking to their students, preparing them for the challenges of the future. Using project-based learning in their classrooms and in the Makerspace, as well as adopting district-provided curriculum with Project Lead the Way, teachers take their students on daily creative journeys. Walking through the hallways, one may find groups of students using a green screen to inform an audience about extreme weather, designing a compound machine to rescue a tiger that is stuck in a moat, and coding Spheros to locate fractions on a number line. Teachers encourage students to take ownership of their learning and to embrace challenges inside and outside of the classroom.

In 2001, Corinth received the National Blue Ribbon School Award, and a banner commemorating the accomplishment hangs prominently in the entrance of the school building. Staff vividly remember the announcement, made very shortly after the events on September 11th, 2001. Although that timing precluded a full celebration of the award's magnitude, the achievement further energized our pursuit of continuous improvement—and our hope to earn that recognition again.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The Shawnee Mission School District’s reading/English language arts (ELA) curriculum, aligned with the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards for ELA, focuses on effective communication and lifelong learning. Using Curriculum Cadres, teams of teachers identified grade-level priority standards and created proficiency scales outlining varying levels of student achievement for each standard.

As part of the implementation of professional learning communities, Corinth Elementary tasked the grade-level teaching teams with unpacking the ELA priority standards. The teams selected specific standards and created formative assessment tools to guide their instruction. After teaching a priority standard, teams would review student work samples and data to identify students who needed reteaching or enrichment. This streamlined process of differentiated instruction, provided through a variety of leveled materials and scaffolded teaching support, maximizes learning for each student.

The district provides the Wonders curriculum as a resource for teachers, while encouraging them to create their own lessons and learning environment. At Corinth, teachers choose engaging literature to encourage a love of reading and to reinforce content standards with real text. Teachers conduct whole-group mini lessons, in which students learn close reading skills with challenging texts. Students search for main ideas and details, identify text structures, and make connections with their own lives. After the whole-group lesson, students engage in workshop time composed of skill work and targeted interventions. Teachers utilize the small-group format to equip students with the tools they need to think critically about literature and improve their comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency skills.

Corinth’s reading specialist works with students below benchmark at all grade levels in small groups to meet their individual needs. Throughout the school, students engage in authentic learning as they develop their metacognitive skills with a self-reflection journal used after assessments, record themselves reading on a digital portfolio to show off their fluency skills to parents, and participate in Socratic Seminars to discuss literature while practicing speaking and listening skills.

1b. Mathematics:

The Shawnee Mission School District’s math curriculum, designed around the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards, promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills through a mathematical lens. Equipped with the Engage New York Curriculum, teachers at Corinth promote conceptual understanding and transferable skills, and strive to meet students at their individual learning needs.

To do so, teachers differentiate their lessons as they see fit. For example, in 3rd grade, teachers pre-test every unit to gauge students’ prior knowledge about the topic. Based on the pre-test data, teachers determine which students need what instruction. Days begin with a whole-group mini-lesson. Next, using the station-rotation model, students divide into five differentiated groups and engage in a mix of problem sets, games, exit tickets, online applications, and extension projects. Each student has a to-do list outlining the expectations for each rotation, fostering more individualized instruction. Grade-level teams review exit tickets and other formative assessment data to identify students who need reteaching or enrichment on any given topic.

Teachers also utilize Corinth’s community-funded Math Aide to meet the needs of all students. Our math aide meets with every grade level each day and works with students needing intervention support, as well as extension and enrichment. The grade levels have the freedom to allocate this time as they see fit to focus on student learning and growth.

All grade levels provide opportunities for students to explore math-related topics in hands-on, rigorous, and

relevant ways. Kindergartners discovered teen numbers by playing a game called “Hide the Zero,” second graders explored geometry concepts using toothpicks, and fourth graders programmed Ozobots to investigate the question: “Can two rectangles have the same area but different perimeters?” At Corinth, teachers unite with a common goal of making math engaging and inviting to all learners.

1c. Science:

The Shawnee Mission School District’s science curriculum, aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards, includes quarterly units for kindergarten through sixth grade, focused on four topics: physical science; life science; earth and space science; and engineering, technology, and applications of science. Every grade level identifies priority standards for each focus area. These standards are not the main focus of every science lesson, but they help ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

In addition, each grade level has access to a scope and sequence for each area of focus. These identify the standard, essential questions, essential understanding, and approximate time frame for the unit, as well as the scientific practices that students will explore. The resulting unit-specific map creates a solid foundation for all learners.

Teachers at Corinth also have access to engaging and research-based resources, such as Project Lead the Way, National Geographic, and Mystery Science. These resources, combined with the SMSD’s detailed scope and sequence, allow for meaningful, rigorous, and relevant learning experiences.

Teachers focus on making cross-curricular connections to English language arts and math to integrate science into all areas of the curriculum. Corinth kindergarteners, for instance, investigated, analyzed, and interpreted data, and designed solutions, as they created structures as part of a unit of study with *The Three Little Pigs*. Their challenge was to design a structure that could withstand the force of air from the “Big Bad Wolf” (in this case, a lawn blower). First, the students researched the problem by reading multiple texts of this story and designing an initial structure. Next, the students used their prior knowledge from text, as well as their designs, to create a new structure. Teachers use the scientific process to engage students and to create meaningful and engaging learning experiences every day at Corinth.

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

The Shawnee Mission School District supports and encourages curricular connections across social studies, reading, writing, math, speaking, and listening, and Corinth utilizes a variety of online and print resources to enhance student learning in the area of social studies. From the online materials available via National Geographic to applications like Pebble Go, *Time for Kids* magazine, and a social studies curriculum by TCI, teachers have a wealth of resources at their disposal to engage every type of learner. For example, TCI has an online component, which allows students to engage with lessons using their iPads and complete open-ended, higher-level questions and prompts.

Project-based learning is another key area of focus at Corinth. As part of a recent unit focused on learning about other communities, Corinth second graders researched a recent hurricane that caused major damage to an island community. Moved by their findings, students decided to search for ways to help, and proactively decided to collect flashlights and seek support from local community members. Ultimately, the students sent more than 50 flashlights and batteries to those affected by the hurricane. Corinth sixth graders, meanwhile, take a project-based approach to studying Ancient Greece. After learning about Greek culture and history, sixth graders work in teams to create plays incorporating their new knowledge. Teachers encourage students to pair factual information with a creative element, and students perform their plays for our learning community.

Corinth teachers also seek out opportunities for students to hear from outside presenters or educators on topics that map to the district’s social studies standards. Each year, second grade teachers invite the Johnson County Parks and Recreation Department (JCPRD) to Corinth to discuss the history of Native Americans in our geographical region. JCPRD provides a hands-on learning experience by building traditional teepees on school property for students to explore as they learn about the culture and customs of Native Americans.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In 2016, the Shawnee Mission School District implemented a new elementary specials schedule, which gives students a fifty-minute special each day. All Corinth Elementary students rotate among music, physical education, art, and library/media studies. While students are at specials, Corinth teachers have a common plan time with their team to engage in meaningful professional learning focused on DuFour's professional learning community guiding questions.

As part of the Shawnee Mission School District's Digital Learning Initiative, each student at Corinth has a personal iPad. This access to technology allows teachers to engage students at a higher level in all curricular areas. In art, students take pictures of their artwork and post their work on a website for parents to view. Students reflect on their learning by writing statements about how their work relates to the artist explored. Using slow-motion animation, students record the creation of their artwork. Together, students watch other slow-motion videos to learn techniques and strategies related to art standards—shadowing, lines, and texture, to name a few.

In physical education, students use a learning application to keep track of their bowling scores and film their golf swings, jumping, skipping, dribbling, and swinging. Students then review the footage and learn how to improve their technique. In music, students utilize educational applications on their iPad to create their own musical compositions. In library, students access online research sites and online texts, create video games, code, and read e-books.

Corinth's fantastic specials team works together to create authentic learning opportunities for students. Under the direction of Corinth's music teacher, students in first, third, and fifth grade learn and perform a musical during the school year. Each musical takes months of preparation, highlights student soloists and choral singing, and involves the community in the creation of backdrops and costumes.

Artwork created in the classroom hangs on display at a locally owned ice cream store, where students can view their artwork with their families and friends. Corinth teachers recognize the value of providing students an opportunity to engage with an audience and display their outstanding creations.

In the classroom, students engage in social-emotional lessons using Second Step, a research-based curriculum. Teachers may follow the scope and sequence the curriculum provides or use specific lessons to meet individual classroom needs. Additionally, Corinth's community-funded social worker collaborates with teachers to provide each class with a differentiated lesson based on that classroom's social-emotional needs on a monthly/bi-monthly basis. The social worker also meets with individual students or small groups as teachers and Student Intervention Teams see fit.

The upper grade levels have additional curricular opportunities. Fifth and sixth graders can participate in band and strings during the school day. Band and strings teachers come to Corinth each day to provide 30-minute lessons to those interested. Several times a year, students participating in band and strings perform for an audience. During the annual Shawnee Mission East Area Festival, Corinth students perform with students across the district, including middle- and high-school students. The festival highlights student growth after multiple years in the program.

Similarly, Corinth fifth and sixth graders can participate in choir, which offers an opportunity for students to practice their choral skills and perform—both onsite at Corinth's annual Veteran's Day assembly and off-site at local venues.

Finally, students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade can participate in Mathletics at Corinth and across the Shawnee Mission School District. Coached by Corinth's Mathletics lead teacher, participating students attend monthly practices focused on solving math problems and compete in teams of three against students from other schools.

All of these opportunities enable students to have a rich educational experience inside and outside of the classroom. Whether they are creating Edvard Munch's "The Scream," in art class, learning to focus on breathing and using self-talk during a Second Step lesson, or developing a mini golf hole with six items in physical education, students at Corinth have numerous opportunities to explore creative outlets.

3. Special Populations:

Corinth Elementary strives to meet the needs of all learners. By supporting the whole child, Corinth facilitates growth in reading, mathematics, the arts, and social-emotional skills.

To support student growth in the area of reading, Corinth utilizes a reading specialist and reading aide. The reading specialist is trained to implement a multi-sensory, structured reading program. Corinth's reading team also provides support in the areas of phonics, comprehension, and language acquisition, progress monitoring students at various frequencies based on each student's performance.

In mathematics, the Corinth community funds a math educational aide. The math aide works with each grade level, each day, to implement targeted interventions for remediation and extension. This support varies, depending on grade-level needs and student growth data. For example, stakeholders at a recent Student Intervention Team meeting determined that a third grader wasn't learning basic computational skills at the desired level. Prioritizing this student's needs, the team allocated twenty minutes of daily support time for this student to meet with Corinth's math aide. As a team, Corinth teachers, administrators, and specialists work together and use data to guide interventions, as well as the intervention time needed to help each student succeed.

As noted in the first portion of this application, Corinth has 555 students, 1 percent Black or African American, 4 percent Hispanic or Latino, 4 percent two or more races, and 91 percent White. One percent of the school's population has been identified as English language learners, and 2.87 percent qualify for free/reduced meals. Twenty-nine students qualify for special education services.

Supporting students who receive special education has become a major focus of the Corinth learning community. Corinth and the Shawnee Mission School District are in year two of the Kansas Educational Systems Accreditation (KESA) cycle. As part of building accreditation for KESA, Corinth staff identified two building goals after an extensive needs assessment. One goal states, "by the end of the accreditation cycle, third through sixth grades will reduce the number of students in the low-achievement, low-growth area on math NWEA MAP assessment to less than 6 percent." The baseline for this goal showed that from fall 2017 to spring 2018, 8.79 percent of third through sixth graders performed at the low-achievement, low-growth quadrant on the math NWEA MAP assessment. While not all of the students in that quadrant receive special education, a significant portion do receive those services. To help support students at Corinth in the area of mathematics and to help reach this goal, the school applied for, and received, a grant to provide before- and/or after-school tutoring, allowing Corinth to support 28 students each week with one-on-one or small-group tutoring in the areas of mathematics and reading.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Corinth Elementary engages and motivates students and staff by creating a positive environment in which all shareholders are encouraged and supported. Corinth's aforementioned mission, vision, and shared values speak to the caring atmosphere that permeates the building.

Corinth's principal holds a weekly staff meeting, dubbed "Family Meeting." The name speaks for itself: the staff at Corinth is a family that celebrates each other with weekly shout-outs. Staff members write messages recognizing their colleagues, which are read aloud during the meeting. Family Meetings set the tone for the entire staff to rely on each other and support each other every day. Just this past month, a teacher walked out into the parking lot on a below-freezing day to find her car had a flat tire. Corinth's physical education teacher happened to be outside at the same time and took the time to help this colleague by changing her tire.

Because the staff feels valued and supported, they create a similar sense of community within their own classrooms. Corinth's principal encourages teachers to take the first several weeks of school to build a community within the classroom. The Responsive Classroom's First Six Weeks of School explains the importance of laying the groundwork for a positive, collaborative, and supportive classroom environment at the beginning of the school year. At Corinth, teachers create a climate of warmth and safety by encouraging every member of the class to get to know each other. Certain classrooms use "get to know you" games and icebreaker activities to help students interact with each other. Other classes write "I Am From" poems or create "All About Me" posters for students to share with their classmates.

Corinth students feel welcomed, included, and safe in their classrooms. Because of this, they are more likely to challenge themselves and take risks in their learning. Classrooms focus on using a growth mindset: embracing challenges as opportunities. For example, in Corinth's Makerspace, students use the engineering and design process to research problems and create solutions. They test their solutions, which almost always fail at first, and use their growth mindset to improve their design by learning from their mistakes. This practice translates to all academic areas, as teachers inspire students to believe in themselves and strive to reach their full potential.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Corinth Elementary's community unites with a common goal of supporting students to achieve their highest potential. To this end, the school prioritizes frequent communication with families and the community. At the end of every school week, Corinth families receive "Dragon Tales," a digital publication that includes a calendar of upcoming events, notes from the principal and nurse, and opportunities for families to volunteer within the school. Similarly, teachers send home weekly newsletters that inform families of important classroom happenings and school events. Parents often remark that they are thrilled with the constant communication they receive from the school.

Corinth's 366-member Parent Teacher Association (PTA) also sends out a weekly newsletter about PTA-sponsored activities. The PTA organizes numerous events throughout the school year, including a community 5K race called the Dragon Dash, a Fall Festival, mother/son and father/daughter dances, a biennial school auction, and monthly evenings at local restaurants to bring the community together. The proceeds from these events directly benefit the school, and students relish the opportunity to be with their classmates and teachers outside of the regular school day.

In the Shawnee Mission School District, each building has a Site Council made up of current students, teachers, staff members, and community stakeholders. Corinth's Site Council includes retired teachers with years of experience in the building, passionate parents of current students, and nearby business owners who care deeply about the future of the school. The Council discusses bringing new initiatives and changes to Corinth. Recently, the Council discussed the best way for students to transition to the following school

year. Considering the anxiety many students face leading up to the start of a new school year, the Council decided to create a “Jump-Up Day.” Rather than waiting until the week before school starts to post class lists, Jump-Up Day will take place in May, giving students an opportunity to meet their class and teacher for the following school year. This decision involved great thought in hopes of making the transition as positive and seamless as possible.

Corinth works closely with family and community members to promote student success and improve the school. One notable example is the “Dragon Dad Program,” which invites fathers, grandfathers, or other male figures in students’ lives to volunteer at the school. Dragon Dads assist by monitoring the school entrance, unloading and loading cars, helping in the lunchroom, and joining their students in the classroom. This program, as well as countless other initiatives, assures students that they are surrounded by a community of supportive partners who are entirely invested in creating a positive learning environment

3. Professional Development:

The Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) moved to an innovative approach to professional learning starting in the 2017-2018 school year and approved a professional learning calendar. All certified teachers are allotted two days each year to explore professional learning topics at an individualized level. The SMSD created and promoted these two teacher-directed professional learning days to better meet teachers’ needs.

Teachers can work on-site, off-site, or collaborate with professionals in their respective field. An ideal model, this differentiated approach to professional learning allows learning to be tailored to the individual, as teachers do with students in their own classrooms. For the first teacher-directed professional learning day in 2017, Corinth Elementary offered a trip to a local Makerspace Studio for professional learning, and 17 of the 24 classroom teachers chose to participate. Each year, the SMSD also provides a variety of learning opportunities for teachers looking for guidance or inspiration for their two professional learning days.

The district also designates one professional learning day at the beginning of each school year for the SMSD Instructional Fair. The fair offers teachers and educators a multitude of professional learning opportunities at one of the SMSD’s five high schools. Sessions typically include a keynote speaker and dozens of smaller break-out sessions, which provide differentiated professional learning opportunities. Last year, teachers chose from sessions such as social-emotional learning strategies, tips for how to engage in morning meetings, enrichment in the area of mathematics, collaboration, Socratic seminars, and positive behavior supports. By choosing sessions based on their interests, teachers are able to explore topics at the beginning of the school year that can inspire their professional learning for the rest of the year.

The professional learning taking place at Corinth supports the SMSD’s overall focus for professional learning—“Kids First! Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships”—with three main imperatives, the so-called “Big Three.” First is culture, composed of climate, relationships, professional learning communities, and the belief that ALL means ALL. Second is leadership, focused on Quad D leadership, monitoring, modeling, and a growth mindset. Third is learning, implementing Quad A-D learning, technology integration, transformational strategies, and flexible learning spaces. Corinth places kids first—focusing on rigor, relevance, and relationships—while staying innovative and cognizant of how culture, leadership, and learning all work together.

4. School Leadership:

Corinth Elementary encourages teacher and student leadership, and believes in a shared, or distributed, leadership model. With this leadership approach, all adults in the building are empowered to individually and collaboratively uphold the mission and vision of our learning community. The Building Leadership Team (BLT), a guiding coalition for Corinth’s direction, consists of one teacher from each grade level (K-6), a specials teacher, the reading specialist, the lead teacher, the principal, and the instructional coach. The BLT meets at least once a month to provide guidance, share input, and reflect on the building’s progress in providing a guaranteed viable curriculum for all students.

Corinth has at least 22 different opportunities for teachers and educators to take on a leadership role. These opportunities include: Student Council leader; building representatives for the SMSD ELA, Math, and Science Cadres; SMSD advisory board member; Corinth Site Council representative; and SMSD Curriculum Council representative.

The principal also encourages teachers to explore their passions and use them to make a positive impact on students' lives. For example, one second grade teacher, who is passionate about using movement to start each day, developed a program called "Morning Milers," where students can come to the gym each morning and walk laps with friends before starting the day. Prior to this opportunity, students typically waited in the hallway, sitting on the floor with peers.

Another example of empowering a shared leadership model comes from the physical education (PE) teacher. The PE teacher is passionate about student well-being and promoting healthy activities. Four years ago, the PE teacher started a Spring Running Club open to all Corinth students. Participation has increased each year, and the most recent Running Club season had 22 percent participation from the student body.

Meanwhile, a Corinth kindergarten teacher and sixth grade teacher have teamed up to support students with a passion for technology, speaking, listening, and broadcasting. They started a broadcasting club for students who were interested in creating a weekly Corinth news broadcast to be shared with the entire student body. These teachers volunteer their time each week to support the handful of students who are thrilled to produce their own weekly video.

No one person at Corinth has all the answers. The staff at Corinth work together to play to each other's strengths, support professional passion areas, and problem solve as a leadership team.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Building positive relationships among students, teachers, and the community has been the most influential practice in boosting student success at Corinth Elementary. In Clayton Cook’s study, “Cultivating Positive Teacher–Student Relationships,” a focus on positive relationships was found to increase academic engagement by 33 percent and decrease disruptive behavior by 75 percent.

Over the past four years, under the leadership of its principal, Corinth has implemented a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system that celebrates and rewards students for demonstrating they are respectful, on task, acting safely, and responsible. Those who visit Corinth remark that they feel welcome upon entry, greeted by smiles from students and genuine conversations with staff members.

To promote positive relationships throughout the building, staff members have intentionally planned specific community-building activities, including Buddy Classrooms and Dragon Dens. Each of Corinth’s classrooms meet with a Buddy Classroom at least once a month to participate in a learning activity. The positive relationships created during buddy time carry beyond the school walls. A kindergarten parent recounts that her child ran into her fifth-grade buddy at a store and was greeted with a hug and a special handshake.

Similarly, Corinth created Dragon Dens as a way for students to build relationships across grade levels and a way for adults at the school to get to know students at a deeper level. Every student is assigned to a small “den” composed of students from each grade and led by a Corinth staff member. Dens meet once a month for 45 minutes to participate in a lesson or an activity intended to build community .

At Corinth, the meaningful connections made inside and outside of the classroom have translated to an increase in student achievement. In 2015, 34 percent of Corinth 3rd graders performed at a level four on the Math Kansas State Assessment (the assessment is scored on a scale from one to four, four being the exemplary, or above grade level, score). In 2018, 53 percent of Corinth 3rd graders performed at a level four on Math—a 19 percent increase. In the 2017-2018 school year, out of 34 elementary schools in the district, Corinth had the highest percentage of students scoring at a level three or four on the Math and ELA Kansas State Assessment. Encouraged by these results, students, teachers, and the community agree that the focus on positive relationships is working.

In his study, Cook explains that “strong teacher-student relationships have long been considered a foundational aspect of a positive school experience.” Building positive relationships among all shareholders is a strategy foundational to Corinth’s success.