

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 Dr. Mary Narvaez

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

Official School Name Conway Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 9900 Conway Road

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

St Louis MO 63124-1651
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County St. Louis County

Telephone (314) 993-2878

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Web site/URL http://conway.ladueschools.net

E-mail spadberg@ladueschools.net

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Jim Wipke

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail jwipke@ladueschools.net

District Name Ladue School District Tel. (314) 994-7080

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Carolyn Jaeger

(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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 7 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	37	25	62
1	38	34	72
2	45	40	85
3	29	32	61
4	37	34	71
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	186	165	351

*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
 - 13 % Asian
 - 7 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 68 % White
 - 8 % 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: 6%

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	14
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	22
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	347
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
German, Guiarti, English, Chinese, Armenian, Spanish/Castilian, Hungarian, Korean, Russian, Madurese, Hindi, Telugu, French, Vietnamese, Tamil, Amharic, Achinese, Catalan/Valencian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4%
Total number students who qualify: 13

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
47 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>4</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>1</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>15</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>5</u> Developmental Delay | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>36</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: 24
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.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 18:1

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	95%	95%	95%	94%	97%
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. 2007

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

Conway School's vision is to nurture the joy of lifelong learning, to embrace the diverse qualities of each person, and to develop responsible citizens.

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

Nestled in a small suburban neighborhood within the St. Louis, Missouri metropolitan area, Conway School is a place where children thrive and grow. Conway School is a public elementary school serving 351 children in the Ladue School District. Conway is a close-knit, supportive and safe community. The student population is ethnically, socio-economically and academically diverse. Many children return as parents of the next generation of Conway students. This positive cycle of growth and renewal is promoted by Conway's traditions of the highest academic achievement, the commitment to serving every student's individual needs and the intense involvement of parents and community members. We are proud of our tradition of excellence. The mat at Conway's front door announces our school motto, "Welcome to Conway, A Great Place to Learn."

Our curriculum is centered around the whole child, focusing on academic, intellectual, social, emotional and physical health. Students also receive a strong foundation in character development. They learn the need to apply a growth mindset to overcome challenges. Conway students understand that mistakes are a necessary part of moving forward in the learning process. The schoolwide philosophy for student behavior expectations is taught in every area of the Conway community through The Conway Promises - Be Kind, Be Responsible, Be Respectful, Be Positive, and Be Safe. The Promises represent our code of conduct. All staff have been inserviced in Olweus, a bully prevention curriculum. Teachers incorporate weekly class meetings to promote positive solutions to conflict and encourage self-reflection and personal responsibility. The guidance counselor is another avenue of support. Classroom lessons and small group sessions center around personal and social development, career exploration and educational and vocational development. We teach life skills such as building resiliency, communicating with others, getting along with peers, problem solving, time management and effective organization. Conway's philosophy is to meet each student where he/she is academically and move the learning forward. Our core belief is that every child deserves at least one year's growth every school year. Through differentiated instruction, all students experience success in their learning. There is a formal program to assist the intellectually gifted in reaching their potential. Conway also provides interventions for students who are below grade level expectations.

Conway recognizes the importance of the arts and provides students with diverse experiences and activities throughout the year. Whole-school enrichment assemblies introduce students to storytelling and dance. Students attend performances at the Florissant Valley Civic Center to enhance their appreciation of theatre and literature. Fourth graders participate in a two week residency with dancers from the Modern American Dance Company through the Books in Motion Program. This year, students visited the Art Museum exhibit of the two lost cities of ancient Egypt. Every year, students attend a performance of the St. Louis Symphony at Powell Hall. All of these experiences extend our core curriculum.

Conway promotes cultural understanding and cooperation within the school community. Teachers create classroom environments that are centered around culturally responsive teaching practices and develop authentic learning experiences for all students. We purposefully include diversity in the library collection and cultivate an environment in which all cultures are recognized and each child can see himself in what he reads.

Each year, we average 140 parent volunteers who provide services to the children and the school. The strong, caring Conway School Association (CSA) supports the school in many ways. The Conway Auction funds a one to one technology initiative and also purchases Playaways, electronic versions of award winning books in literature, for the library. Parent and community partnerships also teach children to be responsible citizens through community outreach programs. Examples include the Snowflake Project which delivers over 200 holiday gifts to Conway students in need, the Food Drive for Veterans, the Dads' Club sponsored service project to feed the homeless, and fundraising for environmental causes such as the rainforests. Other Conway traditions include Field Day and an end of year picnic with games, rides and food trucks.

We recognize that there is a social emotional component to learning. Due to circumstances beyond their control, some students are in crisis and interventions must be put in place to help them navigate daily school life. The district provides a behavior interventionist to observe the student and help the teacher create

effective strategies. The interventionist also provides ongoing professional development to the staff. Three years ago, the CSA funded a sensory room at Conway as a proactive measure to provide scheduled movement breaks for students with focus and attentional needs.

The 2007 Blue Ribbon award was a validation of our core belief that “Together We Succeed”. It created an opportunity for the entire community to celebrate student success and was a recognition of our work. The Blue Ribbon award encouraged teachers to continue to grow as a community of learners. Conway also received two Gold Stars from the Missouri Department of Education and was named an Apple Distinguished School in 2017.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The goal of our balanced literacy program is for students to be skilled, independent lifelong readers and writers. Conway provides an integrated English language arts program that is research based and tiered to support all students. Students are challenged to be critical thinkers and to use quality questioning to extend understanding of a concept. Kindergarten instruction begins with phonemic awareness, basic phonics skills, and concepts of print. Students arrive at different levels of readiness, and our goal is to provide support or enrichment to meet individual needs. The program includes a solid structure of reading, writing, spelling, speaking and listening. Literature introduces students to diverse text which includes culturally diverse characters and authors. Grammar, phonics, writing and comprehension skills all revolve around an anchored text. Informational, opinion and narrative writing are the three main focuses for writing among the grade levels. The writing program provides a vehicle for self reflection and assessment. Spelling instruction follows the phonics patterns required at each grade level. These patterns are explicitly taught and words from these patterns are embedded into the reading text. Word lists are scaffolded and personalized for each learner. The lists include below grade level, grade level and challenge words for each pattern. Students create and record sentences utilizing QuickTime Player to be used for their individual tests.

Differentiated Instruction is Conway’s core model for the delivery of curriculum. Teachers use whole group instruction when introducing skills. They then create a pre-assessment to reach both the ceiling and basic level of readiness. The results determine the number of readiness groups needed for the skill.

Technology resources enhance student achievement. Kidspiration software is interactive and creates story webs for both reading and writing. ThinkCentral is the platform for our reading program which allows students, parents and teachers to access decodable stories and leveled readers at school and at home. It provides print resources, interactive lessons, as well as online assessments which teachers can assign to individual students.

1b. Mathematics:

Conway’s math program is rooted in problem solving. Students develop a conceptual understanding through a concrete-pictorial-abstract learning progression in order to comprehend and solve problems. Teachers empower students to use critical thinking skills and multiple strategies when problem solving. Students gain confidence to persevere which sets the stage for success. Teachers use differentiated instruction to meet the needs of the learners in the classroom. After identifying the learning standard to be taught, teachers give pre-assessments addressing all levels of readiness and analyze results. Resulting data helps teachers determine appropriate scaffolding and extensions in order to optimize student learning. Instruction is purposeful and designed to gradually release the responsibility of learning to the students. Visual models, hands-on activities, manipulatives, and online tools are some of the resources used to enhance daily instruction. ThinkCentral is the technology platform for our math program allowing students to access virtual manipulatives, interactive lessons, student textbooks and workbooks. Other technology resources utilized to provide instruction and support to students include IXL, Matific, and XtraMath. Conway’s math interventionist provides additional instruction for developing students while the gifted specialist shares resources with the classroom teacher to enrich students working beyond grade level expectations. Teachers continually check for understanding through formative assessments such as exit tickets and adjust instruction accordingly. The math program provides end of unit tests, which allow teachers to determine students’ mastery of the learning standards. Conway School uses a benchmark assessment to measure students’ growth and proficiency. From this data, teachers get a picture of how much the students have grown, what they are ready to learn next and specific skill gaps needing to be addressed. Conway teachers use this data to help design instruction for students. Continual assessment ensures that groups remain fluid throughout the year.

1c. Science:

Conway's focus in science is the acquisition of scientific principles and process skills through an inquiry-based approach. The science program fosters a sense of discovery and curiosity within students while developing their critical thinking skills. One instructional approach implemented by Conway teachers is the use of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) design challenges to question scientific phenomena, design and test a solution, and draw conclusions about the findings. Conway has been fortunate to have a professor from North Carolina State serve as our STEM coach. She mentors teachers, observes STEM lessons and actively engages with the students in the classroom. Students are given real world problems as a construct for the design challenges. This process allows students to develop creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication skills. Teachers implement the Teach, Model, Apply approach throughout all units of study. Teachers provide explicit instruction, model with students through guided practice, and then students independently apply skills, concepts and knowledge through hands on learning experiences and field trips. Conway teachers use technology to support and extend science instruction. Students participate in a virtual field trip to a local news media station to learn about meteorology. Students utilize virtual reality to explore our solar system and investigate force and motion principles by using Lego WeDo kits. All grade levels learn coding, from basic programming with simple robots such as the Code-a-pillar to complex robotics programming with EV-3s. Coding helps students acquire initial problem solving skills. Students also create Google Slide photo journals to document plant growth. Instruction is differentiated by readiness, learning style, and student interest depending upon the unit being studied. Students are evaluated using a variety of assessments including performance events, end of unit tests, and projects. Formative assessments used throughout the unit help guide instruction pace and depth.

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

Conway's inquiry based social studies curriculum provides developmentally appropriate experiences with integrated civics, social-cultural, historical, economic and geographic concepts. Students learn that they are a part of a larger, interdependent global community. They have the opportunities to explore, analyze and gain an appreciation for the cultural diversity within their community and around the world. Differentiated instruction allows students choices and take an active role in their learning. Units are interwoven with reading, language arts, science and mathematics. Teachers use culturally responsive literature to tell the story of historical events and figures through multiple viewpoints. Other supplemental supports which engage learners include guest speakers, videos, trade books and fields trips. Students explore economic concepts such as opportunity costs, goods and services, interdependence, work readiness and entrepreneurship through Junior Achievement lessons delivered by members of the community. Further authentic economic experiences allow students to create "companies" which sell products to student consumers. First grade students produce friendship pins to sell on Valentine's Day. Proceeds are distributed to non-profit organizations. Geography is the focus of our schoolwide country study. Classes select a country to research. Classrooms display information about the culture, religion, language and geographical points of interests to create a visual display that fills the Conway hallways. Each country has a set of questions and all students "travel the countries" and fill out the answers to each country's questions. Songs from the winter concert represent the countries being studied. Teachers incorporate project-based learning, performance tasks, open-ended questions, writing tasks, student discourse, and other assessment strategies in their instruction. An example of one project-based unit is the Native American unit. Students research Native American tribes, analyze the regions where they live and create models of Native American dwellings. The components of our social studies program help our students understand and interact with the world around them.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Conway's art curriculum encourages creativity, craftsmanship and self-discovery. The weekly one hour program integrates grade level curriculum into lessons that connect art to classroom instruction. Differentiation allows students to work at their readiness levels so that each child succeeds in creating unique masterpieces. Several different facets of art such as drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics and printmaking are explored in the curriculum. Art club and small group enrichment allow students to experience more complex projects. All of this work culminates into a grand art show in the spring. Artsonia, an online gallery of student work provides families a forum to see student artwork throughout the year.

The study of music is an essential part of the education of all students. A sequential curriculum emphasizes experiencing and enjoying music while building music literacy and understanding through performing, listening, creating, and analyzing music. Kodaly, Orff, Dalcroze, and other philosophies are integrated into the instruction and address all student learning styles. Cultural enrichment and historical connections are emphasized in the selection of repertoire and activities. Students receive one hour of instruction per week. All fourth grade students are offered the opportunity to participate in a before school violin program. A modified Suzuki approach helps beginning violin students learn through listening, repetition, encouragement and cooperation. Instruments are provided for those students in need.

Students in all grades receive 30 minutes of physical education instruction daily. Health maintenance and personal wellness skills as well as the functions and interrelationships of the body systems are included at every grade level. Each year, students are assessed using the Fitnessgram program. This program measures aerobic capacity, upper body strength and endurance, abdominal strength and endurance, and flexibility. Conway's annual Field Day focuses on teamwork and sportsmanship.

Every Conway student has the opportunity to take part in second language acquisition. The Spanish program is taught in three 20 minute lessons per week. The program uses the highly interactive Symtalk (symbol-talk) Method. It encourages students to take ownership of their language learning and builds confidence from the beginning of instruction. The ultimate goal is to provide opportunities for students to attain a high level of fluency.

Conway's technology and library media curriculum support essential skills in all academic areas to provide limitless learning for all students.

The librarian enhances curriculum at every grade level. For example, when studying civil rights in third grade, students have access to wide variety of books on the subject. She provides different independent reading levels for each content topic. The reading material is a reflection of our diverse student population. Students receive instruction one hour per week. The goal of our librarian is to broaden students' point of view and to foster lifelong readers.

The technology specialist provides modeling, co-teaching, and lesson planning support throughout the year. As teachers plan in their Professional Learning Communities (PLC) teams, the technology specialist supports their work and demonstrates how to integrate technology efficiently and effectively into the curriculum. Every fourth grade student participates in broadcast journalism. The Conway Connection is a video morning broadcast created, directed and published by the students. It integrates reading, writing, researching, editing, grammar, public speaking and interviewing skills. Each segment focuses on different themes. Students build upon their skills while informing the audience in a creative way.

The technology specialist also offers coding and robotics classes after school and the librarian teaches Junior Great Books classes to third and fourth grade students each semester. These specialists also provide enrichment opportunities before and after school throughout the year.

Character education focuses on five core values centered around Conway's Spotlight on Success. All students and staff promise to learn in a safe, kind, respectful, responsible, and positive environment. Each month, one of the spotlight words is featured throughout the school community. All students participate in an activity to reinforce each promise. The activity is proudly displayed in the hallway and allows students to

read and reflect on each other's responses. The different responses facilitate dialogue among students which broaden their understanding of multiple viewpoints. In the classroom, teachers conduct weekly class meetings to create rules of conduct, solve problems, establish group goals and build a sense of community. The purpose is to develop a safe culture where students feel a sense of ownership and belonging.

3. Special Populations:

Conway's focus is to improve students' academic achievement, build positive self-esteem and develop habits of mind. The goal is to create independent and responsible learners. At the beginning of the year, classroom teachers and specialists meet to share information regarding the needs of every student. Conway utilizes Response to Intervention (RTI) in problem solving teams consisting of the principal, counselor, classroom teachers, and specialists. These meetings are conducted throughout the year as student needs arise. The school schedule includes common grade level planning twice a day allowing teacher teams to create lessons, assess data, and collaborate on curriculum. Benchmark assessments are given three times a year in the areas of reading and math to track student progress, as well to guide teacher interventions. Formative assessments are also given to track student progress.

Each grade level has a daily 30 minute Learning Block to address specific skills that may need reteaching, as well as a time for gifted, Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. Learning Block was instituted at teacher request to centralize student pull-outs from core instruction in the classroom. Conway teachers provide weekly before and after school skills groups for students who may need more time and practice with skills that they have not yet mastered. Weekly Homework Club offers a quiet place for students to complete homework. Teacher assistance is available as needed. The Before and After School Tutoring Program is available twice a week throughout the year to any at-risk student who needs extra instruction. During the 2017-18 school year, 34 students participated in the tutoring program. Based on end of year testing, 33 students had reached grade level expectations or above.

Reading and Math Lab provide instruction for Tier 3 students in kindergarten through fourth grade who qualify for extra support. Students' needs are evaluated through state and district assessment data, classroom observations and teacher feedback. With parent permission, an intervention program is developed and implemented based on the student's specific needs. Progress is monitored and interventions are adjusted as needed.

The Gifted Program is a 150 minute pull-out program which supplements and extends the regular curriculum. Students are identified through multiple levels of evaluation.

Special School District encompasses St. Louis County and provides instruction for the special educational needs of children with diagnosed disabilities. Qualified students receive instruction in the Conway school setting. Professionals include resource teachers, a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapists, and a school psychologist.

Conway has many different learning spaces available to students in order to optimize learning. From couches and wiggle seats, to ball chairs or standing desks, students have the opportunity to manipulate their bodies and limit distractions. As a proactive measure, a sensory room has been created at Conway. It provides opportunities for any student who would benefit from sensory breaks during the day. An occupational therapist consults with teachers to determine which activities are deemed appropriate for each student. Students are assigned by the teacher and supervised by a teacher assistant. Posted charts with photos let the teachers know which items calm "busy motors" and which ones stimulate the idle brain.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Relationship building is a core belief at Conway. Students thrive on the positive relationships that are built on a foundation of trust. The teachers provide a survey for students and parents. Teachers are genuinely invested in the daily interests and activities of students. They attend many of their students' extra-curricular activities. These relationships are the driving force for student motivation throughout their years at Conway.

Conway Elementary has hosted hundreds of teachers and administrators who are interested in experiencing schoolwide differentiation in action. A common theme that visitors express is that the school exemplifies collaboration, enthusiasm and teamwork. Students are engaged and parents and teachers are partners in the school community.

Conway staff provides a safe and nurturing environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and understand that mistakes are essential for growth. The Conway Promises provide students the security of consistent schoolwide behavior expectations. Weekly class meetings provide opportunities for students to share ideas and concerns and brainstorm solutions. Throughout the year, teachers explain the difference between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset and encourage students to stretch their learning boundaries and move out of their comfort zones. Students are taught about the upstairs and downstairs brain and they use this terminology to let teachers know if their emotions (downstairs brain) are interfering with learning. It is a signal that a break is needed so the student can return to his upstairs brain, the place where learning occurs.

Evening parent workshops introduce initiatives such as differentiated instruction, internet safety, Love and Logic and the Olweus bully prevention program. To support the school, parents need to know how these initiatives help their children learn and grow. Student and parent surveys give feedback on the effectiveness of the school initiatives.

Leadership has cultivated an environment where teachers feel valued as professionals. Coaching is an integral part of lesson observation. The leader conferences with the teacher and together they develop a differentiated lesson based upon pre-assessment results.

The Conway community works together with staff to create a special learning environment where everyone succeeds. The Conway library is open one day each week during the summer to provide the opportunity for students to check out books and have a quiet place to read. CSA funding supports our open summer library. It also provides funds for childcare for parents while they are meeting with teachers during conferences.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Conway families and the surrounding community have many opportunities to be a part of our great school. In April, Conway hosts parents of incoming kindergarteners to give an overview of kindergarten and to meet the teachers. The kindergarteners have an evening of stories and activities with the librarian and art teacher. CSA hosts two summer play dates for kindergarteners and their parents to begin developing new relationships. To reduce parent anxiety, parents and students board the school bus and take a ride around the neighborhood. Sneak Peek is an event where all students meet their teachers the day before school starts. The first day coffee is an opportunity for parents to sign up for the many committees and volunteer opportunities. CSA funding has provided Smart Boards and FM systems in every learning space. The latest technology initiative was partially funded by the CSA. Students in K-1 have iPads and laptops are provided for students in grades 2-4. Two popular evening events are Family Fun Night and the Dad's Club movie night. The annual Spring Open House is another event where families can come together to view their child's artwork and classroom projects. A Conway tradition is the school picnic to celebrate the end of another year of learning.

Communication with parents is achieved in a variety of ways. Parents have access to all staff email addresses. In the first two weeks of school, Conway hosts a Meet the Teacher night to give parents an overview of the curriculum. Each grade level maintains its own website to keep parents informed and share curricular resources. The parent school connection fosters academic growth by assuring that all stakeholders are on the same path in supporting the students' academic achievement. The school offers evening workshops for parents to introduce new curricular initiatives and programs. Weekly teacher newsletters keep our parent population aware of current classroom and school events. A monthly, online newsletter is written by the CSA and the principal.

The OASIS Tutoring Program is an example of how Conway partners with the community. Senior volunteers provide one to one instruction and serve as mentors for students needing an extra adult connection. Parents also share their expertise by hosting after school learning clubs. For example, a parent programming expert incorporated Raspberry Pi's in teaching students the coding process. Parents also lead the Girls on the Run Program for girls in grades 3 and 4. High school student cadet teachers fulfill part of their course requirement by volunteering in Conway classrooms. Our families and surrounding community share in our motto that Conway is indeed a "Great Place to Learn."

3. Professional Development:

Conway's mission and vision drive our focus in professional development. Professional development revolves around schoolwide initiatives which include all staff in the learning process. Teachers attend a weeklong workshop at the University of Virginia focused on Differentiated Instruction, a teaching model that Conway has embraced for the past eighteen years. For the first five years of this initiative, Conway was coached by an expert in differentiated instruction who worked with Dr. Carol Ann Tomlinson of the University of Virginia. She taught strategies and coached teachers through the development of differentiated lessons. Data analysis comparing student achievement for three years prior to differentiation and three years during the practice of differentiation showed a statistically significant rise in student achievement.

Schoolwide initiatives include Restorative Practices, Love and Logic, and the Trauma Informed Classroom. The principles of these initiatives are taught to new teachers yearly and reinforced on an annual basis with the entire staff. Conway teachers have attended the Assessment for Learning Institute which addressed the importance of designing effective assessments and analyzing formative and summative results. Knowledge gained is presented to the entire staff. All staff participate in Book Clubs related to current professional development topics to further extend their knowledge of instructional practices.

One area of focus for our staff professional development is centered around Diversity and Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices. All staff has been trained and participated in the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity Program (S.E.E.D). Follow up workshops are regularly presented to reinforce efforts to provide safe, collaborative, and culturally reflective learning environments. Utilizing these frameworks Conway ensures that all students find connections that honor their cultures and their personal experiences and backgrounds.

Survey results drive professional development. Topics are aligned with school goals and needs. Conway's Professional Development Committee (PDC) analyzes and evaluates each professional development experience. Focused, consistent, and ongoing evaluation for all Conway teachers helps ensure the implementation of a strong foundation of instructional strategies. New teachers are valued at Conway for their fresh ideas, new insights and enthusiasm. All new staff members receive a mentor who guides the new teacher through the curriculum and school and district expectations. Conway recognizes the fundamental role of all support staff and encourages their ongoing professional development. Counselors are trained in new procedures regarding educational supports. Professional growth for both certified and non-certified staff is a continuous process of refining skills, keeping current with new developments and creating new visions in education.

4. School Leadership:

Conway's vision is to nurture the joy of lifelong learning, to embrace the diverse qualities of each person and to develop responsible students. The school leader works with staff to create an environment where all voices are heard and consensus determines the path that will fulfill our vision. A new initiative is added only if it fits into the school vision. Recognizing individual teacher strengths and sharing leadership opportunities is a high priority. Conway has successfully implemented second order change through schoolwide differentiation. Information is shared with parents to create a common understanding of this philosophy of teaching and learning.

Once the vision is established, the leader sets the expectations and outlines the resources needed to achieve the goal. She provides resources to inservice teachers in the initiative. The leader learns with the teachers when a new approach is introduced. Teachers work in grade level teams with 90 minutes of joint planning per day. The time can be used for lesson development and data analysis. The team concept creates a natural mentor situation for new teachers. As teachers plan together, they discuss ideas for lesson objectives and pre-assessments to be shared by the team.

Another paradigm that teachers model is that everyone grows through mistakes. Teachers encourage students to stretch themselves and take risks in their learning. One of the school themes is "I don't know...yet." Our staff creates a safe environment where students can push themselves past their comfort level. Students understand that the road to success is paved with mistakes well handled. (Meyer, 2018).

Shared leadership is demonstrated in many ways. Teachers chair committees at both the school and district level. Conway's leader encourages distributed leadership. She understands that teachers need to take ownership of the many facets of our vision and share the knowledge with the group. School committees include diversity, character education, Olweus and safety. The Cross Grade Level Committee consists of representatives from K-4 and special areas. It is a two way communication between the leader and staff. Another example of shared leadership is our Before and After school Tutoring Program every Tuesday and Thursday. The technology specialist introduces new programs and software to teachers and students that extend understanding of concepts taught in the classroom.

The fidelity to the implementation of the school vision has created a common language regarding character education, bullying prevention, social-emotional learning, mindset, and differentiated instruction and this common language is understood by students, parents and teachers. Student needs are constantly changing and our challenge is to continue the learning process to meet these changing needs.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

“Good is the enemy of great. We don’t have great schools, principally because we have good schools. To go from good to great requires transcending the curse of competence.” (Collins, 2001)

Collins’ quote was the unifying motivation for staff in collectively beginning the journey toward schoolwide differentiation eighteen years ago. The main question for reflection was, “Are we as good at teaching all learners as we can be?” Through the implementation of differentiated instruction, teachers developed a common vocabulary, a common mission, and an interdependent support system. Lesson development began with creating the Know, Understand, and Do (KUD). The understand connected student learning to everyday experiences so that they would know why these skills were important to learn. Lessons were developed to match readiness levels, learning style and interest.

Pre-assessment determines what scaffolding and flexible grouping is needed for the specific skill. There was a shift from “activity-based” to “thinking and skills-based” learning. All students became active learners because what they were asked to do was at their readiness level. Reflection was important in that it was both a mirror and a window, allowing teachers to examine their practice relentlessly while offering new views on how to move from good to great. An interdependence and collaboration evolved among teachers as they created lessons. For five years, an expert in differentiated instruction coached teachers and the leader in the strategies that support this method. Parents were informed of the “why” of differentiation early in the process and were introduced to the tenet that fairness trumps equality and the rationale that having students do the same thing does not meet their individual learning needs.

Data analysis compared three years of test results prior to differentiation with three years of results with differentiation. Results showed a statistically significant rise in achievement with differentiated instruction. The trend has continued throughout the years. Of significance, there has been upward movement of students from proficient to advanced and from basic to proficient.

Two books have been written about schoolwide differentiation at Conway. *The Differentiated School. Making Revolutionary Changes in Teaching and Learning* (Tomlinson, C. A., Brimijoin, K., & Narvaez, L. 2008) documents the school’s journey and *Differentiation At Work K-5* (Narvaez, L. & Brimijoin, K. 2010) includes nine teacher lessons as well as teacher reflections on how and why the lessons were created.

The learning culture at Conway has been transformed for students. Instead of wanting to “do the same” as the other students, the conversation revolves around what each individual needs. Through teacher reinforcement of the idea “one size does not fit all”, students are comfortable in discussing their strengths and learning needs. This paradigm shift has created flexible and confident individuals willing to take risks and understand that mistakes are natural outcomes in the learning continuum.