

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Westchester Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1416 Woodgate Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Kirkwood MO 63122-1036  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County St. Louis County

Telephone (314) 213-6160

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Web site/URL  
https://www.kirkwoodschoo  
l.org/w

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l.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\*Dr. Michele Condon E-mail  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) michele.condon@kirkwoodschoo  
l.org

District Name Kirkwood R-VII School District Tel. (314) 213-6100

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. Darnel Frost  
(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**

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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

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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)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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	44	79
1	48	40	88
2	48	34	82
3	52	45	97
4	51	51	102
5	26	38	64
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
<b>Total Students</b>	260	252	512

\*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
  - 2 % Asian
  - 6 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 82 % White
  - 5 % Two or more races
- 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: 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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	19
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	33
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	512
(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: 2%  
8 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8%  
Total number students who qualify: 39

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %  
81 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>16</u> Autism                 | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>37</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
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 22:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	97%	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.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

Westchester Elementary is a diverse learning community where stakeholders collaborate to become creative problem solvers who make responsible choices and persevere in a complex and dynamic world.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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As proud former recipients of the Blue Ribbon Schools Award, Westchester Elementary has a legacy of high standards of excellence for our staff, students, and community. Families enroll at Westchester from around the country in large part due to our Blue Ribbon status and exemplary reputation. We have leveraged our distinction and cultivated a culture of family. Like any family, we recognize that every person that walks through our doors is unique and valued. This philosophy greets our children before they even enter kindergarten. We prioritize getting to know each of our youngest learners during the first two weeks of school before placing them permanently. This investment of care and recognition of the individual follows our students throughout their time at Westchester.

Westchester embraces the connections that make our building feel like home. The moment our children arrive in the morning, adults welcome them individually. Children may stop to get a kiss from Millie, our three-legged therapy dog on their way to their classrooms. Several students may search for the queen by the indoor beehive and check in with our school secretary who is also our resident beekeeper. When they arrive at their classrooms, teachers meet them at the door with a personal greeting. The staff at Westchester is committed to forging individual connections with each student.

Westchester’s family philosophy transcends traditional ideas about school and learning. The learning experiences at our school are not limited to the four walls of our classrooms. When walking through the grounds of Westchester, visitors may notice children completing their daily responsibilities of feeding our chickens, composting in the cafeteria, and weeding in their grade level vegetable gardens. Entering the Westchester Woods, there may be fourth graders repelling from trees to learn about seed dispersal, first graders taking a stroll through an interactive story walk, third graders participating in a drum circle, second graders performing a reading production in the amphitheater, and middle and high schoolers reading with their kindergarten buddies at picnic tables. At Westchester we believe that learning experiences should engage every learner when we intentionally diversify our pedagogy.

In our building, rich learning experiences happen all over. Inside the gym, children might be participating in a before-school yoga session led by staff members to start the day off right. Reporters for our school newspaper could be jotting notes and taking pictures with their iPads for the latest Wildcat Weekly. Further down the hall, children may be enthusiastically completing a Rigamajig challenge or another STEM activity. In another classroom, a group of fifth graders could be interviewing a teacher about their social media use for their podcast. Children may be lining the atrium to sketch the turtles in science journals. Young Mathematicians are often sitting on wobble stools engaging in discourse about the most efficient strategy to use to subtract two numbers. We value the autonomy of our talented teaching staff to develop unique opportunities for students. Our philosophy is that kids learn best when they are autonomous as well.

Like any family, our Westchester family encounters challenges and conflicts. Students may be working on a restorative think sheet to repair hurt feelings. A class could be passing a talking stick during a Circle to solve a class conflict. A chime may sound to begin a mindfulness lesson. Universally, students participate in mindfulness activities; Olweus anti-bullying curriculum, Second Steps, Digital Citizenship, and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS). When problems arise, we are dedicated to utilizing Restorative Practice in lieu of punitive measures.

Celebrations and traditions are important to Westchester. Our Westchester family photo album in our yearbook is filled with lifelong memories. One page depicts the Art Show which showcases art from every student. Another page recognizes the diverse families and cultures during our Cultures of WE event. Families share their traditions, food, music, and art with our community. Some pages highlight grade level celebrations and traditions like the fourth-grade Wax Museum, Kindergarten Veterans Day performance, and all-school Lego Expo. Our longest standing tradition is the Third-Grade Circus, a multi-disciplinary performance that features students’ unique talents and abilities. The final pages of our album will show our special way of celebrating milestones. Students line the halls ready to “clap out” their fellow Wildcats. The honorees walk through the halls being cheered on by their entire Westchester family. The final clap out of each year is for our fifth-grade students graduating and completing their elementary career at Westchester.

Through our celebrations, we connect generations of students to the rich history of our school and our community.

It is a true honor to be nominated for the Blue Ribbon Schools Award for a second time. It validates the hard work and dedication of our staff and students on a daily basis. We would use this honor to continue to hone our exceptional and personalized culture and represent the values of public education in the state of Missouri. Our goal is to send the kids off to face anything in the world due to their high-quality education and the unwavering support of their Westchester family.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

Teachers implement high-quality core instruction using the Balanced Literacy Framework as the foundation for literacy. The balanced literacy framework provides teachers with the opportunity to differentiate through a variety of structures; read aloud with accountable talk, shared reading (k-2), reading, writing and phonics workshop, and shared and modeled interactive writing with accountable talk. Teachers utilize the workshop model when they first deliver a mini-lesson, followed by work time when students either work independently or with a teacher in a small group based on the specific needs of learners, or enjoy a 1:1 conference, and finally, closing with a debrief. Teachers deliver the mini lesson in a predictable structure which starts with a connection to previous work, explicitly stating the teaching point, an opportunity to engage in the new learning with peers and teacher support and ends with restating the teaching point.

A variety of assessments are used to determine student progress, strengths, and areas of need; universal screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative. A student's instructional reading level is determined using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System and progress in attainment of the learning standards is gathered through the end of unit reading and writing common assessments. Teachers view assessment as an ongoing process and use the varying forms of data to inform whole group and small group instruction so that they can tailor lessons to meet the specific needs, learning styles, and strengths of the group as a whole as well as individual learners. Students are regularly brought into that process through self-assessment, goal setting, and tracking of goals.

Teachers are able to utilize the 1:1 iPads to personalize instruction and support the diverse needs of their students. Some ways in which teachers use technology to support their diverse learners are to record lessons and provide access to online libraries.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

Westchester teachers strive to encourage all students to become proficient mathematicians by situating problem solving into real-world contexts and allowing strategy, comprehension, and fluency to develop through hands-on learning and collaboration. Teachers emphasize the Standards of Mathematical Practice in problem solving, communicating thinking, modeling, and using tools. Curriculum follows a balanced framework of setting a clear learning intention, and having time to problem solve, spiral review, and develop procedural and conceptual fluency. Teachers utilize the workshop model where they deliver a mini-lesson, followed by small group instruction and conferring, and close with a math congress or debrief.

Teachers' innovative instruction is showcased through their use of data driven lesson planning, multiple resources, and technology to help individualize student learning and increase engagement. The learning outcomes are aligned with Missouri Learning Standards and include essential questions, enduring understandings, and academic vocabulary. Students are assessed using common reporting standards on classroom assessments. Other assessment data is collected through our universal screenings during our benchmarking periods. This data includes early math skills, automaticity, process, conceptual understanding and application, as well as an adaptive measure individualized to each student. These assessments are used to identify students performing at, above, and below grade-level expectations and how-to tailor instruction to best support their needs.

#### **1c. Science:**

Westchester's science curriculum focuses on next generation skills through collaborative work, critical thinking, and problem solving gained from hands on experiences. Students work as engineers, coders, meteorologists, physicist and biologists. These roles are connected through the concepts of cause and effect, structure and function, systems and stability, patterns and change. Westchester scaffolds this learning from

kindergarten to fifth-grade. In kindergarten, students begin their understanding of engineering by building a sturdy beanstalk through a beginning design process. First-grade biologists blend their creativity with research-based knowledge in creating a three-dimensional model of their animal and its habitat. Physicists in second-grade investigate with insulators and conductors by insuring an ice pop remains solid for an extended period of time. Third-grade coders develop their understanding of computer science and the importance of coding in their daily lives. Science springs to life in fourth-grade as students explore high in the trees of the Westchester woods by learning the effects of pollination and seed dispersal. Fifth-grade students become computer science engineers and develop a design process that fabricates a robot with multiple functions. Westchester proudly collaborates with families to host Family STEM Night, an interactive evening allowing teachers and parents alike to showcase their talents and passions. Community professionals also demonstrate how learning in the classroom prepares students for next generation careers.

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

Westchester's social studies curriculum is cyclical and hands-on. The curriculum encompasses a variety of concepts that include learning about community, history, culture, economics and geography. Additionally, each grade has one large experiential project in which students dive deeper into one topic. In kindergarten, our newest students explore what it means to be a member of different communities. First-grade celebrates, researches and shares their diverse family traditions. Second-grade entrepreneurs collaborate with peers to establish and run their own businesses in "Economics City". Informed third-grade citizens visit our state capital to learn more about the different parts of government. Fourth-grade historians participate in a historical-themed wax museum where members of the Westchester community learn more about their contributions. Our most senior wildcats apply the skills of citizenship, business and consumerism by participating in Junior Achievement's Biztown.

Throughout all social studies learning in all grade levels, Westchester strives to teach students respect for all cultures, backgrounds and abilities. Therefore, students have opportunities to share and participate in whole school events such as Cultures of Westchester and Black History Month. At Cultures of Westchester, families are encouraged to share their culture; through this unique event, students are able to develop an appreciation of the many cultures that make up one Westchester. Teachers collaborate with each other to develop age-appropriate activities around a different theme while focusing on Black History.

#### **1e. For secondary schools:**

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

### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

A large focus of Westchester is to develop the whole child. Students meet for 50 minutes daily for a four-day rotation schedule of art, music and physical education/health in addition to weekly classroom character education lessons.

Westchester artists experience a variety of art making processes such as: drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, elements of art and principles of design, different cultures and a variety of artists. Through these components of the art curriculum, artists connect core classroom concepts to their artwork. Math concepts such as shapes, forms, patterns, and symmetry are strongly connected throughout the art curriculum. Symmetry is utilized in a variety of ways from portraits in kindergarten, first and fourth grade to asymmetry in third and fifth grade. Artists engage in science through color mixing in varying degrees at all learning levels. In addition, they engage in clay construction and glazing and study the chemical reactions that occur with a clay project as well as the different stages of the clay material and the glaze as it changes from a liquid to a solid. Artists in fourth and fifth-grade connect their art and writing by using their iPads to compose a reflection about their art.

Musicians develop skills in singing and playing instruments including a variety of percussion instruments, the recorder, and the ukulele. The music curriculum includes music literacy which teaches kids to read and write standard music notation. They also study rhythm, melody, and movement. Through the use of Will Schmid's World Music Drumming curriculum and Kirkwood music standards, students are able to experience music making with an emphasis on community building, teamwork, student leadership, and appreciation of diverse cultures. There is an optional before school choir for fourth and fifth grade students at Westchester, as well as, an optional instrumental music program for beginning band and orchestra students in fourth and fifth-grade. Students also develop partnerships and opportunities to learn from area experts through field trips and interactive experiences.

Students participate in 75 minutes of Physical Education (PE) and 25 minutes of Health. Our curriculum is a blend between the Missouri Learning Standards and the Kirkwood Mission Statement. We strive to educate the whole child through movement, skill-based learning, cross curricular lessons and health related fitness concepts. We teach the standards through creative activities and our own unique program. Each grade level participates in a variety of additional special events. This includes a low ropes course, bike rodeo, Third Grade Circus, Field Day, roller skating, Family Fitness Walk, Walkers Club, and other activities. These opportunities develop cooperation, social skills, joy, personal growth and wonder. The Health curriculum focuses on body systems, mental health and mindfulness, nutrition, and social-emotional health. Technology is in the forefront of our health curriculum with the use of the student iPads and interactive apps. The PE and Health teachers provide opportunities for inclusion for all students of all abilities, making PE and Health a life-long value.

The library program invites all students to begin the journey of becoming lifelong readers and information seekers. Classes visit the library at least once a week for read alouds, informational skills lessons, and to check out books. They discover authors, genres, and books that help them learn and also help them to love reading. In order to become future-ready learners, students attain research skills that will help them throughout their lives. Technology plays a significant role in the library. Students use their iPads to search the catalog, access and read ebooks, and do research on online databases. Students share with our school community by creating videos that are shown on our weekly announcements, "What's Up, Westchester." This video is a communication method for the whole school to learn about what is happening in and around Westchester. Throughout the school year, the library hosts several all-school activities that promote literacy. Multiple authors visit Westchester to share the process of creating books.

We believe that character education is something that should be explicitly taught. Students receive monthly counseling lessons with our school counselor. The lessons focus on a variety of topics such as, inclusion, relationship building, empathy, digital citizenship, and problem-solving. Additionally, teachers utilize Second Steps and The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program to promote social and emotional well-being amongst all students.

### **3. Special Populations:**

Westchester students are carefully monitored throughout their school career, as early as pre-K, with screening tools to aid in our identification process. Using the FASTbridge Assessment Suite, universal screeners are given three times per school year in reading and math. Additionally, students are screened using SAEBERS twice per year to monitor their social-emotional-behavioral needs. Once data is collected our Core ASSIST team (principal, assistant principal, school counselor, school psychologist, gifted specialist, and reading/math/behavior specialists) analyze current and historical performance plus each student's rate of growth. Access to this data determines professional development needs, effectiveness of interventions, fidelity of interventions, and behavior incidents and behavior plans as part of PBIS. Following the CORE Team meeting, teachers meet along with the CORE Team to determine levels of support for students performing both above and below grade-level expectations. Multiple pieces of data are reviewed to gain a complete picture of the learner.

Teachers' high-quality core instruction has a great impact on student success, so our master schedule has protected blocks of time for literacy and math instruction, as well as intervention. During the intervention

block, special education teachers (Special School District) pull students with a diagnosed disabilities, the district specialists pull students requiring intensive, targeted instruction (tier 3), while the classroom teacher delivers supplementary small group instruction (tier 2). Evidence-based or research-based programs are used to deliver instruction. Any student receiving a tiered intervention is progress monitored, with more intensive interventions monitored weekly and supplementary interventions bi-weekly. Progress monitoring data is accessible to teachers and this data is shared with families quarterly. We value the home-school connection and we understand the important role families play in a child's education. Communication begins with the teacher informing the family that their child has been identified through the screening process as needing additional support. Specialists join the classroom teacher for conferences. Parents are given a description of the intervention including the skill focus area, frequency, duration, and progress monitoring goal. Families are also kept abreast of skills and strategies and are given opportunities to continue this work at home.

Our district has developed a multi-step process to identify children who are gifted and talented. This process includes classroom and small group performance observations, formal and informal assessments and an IQ assessment. Once they qualify for our gifted program REACH (Responsive Educational Advocacy for Children of High Potential), we have a Multi-Tiered System of Support, including support from a gifted specialist both in, and out of, the regular education classroom. Additionally, students in grades two through five are eligible for whole grade acceleration in math where there is an established protocol in accordance with state standards. There are numerous opportunities for students to show their capability and advanced readiness.

Students showing social-emotional-behavioral needs via the SAEBERS screener also receive interventions such as Check In-Check Out, Meaningful Work, Fifth Grade Mentors, time with our therapy dog Millie, and/or counseling sessions with our school counselor or educational support counselor. In addition to the universal screenings, teachers can problem solve with our SEB team at our bi-weekly Social-Emotional-Behavior meetings.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Each school has its own culture that is unique to the ideals of the community, expectations of the parents, and reflections of the interests of the students. Westchester families value the reputation of their school and expect similar experiences throughout the years for their children. Perhaps the most highly anticipated event is the Third-Grade Circus. The third-grade students perform an annual Circus show highlighting student art work, musical talents, physical skills and individual talents for the past twenty years. Members from all over the community pack the house for the three performances in February. The grade-level teachers including the art, physical education and music teachers collaborate with students to create acts based on showcasing individual students' skills.

The teachers truly value student choice at Westchester. Students have the freedom to choose where they sit in a classroom whether it be on the floor, a bouncy stool or in a bag chair. Most of the extra-curricular activities offered to students have been born out of a group of students showing an interest and staff members facilitating that growth. One of the prime examples of this is our Chess program which has ballooned to over one-hundred students attending each week to learn new strategies to problem solve and for friendly competition. Assemblies at Westchester are student led. Our Student Ambassadors plan, create, and execute two assemblies annually to establish the 4 Be's of our Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program as well as an assembly on abilities awareness. Students develop content, sketch out the skits and create backgrounds for the performance. The entire student body views the performance. Student choose the manner in which the message is delivered.

Recently, students and staff have shown an interest in mindfulness and wellness. Westchester offers yoga to students before school each week and teachers have the opportunity one afternoon. In partnering with our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), we have had a community member visit classrooms presenting information to all students about mindfulness, deep breathing exercises and positive avenues to pursue that promote a healthy lifestyle. Since its inception we have witnessed students using mindfulness techniques to help others deescalate or regulate their behaviors. Westchester is a unique place that fosters the interests of each child and shares them as a family.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Five years ago, our Westchester community began a journey to understand and promote outdoor education. Westchester is fortunate enough to have three acres of wooded area behind our building, which includes a low ropes course and trails. As our community project began, the area was inundated with over-grown plant species and contained very little wildlife, so we decided to participate in the Missouri Green Schools Quest to make the space more appealing. We partnered with the Missouri Department of Education to design and execute a BioBlitz. Our students and staff discovered several invasive species of plants and vines that had taken over much of our Westchester Woods. The students determined a need to remove these invasive plants, and so a collaboration with Westchester families began.

Over the next two years, Westchester students and their families helped to clear an acre of the woods, virtually eliminating the regrowth of invasive plants. During the next school year, our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) became dedicated to providing even more improvements to our Westchester Woods. The PTO conducted a paddle raise at our annual trivia night, which raised \$15,000 in minutes. That money was used to purchase and build several additions in our woods, which included an amphitheater, a Naturescape learning area, seating, a new ropes course element along with the plants to create a monarch waystation and rain garden.

In addition, parent volunteers renovated an under-utilized shed to create a chicken coop nearby. We used some of the money generated from the PTO to purchase chicken eggs. The entire school watched each day until the chickens finally hatched. The chickens eventually graduated to the coop and now lay eggs each day. The chickens have satisfied two community needs: eggs that are traded for a donation to maintain the

coop and a calming place for students to visit that are unregulated emotionally. Our Scout programs have built birdhouses, bug boxes, and a book walk along the trails, and an Eagle Scout installed solar panels and a battery generator in our chicken coop, while parent volunteers and Green Team students have planted and maintained vegetable, native, and sensory gardens.

This year, Westchester will have a two-day event partnering with the Saint Louis Zoo and a local goat farmer. On the first day, all students will have the opportunity to participate in activities designed by Zoo educators pertaining to sustainability and discovering a love of nature. On the second day, students, staff, and parent volunteers, along with Zoo educators, will host a similar experience for the greater community. On both days, the goat farmer will educate guests on how goats can be a great resource in removing invasive plants in a natural, sustainable, and earth-friendly way.

Through careful planning, connecting community resources and a ton of hard work, it has been beautiful to watch the ideas of a few students to clean up the woods turn into a galvanizing community sustainability project that is multi-functional in providing a space for the community while giving the school real-world learning opportunities in our backyard.

### **3. Professional Development:**

Westchester Elementary is a unique community that believes in educating the whole child. Our staff believes that classrooms can stretch outside the brick and mortar building. We have created spaces and designed professional development to support our teachers and students. Most teachers have researched, planned, and selected items in their classrooms that are more flexible for students. We have encouraged classroom spaces to be less rigid and more fluid or comfortable for students. This has led to higher engagement during whole group and small group learning. Our commitment to educating the whole child and building capacity within our staff, has resulted in a dedicated professional development fund generously provided by our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). This fund has allowed teachers and administration to seek professional development outside of the district that is content area specific and truly beneficial to the individual.

Using these funds, our staff has attended mindfulness and well-being workshops, visited local Blue Ribbon schools, attended an annual physical education conference, and a team of eight staff members attended the Restorative Practices Academy.

Outdoor Education has been a mainstay at Westchester for the past couple of years with it even being outlined in our school improvement plan. In the past we have utilized instructional funds from our building budget to send two staff members to the American Wilderness Leadership School (AWLS). This school developed teachers in combining outdoor education and science standards. When they returned, they shared their learning with staff, as well as provided staff with concrete examples of ways to utilize nature in all grade levels. This year, our staff participated in a building-based professional development workshop provided by the Saint Louis Zoo. This workshop taught and encouraged staff from all content areas and grade levels to utilize nature in areas outside of science in preparation for a school-wide event occurring in May 2019.

To support teachers during typical professional development in our building and district, we have concentrated on targeted professional development in the areas of equity and diversity. Through small group book club discussions, and one dedicated full day professional development in this area, Westchester has seen an increase in putting into practice the principles of Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). The Restorative Academy attendees have shared the reasoning behind this approach to working with students and have supported colleagues in “in the moment” situations where a restorative approach would benefit all involved. These conversations have led to stronger bonds with our students while building empathy among all. Westchester has seen a dramatic decline in office discipline referrals, and an increase in community building circles and conversations around behavior.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

The leadership philosophy will always aim to do whatever it takes to ensure all students are prepared for success-now and in their futures. The leaders of Westchester hold true to these core tenants: promote and model ethical values, providing our school community with a safe and caring environment, providing meaningful and challenging academic experiences for all students, honoring our differences while engaging all stakeholders in a shared responsibility for learning.

Westchester is also proud of its relationship with our Parent Teacher Organization Executive Board meeting each month to collaborate around methods to support school programs and initiatives. Through this close-knit partnership, we developed a program where the PTO funded individual opportunities for all the members of the teaching staff to choose the professional development opportunity of their choice. Teachers took full advantage of this learning opportunity by visiting other Blue Ribbon Schools in the area, diving into best practices for Restorative Justice, and gaining new information on how to provide for the social-emotional well-being of our students and staff members.

Another key leadership decision making process that is vital to the academic, behavioral and social emotional status of our students is the CORE benchmarking meetings attended by the school psychologist, school counselor, social-emotional specialist, mathematics specialist, reading specialist, gifted teacher, assistant principal and principal. Our CORE Team meets to discuss benchmarking data in our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) reviewing the impact of Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS) math, reading, and social emotional areas. We use a protocol to discuss trends in data, develop specific interventions in response to the findings and match students with research-based solutions to improve the level of success. Our teachers are vital to carrying out the day-to-day implementation of these plans, so we meet with each grade level team to discuss their observations, anecdotal notes, and most recent evidence to tailor a plan for the individual students.

Through both the PTO Executive Board and the MTSS process we engage stakeholders at many levels to best determine individual roadmaps for student success and shared responsibility. At Westchester, we believe that this collective efficacy, the selfless ability to talk about our students, and knowing that our focus on learning will provide the greatest opportunity for our students to be prepared for success-now and in their future.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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We work with all stakeholders to implement Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) at Westchester. Our school-wide expectations - Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Cooperative, Be Safe, and Give 100% Effort – highlight our mission. The school-wide expectations and the way we reinforce positive behaviors are shared with families in the WE Family Handbook each year. Even though our staff has utilized the PBIS program for fifteen years, we continually strive to improve our practice as we learn new ways to support all of our children. PBIS has been the focus of faculty meetings. The PBIS team provides weekly announcements for students and staff, a weekly newsletter for families, and information is posted on our school’s website. Consistency and continuity are a key part of our PBIS program.

From the first day of school until the last, the school-wide expectations are taught and revisited frequently within classroom communities and at all-school assemblies. Students discuss, show, and develop a deep understanding about what it looks like, sounds like, and feels like to follow the expectations in all school settings. Visual reminders showing students following school-wide expectations are posted throughout the school. The 4 Be’s & Big E are highlighted on the weekly video announcements, along with students/classes who met expectations and received Shining Stars. Teachers also have alternated problem-solving classroom meetings with Second Step lessons (K-2) and Olweus Class Meetings (3-5) to teach social skills in the classroom.

Additionally, the school counselor implements the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Model and has monthly lessons in all of the classrooms. Our school has a program that provides real-time office disciplinary reports and all certified staff has access to this information. Using this data, we explore the what, where, when, who, time of day, and students involved in situations. Then we problem-solve and make changes to our practices.

Each year the PBIS team and the Social/Emotional/Behavioral (SEB) team looks at the results from the multiple measures to determine the Action Plans for tier 1, 2, and 3. These action plans focus on areas to sustain and areas to improve. The “Big 5” data reports show that we are continuing to sustain our PBIS practices and school-wide systems. Our office discipline referrals continue to decline in general, along with our non-structured areas (bus, cafeteria, and playground). In the last five years, an average of 95% of students received 0-1 office referrals, with 4% avg. of students receiving 2-5, and 1% receiving 6+ referrals. This year 97% of our students received 0 referrals, 2% received 1, less than 1% received 2-5, and less than 1% received 6 or more.