

**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 Mrs. Mary Carole Perry

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

Official School Name Central Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 401 Rock Run Road

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

Elizabeth PA 15037-2448  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Allegheny

Telephone (412) 896-2318

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Web site/URL https://www.efsd.net/Domain/10

E-mail mcperry@efsd.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. Todd Keruskin  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail tkeruskin@efsd.net

District Name Elizabeth Forward School District Tel. (412) 896-2310

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. Thomas Sharkey  
(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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	26	23	49
1	17	21	38
2	27	23	50
3	31	23	54
4	25	24	49
5	35	28	63
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>	161	142	303

\*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
  - 1 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 95 % White
  - 2 % Two or more races
- 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: 3%

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	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	8
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	312
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0%  
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 18%  
 Total number students who qualify: 54

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %  
61 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>7</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>6</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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	15
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 20:1

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	95%	96%	96%	95%	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.

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

Central Elementary is a place where the faculty and staff provide students with a safe, supportive learning environment through establishing authentic, respectful relationships. We cultivate a blended, student-centered curriculum in flexible learning spaces that meet the needs of all students.

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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The Elizabeth Forward School District is comprised of the Borough of Elizabeth and the Townships of Elizabeth and Forward. The District is located along the Youghiogheny and Monongahela Rivers on the Southeastern corner of Allegheny County, approximately fifteen miles southeast of the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The three municipalities encompass a combined land area of approximately 43.3 square miles, and the population of the District was set at 18,410 according to the 2010 United States Census.

Central Elementary School was originally constructed in 1951. An addition and alterations to the original structure were completed in 1971. The current 46,000 square-foot, two-story building was renovated in 1997 as part of a district-wide capital improvement to the elementary schools. Two years ago, Central remodeled their library to provide a multifunctional space to accommodate large and small group instruction, casual and formal meetings, and individual study. This new space allows teachers to combine classrooms and work collaboratively on projects.

Adjacent from the library is a new makerspace. In 2017, Central partnered with both The Pittsburgh Children's Museum and Google Pittsburgh to create a space where students can experience a variety of hands-on learning activities and digital fabrication software programs including laser cutters, vinyl cutters, CNC routers, and 3D printers. Students are learning the design thinking process from prototyping to final projects. Central hosts a Maker Night for the community each year as a way to involve our parents in understanding how valuable this hands-on work is to learning. Students are instrumental in teaching/demonstrating how to make and digitally fabricate during this event.

Elizabeth Forward School District is part of the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools and has been an Apple Distinguished Program for the last four years. Elizabeth Forward School District has been recognized at the White House and across the country as a leader in the K-12 Maker Movement and in K-12 Computational Thinking/Computer Science curriculum. Central Elementary is also recognized by Common Sense Media as a Digital Citizenship Certified School. All students receive lessons on digital citizenship to help them understand and use technology wisely.

Central Elementary is currently seven years into a 1:1 iPad learning initiative. Students take their iPads home each night and also over the summer. This iPad initiative has given equity to all students and closed the technology gap. Central has a 18% economically disadvantaged population and is the only elementary school in the district with an autistic/life skills program. Central is comprised of working parents that are committed to providing opportunities for their children to learn and grow. Our principal, faculty, and staff have worked to build strong home/family partnerships and to create experiences beyond the classroom to provide enrichment opportunities for our students and build a lasting love of learning.

Central Elementary is one of four total elementary schools located in the district. It is comprised of 18 homeroom teachers, three special education teachers, one reading teacher, one technology integrator teacher, and shared music, art, gym, band, speech and enrichment teachers. Students receive additional support from three reading aides and six instructional aides. Students identified with a disability and/or other need may receive nursing services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and/or speech therapy. All students move through the specials/itinerants on a ten-day rotation schedule. Adapted specials are also provided to students with higher level special needs. Our fourth and fifth grades are departmentalized and broken into ELA/Grammar and Math/Science/Social Studies.

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

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

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

Central K-5 teachers utilize a blend of the StoryTown Language Arts curriculum, as well as District PA Common Core aligned materials for ELA instruction. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade receive instruction in PA Academic Reading Standards using whole and small group instruction, as well as the technology-based components of Think-Central to teach vocabulary, comprehension and specific literary genres. A differentiated instructional model is consistently used within all kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms to target specific areas of student need. Teachers continually reevaluate reading needs using a model that includes formative and summative assessments, anecdotal observations and NWEA Maps Assessment results. The skills addressed in each group are based on curriculum assessments and NWEA Maps Assessment results.

Students are rotated through skill-based groups on a bi-weekly basis. Frequent formative assessments allow the teachers to determine if the student is above and/or below skill level. Students are continuously progress-monitored throughout the school year to guide the level of intervention and instruction. Data is collected using a variety of reading apps, and content is customized to the student's needs based on academic level. Kindergarten through fifth grade reading classrooms are comprised of a daily 90-minute block. Within that personalized learning time, students use the eSpark Reading app to access instruction on their level. eSpark uses data from state and nationally-normed assessments to diagnose learning needs and monitor academic growth. Students at all grade levels use a variety of apps to deepen their understanding and engagement with the reading materials including Epic, Spelling City, Quizlet, IXL, Newslea, Kandolu, and Nearpod.

The third through fifth grade faculty have also worked across grade levels to improve the writing, grammar and reading curriculum. Monthly meetings are held to compare and improve strategies and materials used for instruction. Students are provided benchmark assessments to determine their weaknesses, and lessons are designed to meet the needs of the students. In addition, our District decided to replace assessing kindergarten students with grades and moved towards a micro-credential/badging method of assessing mastery. In reading, students are assessed using twenty-two reading skills aligned to our Reading Curriculum and PA Academic ELA Standards. Students are assessed and awarded a badge when they have mastered the skill. Additional interventions are personalized to those students who are not earning badges within the expected time frame. Students exceeding expected badges can be assessed using the four advanced badges in reading.

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

Two years ago, Central adopted enVisonmath2.0 as the new math curriculum. This series incorporates the rigor of the Common Core State Standards and provides a blended instructional approach using digital and print to help provide a sound framework for customizing learning for every student. This series is organized into clusters of topics and lessons. During each math lesson, teachers ask students specific questions that require the student to use different strategies to solve math equations thus increasing the student's math reasoning. The lessons provide differentiated resources, tiered activities, learning centers, and flexible groupings. Student are able to access all the content, assessments, and student data on Pearson Realize. This LMS provides access to all resources in and out of the classroom on their personal iPad and/or home computer. Intervention time is used to differentiate instructional approaches and divide students into small groups based on math abilities. The skills addressed in each group are based on curriculum assessments and NWEA Maps Assessments results. Frequent formative assessments allow the teacher to determine if the student is above and/or below skill level. Students are continuously progress-monitored throughout the school year to guide the level of intervention and instruction. Data is collected using a variety of math apps, and content is customized to the students' needs based on academic level. Students at all grade levels use a variety of apps to deepen their understanding and engagement with the math materials, including Khan Academy, eSpark, Wowzers, Prodigy, Splash Math, and IXL.

In addition to the reading, kindergarten teachers use micro-credentials/badging to assess twenty-two math skills based on District Math Curriculum and PA Common Core Math Standards. Students are assessed and awarded a badge when a skill is mastered. Additional interventions are personalized for those students who are not earning badges within the expected time frame and those who exceed are challenged with five additional advanced-level math badges.

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

Central uses a variety of science resources to meet and exceed PA Academic Standards by focusing on National Standards. Over the last several years, we have used the ASSET hands-on, inquiry-based kits. This past year, with the development of our new Makerspace, we began implementing Mystery Science to enhance a deeper and more rigorous implementation and to broaden the hands-on learning activities of our science curriculum. Pacing guides were developed for third through fifth grade to ensure that all Science Standards and vocabulary are covered. Several educational apps such as Nearpod, Newsela, and Science IXL were adopted to enhance the vocabulary, learner concepts and competencies. Students in kindergarten through third grade participate in a variety of life, physical and earth science activities. These include, but are not limited to, metamorphosis, (caterpillar to butterfly), soil/water, seed planting, as well as a flower and bee pollination projects. Students in second grade participate in a culminating penguin project that includes learning about different penguin species and habitats. The students participate in several science experiments that explore blubber, the wax on penguin's feathers and a salt water exploration. Fourth grade students learn a variety of topics due to fourth grade being a science PSSA year. The instruction is intensive and focused on the fourth grade science standards including electricity, circuits and simple machines. Students are expected to apply this knowledge in the annual dream house building project where they incorporate switches, working lights and simple machines. The fifth grade students are more focused on the Science, Technology and Engineering Standards. They use this as a guide to plan, design and demonstrate a standards-based Amusement Park project highlighting force, motion, engineering and electricity. Students in all grade levels are exposed to a variety of assemblies covering science, health and engineering throughout each school year.

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

Central uses a variety of social studies resources to meet the Academic Standards for History. Lessons are designed to focus on a variety of big ideas including Pennsylvania, U.S., and World History, geography and economics. Students in third through fifth grade are provided current digital resources using Nearpod, Newsela and Google slides to cover topics including local, state, and federal governments, geography and careers. Kindergarten through second grade students participate in several cross-cultural activities that enhance their understanding of different cultural celebrations and commemorations. Students experience guest speakers and hands-on activities from Allegheny Land Trust, Japanese Society of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon Outreach Program and the local fire department. All students participate in the annual "Invite a Vet to Lunch" program for Veteran's Day, as well as a variety of service projects to gain understanding and awareness of civic duty. In addition, beginning this year, in order to meet the newly designated Career and Readiness Standards, students are now working on the self-exploration and planning program, Career Cruising. In all grades, students are starting to build a portfolio of career interests that will continue through the 12th grade.

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

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

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

Central Elementary has a rich and comprehensive arts, physical education and technology program for all students. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade participate in classes designated as “specials” that include, library, art, music, physical education, and computer science and computational thinking.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade rotate through 54 specially designed Computational Thinking and Computer Science lessons (CT&CS). This curriculum was designed to meet the needs of our students for a world in which they will live after graduation. The curriculum focuses on taking a problem, breaking it into manageable parts and then creating solutions while looking for patterns and using algorithms. Students use programming to facilitate this kind of thinking, while learning about hardware, software and the responsibilities of using technology. Kindergarten students begin using unplugged activities to introduce the terminology. They move to Kodable and Code Spark Academy Apps then Ozobots and Beebots Robots.

First through second grade students use Typetastic, Scratch Jr., Puzzlets, Ozobots, BeeBots, CodeSpark Academy, Snap and Makey Makey. Third grade students use Scratch, Makey Makey, Dash, Lego WeDo and the board game Qwirkle. Fourth and fifth grade students use Tynker, Sam Labs, Spheros, Parrot Drones, Swift Playground, Piper Bots and the board game, Qwirkle. All classes are enrolled in Code.org and receive instruction in digital citizenship through Common Sense Media lessons.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade are provided health and physical education classes aligned to the academic standards six days in a ten-day rotation where students obtain knowledge and skills that promote a healthy lifestyle. Various guest speakers and assemblies take place at the school to discuss how to maintain an active lifestyle such as Fit Kids Factory, Coach Stew from Kids of Steel and coaches from the First Tee of Pittsburgh. Students are encouraged to participate in the after-school fitness and running clubs, as well as the Kids of Steel community running program.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade participate in Art class three times in a ten-day rotation. Elementary art classes are based on combining visual art, aesthetics, collaboration and art history. We integrate technology into all of our lessons using the student iPads and visual projection. iPads are used to research artists, reference various art styles, answer questions and extend techniques learned or discussed in class. In addition, these same technologies are used to view art to inspire each student’s creative process. Lessons focus on the elements of art such as color, space, line, and form. Various forms of art are the focal point for classroom discussions about what feelings the art creates within the student, what parts of the art the students likes/dislikes, and what the student sees within the artwork. Students continuously exercise their fine motor skills when creating their original artwork. The students also develop their creative problem-solving skills which are used in other areas of study. The elementary art program lays the foundation to be carried on and extended throughout the upper levels of each students’ art education.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade participate in music class six times in a ten-day rotation. Central Elementary’s music program follows the PMEA Model Curriculum Framework to include skills and techniques through formal and informal processes used to assess quality music. Students also participate in a variety of additional music opportunities including jazz band and advanced band. Band and strings instruction are offered to students in fourth and fifth grade and chorus is offered to students in fifth grade. Students also participate in a variety of community events e.g. Singing Saturdays, PMEA Festivals, and the Senior Citizens performance. Central’s Fine Arts Department works together with many cross-curricular activities and events to enhance the art and musical experience. Last year, Central’s music teacher, art teacher and the fifth grade students partnered with Real World Scholar to design, create, and record a K-5 student Christmas CD which sold for \$10 a disk. Sales from the CD's reached over \$2,600 dollars, and funds were used to purchase Ukuleles for the classroom and an after-school club.

## **3. Special Populations:**

Central Elementary provides educational services to a very diverse population of students. Support Services are provided to learning support, as well as those with intellectual disabilities, autism and/or emotional disturbance. Central is the only elementary school in the district providing services to Autistic and Life

Skills students. The educational and social-emotional development of these students can be complex, and this has caused the staff to be at the forefront of understanding their unique academic/social needs. Students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade participate in a variety of assessments to determine their academic strengths and weaknesses.

Learning support students are given the NWEA MAP assessment three times per year. Upon the completion of each test, teachers and the principal review the data results and hold grade level meetings to discuss the achievement and growth of each student. Trends are identified to help determine what skills are needed and small group instruction is based on areas identified as a weakness. Learning support students receive interventions from the regular education teacher, learning support teacher, and two instructional aides. Students are scheduled daily to receive instruction/intervention from the special education teacher based on their present education levels and IEP goals. Data driven groups use various instructional practices including drill and practice, preteach/reteach, word building, and skill focused centers. Direct instruction is also provided to students needing a more adapted level of curriculum to allow them to work within their functional education levels in general education curriculum.

Students with autism and/or intellectual disabilities are provided a more intensive instructional approach with interventions that include sensory materials, focus helpers, visual support and social skills components. The curriculum includes Brigance, Attainment, Touch math, Edmark, and Step 2 Social Skills. Each student is closely assessed using checklists, observation, AIMS Web and curriculum-based assessments. Students are also exposed to life skills activities with job-related skills using the Cuisine Cart, school recycling, office helper, and various field trips. A behavioral specialist helps in the classroom with high need students that require a consistent behavioral plan.

We currently have nine Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) students identified in second through fifth grade. These students are provided enrichment activities outside the general education curriculum with hands-on activities, service-learning projects, writing contests, and state and local competitions. They are provided higher level math and reading content using the Warrior Challenge, Khan Academy, and IXL in addition to various other research and public speaking opportunities to help increase their academic growth each year. For those students who have not met all the criteria for Gifted services, but who are achieving in the 95% percentile on the NWEA, enrichment activities are provided in math and reading to support an increase in their yearly academic growth. We currently have 19 additional students receiving this academic support.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

The school culture at Central Elementary is positive and welcoming to all students, parents, and visitors. We have made it a priority over the last few years to open our doors to more visitors and parent volunteers. Our principal, faculty and staff have created opportunities for after school clubs, service projects and guest speakers to promote positive peer socialization, increase community involvement and enhance our educational programs. We have adopted several standard practices in the building to ensure that all students are able to participate in the many programs offered at Central. Promoting prosocial skills is a focus at Central to ensure all students can experience a comprehensive educational program.

As a way to create common language and behavior expectations across grade levels our school has implemented the PBIS Framework. Our students follow the BE Brave (Be Safe, Respectful, Accountable, Valued and Empathetic) expectations at school. We have created an acknowledgement system for our students, as well as staff, with the use of Brave Bucks. Our Principal Council has a key role in choosing preferred rewards and helping the teachers manage their Brave Buck data sheets, Hump Day Giveaway, and Music Mondays. School wide rewards are also embedded in this framework to further encourage our students to demonstrate these expectations. Our faculty teaches these expectations using student lead/created videos and the lesson plans written by our PBIS core team. Our expectations are displayed in all areas of the building and students are reminded about the importance through classroom meetings and assemblies.

The Central Elementary staff places an emphasis on providing extra support to students who are struggling with peer relationships, social skills, and grief. Our school social worker meets with students individually and in friendship groups to provide support and model pro-social skills. These groups allow her to identify students with additional needs and concerns that require family support. We believe our parent relationships are a vital part in helping our students become successful. Creating strong partnerships with parents fosters mutual respect and rewards for students. In addition to our social worker, we have a behavioral specialist for Tier III students who are struggling with behavioral issues. She works closely with the faculty to ensure students have visual schedules, appropriate behavior plans, and the materials needed to help these students access our various educational opportunities.

Central's faculty also stresses the importance of service projects. Throughout the school year, students in all grade levels participate in a variety of service projects that benefit agencies and people from across the Pittsburgh area. Our school has collected funds and/or items for Zackary's Mission, WHIP Cancer Awareness Project, Breast Cancer, Meals on Wheels, Christmas Stockings (Shadyside Hospital), Perfect Fit Canines, Autism, and Local Food Drives. We believe promoting these activities increases a sense of purpose, self-confidence and well-being.

Finally, our faculty and staff support and foster friendships with each other that extend beyond the classroom. Through our after-school staff Makeshop activities, potluck lunches, soup Mondays, and various moral boosters throughout the school year, we have built a strong support system. With these ongoing activities and transparency with our principal, we have created an atmosphere where we can express our concerns, share our feelings, and celebrate individual successes. We genuinely care about one another's well-being and congratulate each other on family successes and provide support during personal losses.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Central Elementary provides many opportunities for our families and community members to be a part of our school. We believe that developing the whole child can only happen if you build relationships with all the key stakeholders. Engaging families and community members promote a healthy environment and creates better learning opportunities for our students. Central's PTO is very active in helping to create educational experiences for all the students by financially supporting field trips, guest speakers, and

materials needed in the classroom. They are the drivers for the yearly Book Fairs, Fun-To-Be-A-Kid-Day, reading challenges, Earth Day, Dr. Seuss Week, classroom holiday parties, and kindergarten fun nights.

Our principal encourages the teachers to invite parents and guests to participate in a variety of learning opportunities. We have regular guest readers, tinker parent days, and career related speakers. We have partnered with the middle and high school students' groups on a variety of experiences that include Book Buddies, Arts & Bots, Pen Pals, stuffing backpacks for underprivileged students, Book Nook donations, video campaigns, and St. Jude charity drives. Students from the high school have helped Central on several school projects including our PBIS Kick-off, Makerspace video, Christmas presents for parents, and PBIS video campaign. These activities promote leadership and role-model opportunities for our older students, as well as creating an opportunity for our younger students to building lasting caring relationships with secondary students.

As a way to extend our reach into the community Central began honoring our local Veterans with the Bring a Vet to Lunch Program. Each year students in fourth and fifth grade are permitted to invite one Veteran to have lunch with them on Veteran's Day. Our principal works with the PTO and faculty to organize this event that includes a musical performance of patriotic songs and dialogue, patriotic poems, and patriotic pictures. A local veteran is invited to speak to the students and guests on what it means to be a veteran. The afternoon is spent together honoring and remember the sacrifices they made for our country.

Finally, our principal partnered with the local Rotary Association to form the first district-wide third Grade Spelling Bee. This year marks the third year we have hosted this event. Students in third grade across the district compete in this event and the winner has the opportunity to compete with other schools statewide at Seven Springs during the summer. Our Rotary has been instrumental in providing dictionaries to our students, scholarship opportunities, and a variety of donations. They are our goodwill ambassadors in the community and have been an asset in connecting us to the larger community.

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

Over the last five years, the faculty and staff have had extensive professional development in a variety of content areas including reading, math, grammar, science, technology, and behavior management. These professional development opportunities have helped to create a more comprehensive and rigorous curriculum for our students. High behavioral expectations have been established, and a common language is used across the building. Setting high expectations and building a more rigorous curriculum has changed the culture of the building and has led to higher student achievement.

Our first focus at Central Elementary was to create a long-term professional development plan to place all kindergarten through second grade teachers, kindergarten through fifth grade special education teachers and the reading specialist through an intense 12-day literacy program at the Reading Achievement Center. This professional development program is a comprehensive training in reading history, early literacy pedagogy, literacy theory, literacy research, and proven effective literacy instruction. As of March 2019, the above-mentioned population of teachers has received this literacy professional development. The school district recognized the importance of early literacy and added aides in all kindergarten classrooms to support a more student-centered classroom. The lead literacy teachers trained all of the instructional aides and classroom aides to support literacy stations during strategic groups.

The second focus for professional development has been moving from a teacher-centered classroom to a more student-centered classroom include student voice and choice. Teachers were initially trained by eSpark Learning, a personalized learning software company, on how to manage students using iPads with personalized learning software, and how to start grouping students according to their needs. Continuing training supported teachers on how to review the different reports of the NWEA MAP Assessments and how to group students according to the MAP data.

In 2017, the principal recognized teachers were in different places with regards to creating a more student-centered classroom and customizing learning for all students. As such, the principal started to personalize professional development for teachers. Teachers now log into an on-line system, Modern Teacher, to

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complete modules focusing on four professional goals. Teachers can work at their own pace and receive micro-credentials after uploading artifacts from their own classroom to show mastery of that specific module. The teachers are currently working on the following online modules to earn micro-credentials: Architect a Learner-Centered Culture, Architect a Modern Physical Learning Environment, Architect a Digital Learning Environment and Architect a Digital Learning Environment using a Learning Management System.

To broaden the professional development scope outside the district, Central Elementary has formed partnerships with Carnegie Mellon University, the Pittsburgh Museum Makeshop, and Google Pittsburgh to be one of the first elementary schools to create a K-5 Makerspace. Central Elementary teachers have been trained on design thinking, prototyping and the digital fabrication tools. All Kindergarten through fifth grade students rotate into the Makerspace throughout the school year for hands-on STEAM activities.

In 2018, our district embarked on developing the first ever Elementary Computational Thinking and Computer Science curriculum. Through the vision of our technology director and elementary technology integrators they developed a Kindergarten through fifth grade CTCS curriculum consisting of 39 classroom lessons. As a way to scale this work the regular education teachers are helping the technology integrator in the classroom. This model has helped to develop our faculty's ability to teach code and expand these skills to the general education curriculum. Our teachers also completed the Apple Teacher learning program and continue to grow using the variety of Apple products that are available.

Finally, all third through fifth grade teachers have gone through an extensive grammar training provided by two teacher leaders in our middle school. Our district has partnered with Fox Chapel School District to design rigorous grammar benchmarks focusing on academic writing versus creative writing to prepare the students for the TDA writing requirements on the PSSA's. Students are given grammar benchmarks four times in the school year to determine areas of academic strength. In addition, students are given cold writes to determine where we need to focus to improve student writing.

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

Central has one head principal and one principal aide that work together to ensure students are learning and the building is running smoothly each day. There is a collaborative style with how the building operates, and the staff has a voice in initiatives, instructional practices and trainings. Grade level meetings are held every ten days, and teachers are able to give recommendations in the grouping of students, share instructional practices and collaborate on lesson plans. The principal believes in capitalizing on the strengths of each member of the faculty and/or staff and sharing ideas, talents, and instructional practices is key on how the building continues to grow.

Our student-centered approach to decision-making ensures that each member of the faculty is working closely with the parents to inform them about their child's academic and social-emotional well-being. Teachers regularly invite parents into the classrooms to read, participate in STEAM activities, grade level orientation activities, classroom parties, and field trips. There is a close working relationship with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) which is key in facilitating other/new parents to participate in the many activities and fundraising opportunities. Monthly PTO meetings are held to plan, organize, and assign additional leadership opportunities through sub-committees for the members.

Teachers at Central have also taken the lead in many district initiatives. Since our district is part of the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools, we are the elementary building designated to showcase how our elementary schools are personalizing learning for students. In one school year, Central could have over 100 visitors coming to the school to talk with the students and their teachers about what they are learning in the classroom, and the variety of instructional practices that are being used to meet students where they are. These opportunities have helped to further develop teacher leaders and encourage students to develop leadership qualities by explaining what they are learning in the classroom.

Our principal created a Principal Council that enable students to have a more active role in the building and to help with decisions regarding PBIS rewards, assemblies, and building beautification projects. This six-

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member team consists of fifth grade students who are chosen based on a variety of attributes. They are the personal guides for the many visitors that come to see the great things happening at Central each year, as well as provide insight on what they are learning and how they are using technology in the classroom. These students keep a close eye out for any issues or concerns and are the reporters for the entire student body.

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

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Central has made many changes over the last few years to create a culture of high expectations and rigorous learning opportunities. Through our curriculum improvements, clear behavioral expectations, classroom design, and personalized learning opportunities we have moved towards a clear vision of supporting all learners and encouraging collaboration with the faculty and staff. These changes have happened through consistent communication with trainings using best practices. We believe our focus on creating personal learning opportunities and changing the physical learning environment of the classroom has led to much of our success.

Our journey to scale “customized learning” based on student needs began in reading and mathematics. Central at that time was in its second year of a 1:1 iPad learning initiative for all kindergarten through fifth grade students. Our first step in this journey was to implement a nationally normed assessment. The NWEA MAP Assessment was our first choice because of the ease with which it can be aligned with our different technology platforms. Students are tested three times per year and their results are uploaded into the different adaptive technology dashboards. Students use their iPads to access an array of apps that are leveled based on their academic needs. Personalized learning time has been built into the schedule each day for both reading and mathematics to ensure students are gaining additional exposure to the content and learning at their own pace. Additionally, because students have continuous access to their technology devices, they are able to practice skillsets and advance their individualized learning based on need and/or personal interest. Teachers have worked extensively over the last three years to create a more student-centered classroom environment to meet the needs of various student learning styles. Students are grouped according to the NWEA data and are assigned specific learning pathways to meet their academic weaknesses and strengths. These pathways are constantly changing according to classroom assessments and NWEA data. Every ten days, grade level meetings are held to include, the principal, classroom teachers, reading specialists and the enrichment teacher. During these meetings, student data is reviewed from the adaptive technology dashboards, classroom assessments, and observations in the classroom. Decisions are made to either move a student to a different group or remain working in the current group. These decisions are based on whether a student is making adequate progress with the assigned skill.

We also believe that another component to our increased student achievement is our modern physical learning environments. Each classroom has flexible learning spaces that are used to rotate students between stations working with classroom teachers, classroom aides and remediation teachers. This environment allows teachers to differentiate their instruction to enrich and remediate students. A first grade student who needs to be accelerated in the classroom could be working on second or third grade standards now, in this customized learning environment. Teachers initially struggled with this shift, because they were accustomed to teaching just one grade level. Central Elementary teachers now have additional resources in their classroom for students above and below grade level. By using data and adaptive technology with iPads, Central Elementary is truly differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students.