

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	79	68	147
4	69	77	146
5	69	81	150
6	62	81	143
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	279	307	586

*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
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 94 % White
 - 0 % 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: 4%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	586
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

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

Mandarin Chinese, Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 24%
Total number students who qualify: 139

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %
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>14</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>3</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>36</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>34</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 24:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	95%	94%	95%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

Dutch Ridge Elementary School connects students to the global community through innovation and enduring relationships.

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

Built in 2004, Dutch Ridge Elementary school created, for the first time, a district-wide 3rd grade through 6th grade building. Prior to its existence, two elementary schools served the community. One building served Beaver Borough, Bridgewater and Vanport students, K-5th grade and the other served the students of Brighton Township K-5th as well as all district students in 6th grade. While the school has a relatively short history, it has developed a reputation throughout the region as an elementary school worth visiting. Teachers and administrators from many schools in Western Pennsylvania visit the school to learn about the changes that have occurred and to see the students and staff hard at work.

Dutch Ridge Elementary is a suburban school in the Beaver Area School District. It is located in Beaver County, Pennsylvania and serves 586 students in grades 3 through 6 from the communities of Beaver Borough, Brighton Township, Bridgewater and Vanport. The median family income of \$45,000, is slightly below the state average. The school is located approximately 40 minutes northwest of Pittsburgh and 20 minutes from the Pittsburgh International Airport.

While the majority of the students at Dutch Ridge come from traditional two-parent homes, approximately 14% of the students have more than one address. Twenty-four percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch; this is an increase of more than 8% in the past three years. The rise of the natural gas industry in the region has resulted in additional demographic changes. Over the past 18 months, Dutch Ridge Elementary School has received new students from 3 countries (China, Germany and Venezuela) and 5 states (Delaware, Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico and Texas.) These aforementioned changes all present various challenges to the school, yet, Dutch Ridge Elementary School students continue to achieve academic excellence.

Dutch Ridge Elementary School embodies the motto of the Beaver Area School District: “Tradition dictates a standard of excellence.” The administration and staff of Dutch Ridge Elementary recognize that the “standard of excellence” is a target that must continually change to meet the goals of the community, the expectations of the state and the needs of the global market. The 21st century demands workers who can think critically, be creative, work collaboratively and communicate effectively. The math, reading and science scores of the Dutch Ridge students over the past four years rank at the top of the county and in the top 10% in the state. This had not always been the case.

Using site-based decision making processes, the Dutch Ridge administration and staff have made significant changes to the curriculum, instruction and assessment practices. These changes have resulted in a marked improvement in achievement, outstanding growth measures, and significant closures in the achievement gap. The most notable schedule changes include: 72 minutes of math and language arts every day; 72 minutes of social studies and science for half the year; common planning time for content and grade specific teachers; and daily time for intervention and enrichment for all students. The curriculum at Dutch Ridge Elementary school is continually updated to reflect the needs of the students. The tested, taught, and written curricula are now tightly aligned to the Pennsylvania Core Standards. Students now rotate classes among 3 or 4 core team teachers, enabling the teachers to become experts in one core content. Prior to the 2016-2017 school year, Dutch Ridge Elementary teachers were responsible for teaching all core content, resulting in 25 teachers of reading. This new model has only eight teachers of reading, two per grade level. The development of these areas of expertise have enabled the staff to fully commit to standards based instruction and embrace the need for enrichment and intervention. The most notable evidence of the efficacy of the aforementioned changes is the fact that Dutch Ridge received the PA Department of Education’s Keystone Award for Academic Excellence. The award is given to schools ranking in the top five percent in the state, as measured by aggregate student math and reading scores on Pennsylvania System of School Assessment testing and by having met all Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). AMOs are test participation rate, attendance, and closing the achievement gap. Dutch Ridge is considered a “Distinguished School” for the 2018-2019 school year.

A focus on the standards has not stopped the faculty at Dutch Ridge Elementary from creating innovative opportunities for students to work on Passion Projects, take movement breaks to underscore the mind-body

connection, learn valuable coding skills, serve their community through volunteer projects, give back to those in need through fundraising, and practice kindness. Students are also encouraged to utilize the sensory room, participate in mindfulness activities, talk to the on staff mental health therapist, or take one of the therapy dogs for a walk during times of emotional or physical distress as an alternative to suspension or other school exclusion. These alternatives to discipline were a part of our school-wide positive behavior intervention and support program (SWPBIS). Another means of fully including all students in the community was realized three years ago through the opening of a life-skills classroom at Dutch Ridge Elementary.

Dutch Ridge faculty focused on the academic needs of students, while systematically improving college and career readiness plans, increasing the social and emotional supports, and ensuring that the arts remained an integral part of the curricula. These strategic efforts are enabling the students to recognize their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The ELA Curriculum in grades 3-6 includes the following long-term transfer goals: independently comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types; be a critical consumer of text and other media; produce writing to address task, purpose, perspective and intended audience; recognize, understand and appreciate multiple perspectives and culture; research and gather evidence to create and coherent message; communicate effectively for varied purposes and audiences; and listen actively to engage in a range of conversations, to analyze ideas and positions and to evaluate accuracy in order to learn, reflect and respond. Big ideas of the curriculum are that: effective readers use appropriate strategies to construct meaning; critical thinkers actively and skillfully interpret, analyze, evaluate and synthesize information; active listeners make meaning from what they hear by questioning, reflecting, responding and evaluating; effective speakers prepare and communicate messages to address the audience and purpose, effective research requires the use of varied resources to gain or expand knowledge; audience and purpose influence a writer's choice of organizational pattern, language, and literary techniques; rules of grammar and language conventions support clarity of communication; and an expanded vocabulary enhances one's ability to express ideas and information.

After reviewing the state assessment data in 2015 and the academic construct of the building, the need to be data informed and standards aligned became clearly apparent. The curriculum is aligned to the Pennsylvania Core ELA standards both horizontally and vertically. Using data as a guide, the curriculum is revised, annually. The Pennsylvania ELA Learning Progressions provide teachers with an additional map of specific ELA skills across grade levels. Each grade level has developed a scope and sequence and a course syllabus.

Core instruction is provided through guided reading and teachers use various sources of text. No longer do teachers use one core reading series. They are empowered to use their professional, certified judgement to choose the best resource for the learning being addressed and the students being taught. The use of formative and diagnostic assessments enable teachers to continuously regroup students based on standards being addressed and student areas of strength and deficit. These guided reading groups change often, depending on the standards and skills being addressed. This strong focus on differentiated instruction enabled the teachers to recognize they must teach content standards both above and below grade level, depending on specific student need.

In addition to the core instruction, Dutch Ridge Elementary School has a strong Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that offers daily supports for our students. MTSS is used to provide more core instruction, enrichment, or intervention, depending on specific student need. During MTSS, all core content and special area teachers are utilized, enabling small group instruction.

The school calendar and assessment map are aligned. Early dismissal days placed strategically throughout the calendar and daily common planning time enable teachers to analyze data and make informed, instructional decisions. Dutch Ridge uses the diagnostic assessments of STAR reading and Dibles as well as district made benchmark assessments to analyze the progress of students and the quality of instruction. Formative assessments are used to progress monitor students throughout core instruction. Students receiving enrichment or intervention supports are further progressed monitored, depending on instruction being provided.

1b. Mathematics:

Long-term transfer goals of the mathematics curriculum ensure students: make sense of and persevere in solving complex and novel mathematical problems; use effective mathematical reasoning to construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others; communicate precisely when making mathematical statements and express answers with a degree of precision appropriate for the context of the

problem/situation; apply mathematical knowledge to analyze and model situations/relationships using multiple representations and appropriate tools in order to make decisions, solve problems, and draw conclusions; and make use of structure and repeated reasoning to gain a mathematical perspective and formulate generalized problem solving strategies. The big ideas of the mathematics curriculum are that: mathematical relationships can be represented as expressions, equations, and inequalities in mathematical situations; numerical quantities, calculations, and measurements can be estimated or analyzed by using appropriate strategies and tools; data can be modeled and used to make inferences; geometric relationships can be described, analyzed, and classified based on spatial reasoning and/or visualization; mathematical relations and functions can be modeled through multiple representations and analyzed to raise and answer questions; mathematical relationships among numbers can be represented, compared, and communicated; measurement attributes can be quantified and estimated using customary and non-customary units of measure; and patterns exhibit relationships that can be extended, described, and generalized.

The philosophy about curriculum, instruction and assessment for mathematics is similar to that of language arts. The core curriculum is aligned to the PA Core Mathematics Standards both horizontally and vertically. The PA Math Learning Progressions provide teachers with an additional map of specific Math skills across grade levels. Each grade level has developed a scope and sequence and a course syllabus. Using data to inform the decisions, the curriculum is revised, annually.

Core instruction is provided through guided mathematics. Although Eureka Math is a core resource for our math curriculum, teachers are encouraged to use their professional judgement to choose the best resource for the learning being addressed and the students being taught. Many Dutch Ridge teachers use the strategy of a “flipped classroom” to gain instructional time. In a flipped classroom, for homework, students watch a short video introducing a new math concept and then complete three to five short questions. The electronic results of the questions are sent directly to the teacher. Guided math groups are developed based on the results of the homework. This use of formative assessment enables teachers to continuously regroup students based on standards taught and student skills. This has led to strong data informed, differentiated instructional practices.

The Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) offers daily supports for our students. MTSS is used to provide more core instruction, enrichment, or intervention, depending on specific student need. During MTSS, all core content and special area teachers are utilized, enabling small group instruction.

The school calendar and assessment map are aligned. Early dismissal days and common planning time are used to analyze data and make informed, instructional decisions. Dutch Ridge uses the diagnostic assessment of STAR math as well as district made benchmark assessments to analyze the progress of students and the quality of instruction. Students receiving enrichment or intervention supports are further progressed monitored, depending on instruction being provided.

1c. Science:

The science curriculum is based on the following seven unifying themes: patterns; cause and effect; scale, portion and quantity; systems and system models; energy and matter; structure and function; and stability and change. By the time students leave Dutch Ridge Elementary School, they can: identify similarities and differences in order to sort and classify natural objects and designed products; identify patterns related to time, including simple rates of change and cycles, and to use these patterns to make predictions; routinely identify and test causal relationships and use these relationships to explain change; understand events that occur together with regularity might or might not signify a cause and effect relationship; recognize natural objects and observable phenomena exist from the very small to the immensely large; use standard units to measure and describe physical quantities such as weight, time, temperature, and volume; recognize natural objects and observable phenomena exist from the very small to the immensely large; understand that a system is a group of related parts that make up a whole and can carry out functions its individual parts cannot; describe a system in terms of its components and their interactions; know matter is made of particles and energy can be transferred in various ways and between objects; and observe the conservation of matter by tracking matter flows and cycles before and after processes and recognizing the total weight of

substances does not change.

As with both math and English, the science curriculum is revised annually based on all available data. The alignment to standards is both vertical and horizontal. Science teachers also utilize the PA Learning Progressions as an additional map of skills across grades. A scope and sequence as well as a course syllabus is developed for each grade as well. The science department meets annually with teachers in the primary and middle school buildings to ensure the alignment remains tight.

Because science is ever changing, teachers, using their curriculum as a guide, use a variety of resources to support their instruction. Teachers have begun to create their own electronic textbooks for student use. Every student in grades 3-6 have their own Ipads, making the use of electronic textbooks realistic. Using Open Educational Resources, teachers can update the books as often as needed.

The science curriculum is taught using a combination of direct instruction, project based learning and experiential learning. Teachers are empowered to use their certified, professional judgement to choose the instructional strategies utilized. They are required to use data to inform their practices and evaluate the quality of the decisions made. Dutch Ridge students are encouraged to understand that taking risks and failure are part of the learning process. This is a philosophy teachers are expected to model with their own informed, educated risk taking. This practice has led to incredible project based learning activities, student-driven passion projects and strong experiential learning.

In addition to formative assessment and classroom summative assessments, the science teachers utilize the PA Classroom Diagnostic Tools Assessment to analyze student progress toward standard mastery.

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

The social studies curriculum is written, taught and tested so that students are able to independently use their learning to support the ideals of civic rights and responsibilities as set forth in the Preamble of the United States Constitution in regard to their local, state, nation and international relationships with actions and deeds. Big ideas of civics and government include: government is the protection or abridgement of balancing rights, liberty, and freedom; people with liberty and freedom have a right and a responsibility for maintaining and securing them for their posterity; the workings of government vary dependent on how the government has the authority to govern; and citizens balancing their freedom and liberties in one form of government create actions that will impact citizens in other forms of government.

The social studies curriculum is focused on empowering students to become informed citizens involved in their communities while still supporting the English Language Arts curriculum. In social studies, students use reading, writing, listening and speaking to learn. As with all other core contents, the written curriculum is aligned to PA Academic Standards and is revised annually. Teachers have a course syllabus and a scope and sequence. One of the core resources used in social studies is TCI Alive!

Dutch Ridge has embraced TCI as a main resource because it provides many online resources and textbooks from which to choose, keeping the power of choosing the right resources for the right learning in the hands of educated professionals. The social studies curriculum utilizes a number of key instructional strategies, including: experiential learning, reading and writing for understanding, small group problem solving, and utilizing community experts for primary source learning.

While they are still able, students work with holocaust survivors and World War II Veterans. Based on their own passions, students develop and implement service learning projects to strengthen their communities.

Analysis of the social studies curriculum and instruction is based on district made assessments. Currently, there are no state assessments for social studies and no diagnostic assessments offered by the PA Department of Education.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Dutch Ridge Elementary school is determined to have strong academic achievement and student growth. This isn't accomplished just in the core academic subjects. The research supporting arts in education as a vital part of student success is fully embraced. This is evident in the vast special instructional areas afforded the students at Dutch Ridge Elementary School.

All students in grades 3-6 have visual arts instruction once every five days. The visual arts program aims to foster the following essential skills: creativity, problem solving, collaboration and global citizenship. Students work on individual and group projects and use their art as part of service learning projects.

Included in the rotation for all students in grades 3-6 once every five days is general music. General music gives the Dutch Ridge students the opportunity to be creative, work collaboratively with others on ensemble works, and take advantage of the mindfulness behaviors that positively impact academic achievement.

Health and physical education is provided for all students in grades 3-6 and is offered once every five days. Dutch Ridge students develop healthy habits, intended to last a lifetime. The health and physical education teacher works collaboratively with content area teachers to offer academic programming that involves physical movement. Additionally, students with social and emotional needs are encouraged to use the gym for mental breaks or to release extra energy so they can be successful in their academic classes.

The last program offered to all Dutch Ridge students is technology education. This course is offered once every five days. This program is designed for students to become creators of product and not just consumers. Students are encouraged to create their own videos, develop computer coding, use technology to draw, write, record music and research areas of interest. Dutch Ridge Elementary School isn't just interested in students becoming knowledgeable consumers of content that is available, staff are looking for students to be the creators of that content.

Students in grades 3-5 have library instruction every five days while 6th grade students participate in a STEM rotation instead of library. However, these two programs are aimed at developing the same essential skills. Students learn to critically analyze the quality and authenticity of materials and resources available. After conducting this analysis, students use the information to help them solve problems, develop new products and explore entrepreneurship. For example, most recently, 6th grade students designed candy molds, programmed a 3D printer to create the molds, and used the molds to make candy suckers. The students then sold the suckers to raise money for a charity of their choosing. Currently, students are building and programming a robot to assist with gardening. The teachers at Dutch Ridge are working to fund the development of a greenhouse on site. Students would use this green house across all grades and various subjects as they explore authentic project based learning.

In addition to the previously identified offerings, Dutch Ridge has several other musical opportunities for students. Chorus is offered to any interested student in grades 5 and 6 once every five days. Band is offered for grades 4 and 5, twice in five days and up to three times per five days for grade 6. String orchestra is available for any 4th-6th grade interested student twice, every five days.

It is important to note that a student might be involved in general music, chorus, band and orchestra. At no time are students pulled from core content instruction to receive these services. Dutch Ridge staff and administrators worked collaboratively to develop a schedule that supports both the arts and the academics.

In addition to the aforementioned curricular programs, Dutch Ridge Elementary has a state recognized Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that offers two days of math, two days of reading and one day of

social and emotional instruction every five days. During MTSS time, students receive more core instruction, intervention supports or enrichment experiences based on individual need.

3. Special Populations:

Special education teachers work collaboratively with content area teachers to modify instruction, adapt materials and provide alternative assessments for students needing academic intervention. The Director of Pupil Services and the building assistant principal provide guidance and professional development as needed to ensure teachers are providing all appropriate accommodations. Dutch Ridge Elementary School has both a Student Assistance Program (SAP) and a Child Assistance Team (CAT). These programs are used to develop plans of support for students who may be struggling academically, socially or emotionally. Building and Central Office administrators, teachers, teaching specialists and the counselor sit on these teams. They work with the parents, the student and all classroom teachers involved to develop a support plan that is then implemented and monitored. Whenever possible, special populations of students are fully included at Dutch Ridge Elementary School. Students with disabilities are provided any support necessary to be included in all school activities. Students with physical disabilities receive adaptive technologies and/or one-on-one paraprofessional support; students unable to physically attend school attend with the help of a robot and virtual technologies; a sensory room was built for students who may need frequent breaks to remain fully included; and special education teachers push into classrooms using a co-teaching model. It is the goal of the Dutch Ridge administrators that when you enter a classroom, you are unable to tell which teacher is a content teacher and which teacher is a special education teacher. In 2016, Dutch Ridge Elementary opened a life-skills classroom. Doing this enabled students with significant needs to be included in the school and not have to attend school in an outside placement. The life skills program has quickly become an integral part of the Dutch Ridge Elementary School community. English Language Learners receive daily instruction in reading, writing, listening and speaking of the English Language. Dutch Ridge contracts the services of a certified ESL teacher through the Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit. This ensures all English Language Learners receive one-on-one or small group instruction from a highly qualified specialist. Students needing enrichment and students identified as gifted have their own systems of support. Students receive direct instruction in math and/or reading at their instructional level. If the instructional level is less than two years above grade level, then the student receives enrichment and modified curriculum. If, however, a student is more than two instructional levels above grade level, they are accelerated and participate in content in other grades. For example, currently two sixth grade students are participating in Algebra 1. These students are bussed to the middle school to participate in this class. Finally, all students participate in the Multi-Tiered System of Support and receive intervention, enrichment or more core instruction based on their needs. The placement in these groups change frequently and are based on formative, diagnostic and summative assessments administered as part of the core curriculum.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The students at Dutch Ridge Elementary School have many opportunities to positively contribute to the school climate. Whenever possible, students are empowered to make decisions that affect how they learn and how the school functions. For example, in 5th grade, students are encouraged to explore their passions. Time is devoted for them to work on this passion. Most recently, a student built an old-fashioned video game console and then programmed a game to be played in the console. Another student motorized a bicycle that the building principal “tested” by riding around the property. A few 6th grade students were interested in rocketry. They were able to meet during their lunch and recess over several weeks to design and build rockets. Once they were ready for launch, the entire 6th grade team went outside to encourage and support the students.

A couple of times a year, students participate in Bobcat games. This is a friendly competition among grades, pods or content areas. The games consist of physical and mental challenges. While most students love the Bobcat games, there are students who would prefer not to participate. For those students, Dutch Ridge organizes multiple stations throughout the building where students can play board games, read, work on a passion project, or conduct an experiment or STEM activity.

As for the teachers and staff and Dutch Ridge Elementary school, the academic achievement and growth of the students the past several years would not have occurred without their efforts. The schedule, the curriculum, and the planning was all done with cooperation and inclusion of the teachers and staff. Teachers are empowered to make suggestions, encouraged to try to new learning strategies or resources and modify the schedule to work with other teachers in the building on cross curricular experiences. Professional development for teachers is also differentiated. Teachers are asked to reflect on their teaching practices and encouraged to participate in district developed trainings or seek other opportunities of learning that meet their specific needs. This professional development plan demonstrates trust in their abilities and professional judgement. These examples go a long way to build a safe, trusting school climate.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Dutch Ridge Elementary provides a family-like school where the faculty strives to include parents and the community through multiple means throughout the year. To this end, the faculty offers curriculum nights to showcase student work, STEM nights wherein industry leaders and high school students offer experiential learning opportunities meant to inspire, story walks to engage the whole family in literacy activities, notes and calls home that accentuate the child’s positive contributions, and opportunities to volunteer at the school and in the larger community. Each year, Dutch Ridge administrators are proud to work with the Beaver Area Heritage Foundation to host Beaver Tales, a diverse group of storytellers that help connect the multiple communities that send students to Dutch Ridge (Beaver Borough, Bridgewater, Brighton Township, and Vanport) to each other and to celebrate different cultures from around the world. Storytellers regale the students with stories during special assemblies during the school day and then welcome the community for a free story telling event in the evening, which serves as another opportunity to bring the school and the community together. Students also take multiple service-learning projects with the community throughout the year to plant flowers, to clean up parks, and to release trout that they raised in Science class. In 2018, Dutch Ridge students created informational vignettes about historical locations within the community. These short videos were accepted by the Beaver History Museum and embedded into their exhibits. This is just one more way that our students are not only engaging with their community, but also understanding their ability to positively contribute now.

Dutch Ridge also fosters community involvement, including groups of parents working together to create school-like opportunities, events, and programs that reinforce, recognize, and reward students for good progress, creativity, contributions, and excellence. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has sponsored numerous educational and family events including game nights, family meals and dances, and faculty versus student sporting tournaments that reinforce the school as the center of the community. In 2019, the

PTA helped students organize a fundraiser for future student experiential education opportunities by challenging the Harlem GlobeTrotters to a basketball game against Dutch Ridge teachers. These fun-family events are a natural extension of the school's use of industry content experts, such as bankers, lawyers, doctors, and process technologists, to reinforce key academic learning. In essence, Dutch Ridge strives to embody the concept of a "community school," which refers to a place where programs and services for students, parents, and others are offered before, during, and after the regular school day.

3. Professional Development:

Professional Development at Dutch Ridge Elementary reflects that of the Beaver Area School District. In both the District and the School, teachers are afforded a great deal of autonomy in the fulfillment of their professional development needs. The uniqueness begins with the assumption that, like student learners, not all professionals require the same professional development at the same time. Therefore, in-service days requiring all faculty to attend are reserved for state mandates and are usually coupled with opportunities to share progress and positive experiences with colleagues. Instead of the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to professional development, district and school administration have created the Individualized Professional Development Program (IPDP), wherein teachers reflect on their curricular or instructional needs and suggest local, regional, or national seminars, workshops, courses, and conferences that would fulfill a teacher's unique professional growth needs. For example, ELA teachers are free to consider standards and eligible content as a grade level or team, Math teachers might observe another district's exemplary teacher, and art teachers might take a pottery class offered at the community college. Teachers are also encouraged to visit teachers in the district who may have a strength that corresponds to personal area of concern or to invite another teacher to visit their classroom to offer professional insights; teachers are provided release time to accomplish these goals, as a means of de-stigmatizing asking for help and encouraging instructional innovation and professional collaboration. The IPDP at Dutch Ridge Elementary has resulted in teachers finding increased meaning and engagement with their own learning, as well as increased intentionality related to professional development courses offered within the district and the school. While difficult to prove empirically, it is perceived that the one-size-fits-no-one approach to professional development has had a positive effect on both teacher and student outcomes by providing a flexible structure within which teachers can reflect on the nature of personal growth.

4. School Leadership:

Effective leadership requires true listening, the development of consensus building, the use of ethical decision making, and the building and maintenance of a sense of community. It also requires the creation of vision, the setting of challenging goals, the analysis of data and the skills to effectively address conflict.

To reach maximum potential, all schools must be able to solve problems effectively. The most creative ideas must be used in identification and definition of problems, the generation of alternative solutions, and the selection, implementation and evaluation of specific solutions to identified problems. To that end, building-level administration at Dutch Ridge Elementary believes that ensuring the continuous growth and development of faculty members requires an engagement of teacher leaders through a shared decision making and problem-solving process. To achieve the goal of involving teacher leaders in the decision making and problem analysis related to issues, an instructional cabinet approach has been developed and refined over the past four years. Teachers are selected or volunteer to participate on the instructional cabinet based on three factors: 1) their grade level, 2) years of service, and 3) content area.

Since Dutch Ridge was already organized in a pod teaching model, team leaders and senior teachers were able to be identified to work with the principal and assistant principal as members of the Instructional Cabinet to set the educational agenda for the school. Monitoring program implementation, insuring articulation of curriculum, allocating space for instruction, and planning instructional improvement programs are the most typical issues addressed by the Instructional Cabinet members. More broadly, the Instructional Cabinet members seek to: 1) promote collegiality; 2) create a dynamic community of learners; and 3) promote continued school renewal.

and assistant principal add their agenda items and teacher add their own items that can come up in grade level or content specific team meetings. Agenda items are prioritized based on time and urgency of the items and the instructional cabinet members, facilitated by the principal, discuss, plan and make decisions about the items. Instructional cabinet members are tasked with sharing the meeting highlights and gathering input from their grade level teams. If needed, the item will be brought back up to the cabinet for further discussion. This process was used throughout every step of the schedule changes implemented at Dutch Ridge Elementary school. It is this shared leadership model that has enabled Dutch Ridge student and staff to thrive.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The single practice that contributed most to Dutch Ridge Elementary School's academic transformation was changing the entire school's schedule. Changing the school's entire model of learning required a multifaceted approach which included departmentalization, common planning time, and an equalization in instructional minutes per subject.

In 2015, all 24 core content area teachers taught ELA, with many teaching a second tested subject. This resulted in the culture of teaching ELA appearing to be the equivalent of 24 little school houses, each one addressing ELA in its own way and making the mastery of a common skill set at each grade level difficult to monitor. It was recognized that the learning model was causing teachers' attention to be stretched thinly. Reflecting on this and desiring to assist educators in transforming into master teachers, the new learning model philosophy became clear: "Teach one, and teach it well." To that end, a change to departmentalization was made, resulting in two ELA, two mathematics, and two science/social studies teachers at each grade level -- a move from 24 ELA teachers to only eight. It also required the third-grade educators to abandon the self-contained model that they had utilized for all subjects in favor of a pod model, which was more reflective of the instructional philosophy of the rest of the building.

Coinciding with the change in how ELA instruction was provided, the amount of time directed toward specific core content areas was also changed. Now, ELA and mathematics would have equal instructional time daily and there would be an increased focus on science and social studies as well. Mathematics was also prioritized during Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) time, where previously only ELA content had been reviewed. This philosophy evolution required teachers to internalize the message that ELA time had not been lost, rather other subjects (Science and Social Studies) would now help to carry that mantle.

Further supporting the new academic schedule was the provision of common planning time. Wherein teachers rarely had time to reflect upon or share their instructional practices with colleagues in the past, they were now given daily time to discuss their progress toward meeting grade-level standards, to consider vertical curriculum alignment, and to consider how their curricular resources were helping or hindering their progress.

With the adoption of the new learning model, Dutch Ridge Elementary has been able to improve the manner in which the needs of young learners are supported, while continuously challenging educators to become truly dynamic and collaborative in a specialized area. This process required many long, thoughtful discussions and the willingness of all parties to evolve their thinking about the nature of instruction at the elementary level.