

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Greg Figenser

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

Official School Name Truman Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1055 West Teton Boulevard

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

Green River WY 82935-5681
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Sweetwater County

Telephone (307) 872-1900

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Web site/URL https://trues.swcsd2.org/

E-mail figensg@swcsd2.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mrs. Donna Little-Kaumo

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail littled@swcsd2.org

District Name Sweetwater County School District #2 Tel. (307) 872-5500

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Brenda Roosa

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 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	30	38	68
1	26	24	50
2	30	28	58
3	20	23	43
4	32	24	56
5	27	30	57
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	165	167	332

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 12 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 86 % 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: 13%

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	27
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	17
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	44
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	332
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41%
Total number students who qualify: 135

8. Students receiving special education services: 22 %
74 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>1</u> Autism | <u>28</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>8</u> Developmental Delay | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>36</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>12</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: 5
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.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
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 18:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	94%	93%	94%	94%	94%
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.

Learning For All - We believe they are all our kids, whether they are general education or have needs, they are all our kids.

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

Truman Elementary is one of four elementary schools serving students in kindergarten through 5th grade in Green River, Wyoming, a town of approximately 12,000. Green River has a lot of blue-collar workers, and our school's parents want the best for their children. Though our community does have a sizable number of middle-class families, many of Truman's families are lower income and live in nearby mobile homes or low-income housing. Our school has the highest percentage (41%) of students receiving free or reduced price lunches in the school district. Truman also has the highest percentage (22%) of students on an IEP. We house two programs that are open to all students in the district. The first program is our extended resource program which serves students with significant academic delays. The second program is our junior kindergarten which serves kindergarten-age students with late birthdays. To qualify for junior kindergarten, we have a screening process that determines kindergarten readiness in the areas of academics and social-emotional categories. Upon completion of this program, these students then attend regular kindergarten and typically achieve better success than their peers who did not attend junior kindergarten.

Truman's history has been a bit tumultuous over the last 15 years. Prior to 2014, Truman had five different principals in a 10-year span. The lack of stable leadership made it hard for staff to work towards a sustained vision. During this decade of instability, Truman typically scored at the bottom of the district and the lower part of Wyoming on state assessments. According to the state School Performance Report, Truman was partially meeting state expectations in 2013-14. In Wyoming, there are four levels of meeting expectations: not meeting, partially meeting, meeting, and exceeding. During the 2014-15 school year, Truman hired a new principal who currently remains in that role. Though the staff has changed some since the hiring the principal in 2014, both new and veteran staff have worked together to be part of a change movement that has positively impacted every area of the school. In the last four School Performance reports, Truman has exceeded expectations three times and met expectations one time. In the specific areas of equity, academics, and growth, we have not had any ratings below meeting expectations during the past four years.

Over the past five years Truman staff has adopted a "students first" philosophy. A big part of this philosophy is the belief that every staff member is responsible for every student. First grade teachers are responsible for fifth grade students. Our speech language therapist is responsible for all students—not just students on her caseload. Another part of this philosophy is that we avoid labeling students. Students are no longer title students or special education students; they are Truman students. The Truman staff also has grown to realize that we must care for the entire child. If children are hungry or sad, our staff realizes that they will struggle to learn. Our "students first" philosophy believes in caring for all aspects of our students' lives.

Systematic changes in our Title 1, special education, and reading programs have led to changes in our approach to instruction. In 2014 we began the process of removing barriers to all students receiving grade level instruction and targeted, small group reading interventions. To accomplish this, we began to integrate our special education students into the regular classroom as much as possible. Over the years, this inclusion principle has become a standard practice. Most special education students receive whole group, grade-level instruction in the regular education classroom. In those classrooms, they get support from either a special education teacher or a special education paraprofessional. In many regular education classes, the regular education teacher and the special education teacher co-teach. Another key change has been changing our Title 1 status from Targeted Assistance to Schoolwide Title 1. This has allowed Title staff to work with all students and has helped staff our school-wide Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI). All students now have the opportunity to participate in an LLI group. We believe this has been a key driver to increased test scores.

A final piece of Truman's change has been integrating our Response to Intervention/Building Intervention Team with our building wide PLCs. Our response to intervention starts at the classroom level, then moves to the PLC level and then to the building level. At each level we focus on responding to student needs, creative use of staff and small groups, and involvement of other support areas such as counseling. Our focus on response to intervention has decreased the number of students placed on an IEP and improved success rates for these struggling students.

Truman Elementary is now the school parents want their children to attend. Last spring we were projected to be under 300 students to begin the 2018-19 school year. Increased voluntary transfer requests have boosted our current student population to over 350 students. We are proud to offer parents in our community a school that truly makes “students first” a daily priority.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

In 2014, we adopted a new ELA program, Journeys, by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. At that time the state assessment consisted entirely of multiple-choice questions and was tied to the Common Core state standards. The Truman staff started using the newly-released state of Wyoming blue prints that identified grade-level standards and the percentage of the test tied to each standard. Our staff mapped out the year's lessons to spend adequate time on grade-level standards based on the recommendations of the blue prints. Standards omitted from the blue prints were given less emphasis in the year's lesson plans.

In 2014, we also began using Title 1 staff to meet the individual reading needs of students. We followed the Fountas and Pinnell system of Guided Reading. Over the following years all the schools in our district have adopted this system now called Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI). Truman staff have helped train other district schools to use LLI.

In 2015, we made LLI our school-wide reading intervention, supported by our Title 1 program. During this school-wide intervention time, all paraprofessionals and teachers flood a grade level in order to create small reading groups with a teacher/student ratio between 1:1 and 1:6. Our principal and instructional facilitator attended LLI training in Ohio. Soon after all Title staff were trained in LLI. The LLI program allows every student to receive individualized instruction every day in reading from a trained professional. We have regular building wide meetings to discuss LLI, and our grade-level PLCs meet weekly to discuss all accumulated assessment data from LLI reading records. They also use data from both formative and summative assessments to monitor each student's progress. Students regularly move levels in our LLI program as they progress through individual goals and reading levels.

1b. Mathematics:

In 2015, the school district chose a new math program to be used in all the elementary schools. The Wyoming state math blue prints help us focus our instruction on the most important state standards. Using the blue print as a guide, we tailor our math program, teaching the lessons that best meet the identified standards. The philosophy of our instruction is to teach what students need, not necessarily what the math program suggests be taught. Using this philosophy of instruction has enabled us to differentiate in a way that truly meets the individual needs of each student. This has been a significant change from our past instructional philosophy.

Teachers typically start each math lesson with direct instruction to all students. In most classes, special education students also participate in the regular education classroom. After direct instruction, the teacher uses the remaining time to help students work the day's problems either in small groups or one-on-one. In many classrooms, a special education teacher or paraprofessional is present to help students either in small groups or one-on-one. Most grade levels purposely arrange math classes so that IEP students needing extra support are all in the same math classroom. Teachers meet weekly in their PLCs to discuss individual students' progress so that they can adjust their lessons, groupings of students, and pace of instruction.

At the end of each week or unit, teachers give an assessment and then meet with their PLCs to evaluate the assessment data. During this evaluation process, teachers look at the data from each assessment question to better understand what standards students have mastered and what standards students need to review. Teachers also use this data to form daily intervention groups. The intervention times vary by grade level and feature extension activities or re-teaching/remediation groups.

1c. Science:

Science is a way for our students to develop their creative thinking skills. Science also provides our students an opportunity to develop much needed skills in reading and understanding informational text that has many real world applications. Finally, science lets our students have hands-on learning experiences that allow them to see a different side of how the world works.

During the 2018-19 school year, our science curriculum has been significantly changed. Though we have not adopted a new science program, we have teamed with other district schools and the University of Wyoming science department to write our own science units and assessments. The assessments are based on the Wyoming science standards. We are also using the online tool, Mystery Science, in order to more efficiently use technology in the delivery of our newly-developed science curriculum.

Several times per year teachers from across the district meet to evaluate the success and challenges of the new science curriculum. At these meetings, teachers analyze assessment data with the help and support of instructors from the University of Wyoming. During this analysis, the teachers and university instructors evaluate how the units and assessments align with the state science standards. They then discuss possible changes to the units and assessments to better align with the state standards.

One way we extend science into other parts of the instructional day is to have students use ELA time to read non-fiction texts about science topics. During library/technology, students also do science-related projects on their Chromebooks. This further allows integration of the science curriculum into other parts of the instructional day.

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

Social studies is a way for us to expose students to the world beyond Truman Elementary. Many of our students come from low-income families and have limited exposure to people and places beyond our small town. Social studies becomes a way for them to be exposed to big ideas from the distant past to the present.

Though we have limited time to teach social studies, we do work on finding creative ways to integrate it into other subject areas. One way we do this is to integrate our social studies units and projects into our writing time. This has allowed the students to learn to research, take notes, organize information, and complete a project, all while fostering an interest in their community and world around them. This begins with smaller, simpler projects and a smaller world view in the lower grades and expands in both difficulty and scope as the students reach higher grade levels. Our teachers understand that the projects the students create do not always need to take the form of traditional writing assignments, but can also include pamphlets, diagrams, books, and Google Slides. Many of these projects are also used as opportunities to incorporate technology into the creative process. Our teachers have taught students to use a variety of web-based resources for both conducting research and presenting information. Another major benefit of using web-based resources is that the texts are often ability-levelled within the site which allows for further differentiation of instruction.

While integrating writing and technology into our projects has allowed us more class time for social studies, there is sometimes no substitute for seeing and experiencing things in person. That is why many of the field trips we take revolve around the social studies topics we study. As with our in-class projects, the scope of our field trips broadens as the students mature. While our younger students typically travel locally on field trips and learn about social studies topics relating to our community and community roles, our older students travel to locations around the state and begin to learn about topics related to Wyoming and Wyoming history. We are excited to continue pushing the boundaries of our social studies curriculum and plan to continue looking for ways to creatively teach social studies.

We assess student learning in social studies through student writing and projects, but also through our quarterly district assessments. Teachers in our district have written district assessments tied to state standards for each quarter throughout each school year. Teachers then score the assessments based on district rubrics so that teachers know what to reteach or reinforce to their students.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All Truman students from junior kindergarten through fifth grade have music, art, physical education, and library/technology for one hour per week. They also have health for 30 minutes per week and a combination class of art/music for 30 minutes per week. The specials team is very open to collaboration with one another and are flexible with scheduling. They often allow extra time for rehearsals before performances, makeup work in the regular classroom, and assessment completion in the regular classroom. Teachers understand how each elective subject enhances students' ability to be successful in the core subjects of reading, writing, and math. In addition, specials teachers purposely plan lessons to support other content areas such as math, science, social studies, reading, and writing. Truman also has a full-time counselor who supports students in the areas of social development, emotional health, and behavioral expectations.

In the visual arts classroom, students are given ample opportunity to practice collaborating with peers in a manner that communicates mutual respect, empathy, and constructive criticism as they work together through the art-making process. Using a variety of artistic media, students develop various motor skills as they also learn to be creative. The art classroom is a process-based class. Students learn to develop problem-solving skills and are encouraged to develop a growth mindset as they explore various artistic media, techniques, and themes.

Physical education is a very important part of our students' development. Physical education helps teach students to develop skills in areas of stress reduction, self-esteem, managing depression, and maintaining mind-body balance. Physical education and activity also enhances learning and has been proven to help with increased attentiveness in class, better grades, and better behavior. Students can use skills learned in physical education to improve their quality of play at recess and at home.

Students attend a weekly class in the library. During this class each student brings a Chromebook or iPad and learns library skills such as: Dewey Decimal System (2nd-5th), keeping the library organized (all), fiction versus nonfiction (K-1st), using the patron catalog (2nd-5th), and online story reading (K-1st). Some of the technology skills students learn include: using a Chromebook and its functions (K-5th), Google Classroom (1st-5th), Google Earth (1st-2nd), coding (K-5th), Prodigy Math (2nd-5th), internet/computer safety (all), keyboarding programs (K-5th), leveled typing (1st-5th), Google Docs including title, body, and copy/paste (all), Google Slides presentations (2nd-5th), Google Sheets including art, lists, and math (2nd-5th), Google Sheets with spreadsheet (5th), IXL/Khan Academy (3rd), online research including finding legitimate websites, safely searching, and finding grade related information (2nd-5th). We also host two annual book fairs, and each grade has a webpage of leveled learning games. All students can earn rewards through a behavioral point card system.

Truman Elementary is fortunate to have a full-time counselor who has been able to implement a school-wide counseling program involving every student. The following are key components of the school-wide counseling program.

Each year the counselor coordinates an all-school expectations training involving all students and staff. Students and staff visit six different stations throughout the school and are all taught expectations in each area. The counselor has also created PowerPoint presentations for each station so that teachers can review these expectations throughout the school year with students.

The counselor teaches all-school social-emotional-behavioral lessons three to four times per year in health class. Topics covered include: bullying versus bothering, conflict resolution, tattling, gossip, and friendship

skills. The counselor also schedules two-three times per day to be at recess to help make sure students are using the skills taught in the lessons. Teachers receive follow up materials on each lesson so that they can reinforce key skills throughout the year.

Our counselor leads 12-15 social-emotional-behavioral grade level groups throughout the year. Each group lasts 20 to 25 minutes, includes two to six students, and meets weekly. The counselor conducts 80-100 weekly social-emotional-behavioral individual check-ins. These are 5 to 15 minute weekly or bi-monthly sessions with individual students targeting needs identified by parents, teachers, and staff.

Our counselor is available for crisis counseling for the entire student body and parents. The counselor regularly consults with teachers regarding social-emotional-behavioral issues involving specific students and recommends interventions.

3. Special Populations:

Systematic changes in our Title, special education, reading programs, social-emotional programs, and PLCs have changed our approach to how Truman tailors instruction to special populations. In 2014, we began the process of removing barriers to all students receiving grade level instruction and targeted, small group reading interventions. We also renewed our emphasis on meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of our special population students so that these issues did not hinder their academic success.

The first step to accomplishing these goals was to integrate special education students into the regular classroom. Most special education students receive whole group, grade-level instruction in a regular education classroom. In those classrooms, they get support from a special education teacher or paraprofessional. This new inclusion approach dramatically changed the way we teach math. Teachers typically start each math lesson with direct instruction to all students. After direct instruction, the teacher uses the remaining time to help both regular and special education students work the day's problems either one-on-one or in small groups. In classrooms with special education students, a special education teacher or paraprofessional is present to help students.

The second step to accomplishing these goals was Truman's change from Title 1 Targeted Assistance to Schoolwide Title 1. With this change, we have the staffing to allow all students to participate in a daily Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) group. During this schoolwide intervention time, all paraprofessionals and teachers flood a grade level in order to create small reading groups with a teacher/student ratio between 1:1 and 1:6. Students regularly move levels in our LLI program as they progress through individual goals and reading levels.

The third step to accomplishing these goals was to better coordinate our Response to Intervention Team with our weekly PLCs. This change allowed more work to be done at the PLC level. At least weekly grade level PLCs meet to discuss how to best meet the needs of struggling students. During their weekly PLCs, teachers make adjustments to their lessons, their groupings of students, and their pace of instruction. Our focus on PLCs and response to intervention has decreased the number of students on an IEP and improved success rates for struggling students.

The final step to accomplishing these goals was to renew our emphasis on meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students. Many of our students come from impoverished and/or single parent homes. Over 40 percent of our students receive free or reduced lunch. Teachers regularly consult with one another, the school counselor, and the school principal to help students who need support beyond academics. Our counselor works with over 25 percent of our students on a regular basis and is out at either recess or the common areas of the school several times a day in order to reach the rest of the students as needs arise. Our teachers make an effort to build relationships with all students and parents in order to know them better and best meet their social and emotional needs.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At the heart of Truman Elementary is a “students first” philosophy. This philosophy impacts everything we do. It impacts our academic approach, our special education program, our social-emotional supports, and our daily interactions with students and parents. We believe all students learn differently and at a different pace. We believe every student is capable of growing and being successful. All teachers take responsibility for all students. We work together and consider staff, students, and parents all part of the Truman family.

One aspect of our “students first” philosophy is our commitment to responsive teaching. Though teachers are given specific programs to use, they also are given the freedom to alter lessons to meet standards and students’ needs. Teachers regularly discuss these adaptations in PLCs, in informal meetings between classes, and even during class.

A second aspect of our “students first” philosophy is our multiple approaches to instruction. Every student, regardless of achievement level, receives whole group, grade-level instruction. At the core of our success has been our all-school Leveled Literacy Intervention groups. Students are monitored regularly and moved to different level groups as they reach proficiency in their skills.

A third aspect of our “students first” philosophy is our inclusion of special education students in the regular education classrooms. In the past our special education students spent the majority of the day in pull-out classes in a resource room. Now our special education students spend the majority of the day in regular education classes. A typical grade level has one section co-taught by a regular education and special education teacher. After whole group instruction in these co-taught classes, regular education teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals work with students in small groups or one-on-one to extend and reinforce what was taught.

A fourth aspect of our “students first” philosophy is our emphasis on meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of our students. Many of our students come from impoverished and/or single parent homes. Teachers regularly consult with one another, with the school counselor, and with the principal to help students who need support beyond academics. Our counselor works with over 25 percent of our students on a regular basis and is available to the rest of our students on an as-needed basis. Our teachers and staff focus on building relationships with all students in order to know them better and best meet their social and emotional needs.

We find many ways to show our staff they are valued and appreciated. We have a very active social committee and the purpose of this committee is to make sure that our staff know how much they are valued in our school. They plan at least one gathering for staff and their families each month for social time, dinners, bowling, or other fun outings. When people are sick, the unfortunate happens, or a new baby is born the social committee will send flowers, organize meals, send cards, or money if it is needed to help a family get by. Many of our staff have gone through some very hard times and we have created sunshine baskets to take to their house, bought t-shirts to show support for staff going through cancer treatments, and placed hearts around the school to show how much we care after one of our support staff lost their spouse. Our principal values staff time and has taken out unnecessary meetings, worthless paperwork, or unimportant tasks. When people need to leave early on occasion, creative coverage for classes is arranged so that staff do not have to take time off. All of these things together help our staff to know that when they are working at Truman, they are truly appreciated and valued.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Family support and involvement has been an important part of Truman’s success. As part of the Title 1 review process, each year we meet with stakeholders in our community to evaluate our school-wide goals based on the data we have accumulated throughout the year. We also share important changes mandated from the state such as last year’s change of our state-wide assessment from the Proficiency Assessment for

Wyoming Standards (PAWS) to the Wyoming Test of Proficiency and Progress (WyTopp). The PAWS assessment was multiple choice with no writing component. The WyTopp is a computer-based assessment with a combination of short answer, multiple choice, constructed response, and essay questions. We spent time explaining this change to key stakeholders since they are such a vital part of the Truman family. An important aspect of this change of assessments was the more immediate results available from the WyTopp. No longer would we have to wait until the fall of the following year to get our results. The WyTopp provides real time data so that we can adjust our school-wide plan for the coming year based on this information. Having this data in a more timely fashion allows our discussions with stakeholders to be more accurate in regards to our progress. This helps us more quickly determine areas of need and focus and gather input from stakeholders before we finalize our plans for the coming year.

At Truman we have several ways we communicate and engage with families. We have held numerous events such as movie nights, fun Friday activities, and informational dinners. We have a text messaging system that gets information to parents quickly, and we have a weekly folder that gets sent home to parents with classroom and school-wide information. One of our most successful events is our annual Back-to-School Night. Over 90 percent of our families attend this August event which features tours of the school and classrooms, informational booths, and an update in the gym from our principal. Another successful event is our bi-annual book fair. This event is held in conjunction with our fall and spring parent-teacher conferences. We use promotional coupons to encourage attendance and share information about how families can help their children with reading and math at home. During this event we also encourage parents to give us input. Hundreds of Truman families attend our book fairs.

3. Professional Development:

Our professional development at Truman Elementary has encompassed many areas. During the past few years our focus has been on building expertise among our staff in areas that directly relate to our school-wide plan. In 2014, when we started shifting our school-wide plan and instructional philosophy, we decided to dedicate a significant amount of our professional development time to learning the Fountas and Pinnell system of instruction. This new learning involved our principal, our teachers, our support staff, and our paraprofessionals. They were all trained in responsive teaching, guided reading, and on the proper use of the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) materials.

In 2015, our principal, instructional facilitator, special education teachers, Title 1 teachers, and district curriculum director attended a summer LLI training in Chicago. After the Chicago training, our principal, instructional facilitator, and Title 1 teachers attended a more in-depth two-year training at Ohio State University. Those who attended these trainings shared what they learned with other Truman staff. This allowed our entire staff to share ways LLI strategies and materials could better help students progress in their reading and writing skills.

Because of the impact LLI has had on Truman growth rates in reading, other schools in our district expressed interest in learning about LLI. Truman's principal and instructional facilitator have now trained all the schools in the district on how to implement LLI in their schools. This led to district-wide training for all schools in LLI and in the adoption of the Fountas and Pinnell Classroom (FPC) system. Truman piloted the FPC system during the 2018-19 school year, and other schools will start using it during the 2019-20 school year. During the 2019-20 school year, Truman and other district schools will have 10 days of professional development in implementing the system of instruction modeled from Fountas and Pinnell Classroom.

Truman and other schools in the district are also receiving professional development on the use of the PLC model of collaboration. By the fall of 2019, all certified staff at Truman will have been trained in the use of PLCs. This PLC training supports what we are doing in the area of responsive teaching, LLI, and Fountas and Pinnell Classroom. All of our professional development supports our goal of giving our staff the tools to put students first and continue helping every student grow.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership at Truman Elementary changed significantly when our current principal started during the 2014-15 school year. Since he took over the leadership at Truman, our district superintendent has given him the freedom to try new approaches and break free from the approaches other schools in the district have taken. The staff at Truman has always been hard-working but has lacked a leader willing to take risks to make the changes needed to spur consistent growth and student achievement.

The philosophy of our principal is to instill in current and new staff the freedom to take risks. These risks are not without an overarching vision. The principal has been clear in specific non-negotiables. For example, one of his big picture goals is described in the phrase, "80-80 baby." This simply means that his goal is that in all classes at Truman 80 percent of the students achieve at the 80 percent level on a day-to-day basis. Another non-negotiable has been our principal's commitment to involving every student in a daily, small group leveled literacy intervention.

Once our principal got teachers to understand and accept his non-negotiables, he then gave them the freedom to try new strategies and use new materials in their classrooms. Our principal understands that this freedom comes with occasional failures. This is okay with him. Teachers quickly took these failures and used them as steps to their next success. With regular visits to their PLCs, our principal helped teachers find the power of collaboration and working as a team to find solutions to problems specific to their class or grade level. Teachers felt the freedom to teach to individual student needs and understood they no longer had to teach every single page of their grade-level district-provided programs.

This leadership style has caught on with teachers and support staff. Teachers are now excited to try different teaching strategies and even suggest these to their fellow teachers. Teachers more readily take suggestions from our school counselor and instruction facilitator. They understand that we all are a team and that all input is useful as we work together to meet the: academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of the whole student. They also understand that in order to meet the needs of every student, they need to reach out beyond themselves and utilize all the supports available. These changes have all happened under the empowering leadership style of our principal.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Responsive teaching is the one practice that has fueled Truman Elementary’s success. Many of our teachers quickly embraced responsive teaching and found it to be a simple, student-friendly approach. Others found it overwhelming at first, but after seeing it lead to improved results have adapted their approach and made it an integral part of their teaching strategy. Now responsive teaching is the norm, and teachers adjust their teaching throughout the day to better respond to the needs of students.

Though some teachers have been using responsive teaching techniques for years, the emphasis on responsive teaching at Truman Elementary started about five years ago. This emphasis has led to our teachers responding more quickly to what students need. Teachers adapt as students answer questions, complete assessments, and interact in small groups. Using this responsive teaching idea, teachers customize the learning of their students which has drastically improved student achievement at Truman Elementary. Many Truman students make two years of growth in one year. Much of this growth is due to our emphasis on responsive teaching.

While responsive teaching does have some similarities to differentiated instruction, Truman’s responsive teaching focuses on what students can do. Before we adopted this outlook, we followed a strict differentiated instruction approach focused mainly on what a student could not do. This slight difference in approach has allowed us to focus on what a student is ready for next as we systematically work through the state standards. The Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, labeled this expansion of learning the zone of proximal development or ZPD. His theory believes students grow much faster when teachers use this model.

Our use of responsive teaching requires that we constantly use formative assessments to monitor students’ progress. Shorter-range targets allow our teachers to measure growth on a daily basis and quickly determine appropriate learning targets for the following day. The end result is that our teachers can close learning gaps more efficiently and extend the learning of students who show they are ready. Our teachers use the Wyoming state blueprints for summative assessments in all content areas. For English Language Arts assessments, our teachers also use The Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Continuum.

Responsive teaching fits into our “students first” philosophy. We determine the skills our students already have and then plan our next steps. Our teachers use small groups, support from paraprofessionals, regular input from their PLCs, and daily changes to the district programs to deliver individualized instruction to all students.