

U.S. Department of Education
2020 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 Dr. Darin William Siefert
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 1500 Mid-Meadow Lane
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Festus State MO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 63028-1544

County Jefferson County

Telephone (636) 937-4062 Fax (636) 937-7870

Web site/URL
<http://www.festus.k12.mo.us/vnews/display.v/SEC/Elementary> E-mail siefertdarin@festusedu.com

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Link Luttrell E-mail LuttrellLink@festusedu.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Festus R-VI Tel. (636) 937-4920

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 Todd Oetting
(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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	132	118	250
1	123	142	265
2	121	104	225
3	113	110	223
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	489	474	963

*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):
- 0.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.5 % Asian
 - 2.6 % Black or African American
 - 1.3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 89.5 % White
 - 5.8 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 8%

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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	34
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	44
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	78
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	943
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.08
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

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

Arabic, Chinese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %

2 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 40 %

Total number students who qualify: 383

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %

89 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>10</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>33</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay | <u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>32</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>5</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: 14

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	47
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	19
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
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 20:1

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

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	95%	95%	95%
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 2019.

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. 2014

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

Building strong foundations to promote a lifetime of learning.

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

Festus Elementary is the only primary elementary building in the Festus R-6 School District. The school is part of the small, but growing, town of Festus, Missouri. The student body consists of almost 1000 students spread through 47 classrooms in kindergarten through third grade. These classrooms are supported by another 24 certified teachers and another 20-30 classified employees. The building was originally built in 1955 and has undergone a series of renovations and additions over the years. The school, while largely white, does service the needs of a diverse set of students from different racial backgrounds. The school has a steady Free and Reduced student population of right around 40% of the school. With these realities in mind, Festus Elementary has, for the last ten years, been ranked as one of the top elementary schools in Jefferson County, the St. Louis Metro Area, and the State of Missouri.

The success of Festus Elementary starts with its award winning Professional Learning Community culture and program. The R-6 School district has been utilizing the PLC model during the last decade. These PLCs are the foundation to the success of the elementary school and allow us to come closer to reaching our mission of “Doing Whatever It Takes To Build Strong Foundations to Promote a Lifetime of Learning”. PLCs meet weekly on a ‘late-start’ Wednesday. The teachers utilize this time to look at and discuss the expected learning standards known as the Missouri Learning Standards. Teachers, in the past have used this time to develop pacing guides, standards based report cards, assessments, and lessons. This work continues to this day, but now the collection and interpretation of data has become a major component of the PLC. The teachers make decisions that impact students and their learning, both individually and as a group. Festus Elementary has implemented a wide variety of program changes over the years. The implementation of a Co-Teaching program for our students with IEPs, our Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) and our Response to Intervention (RTI) program have all led to students’ academic and basic emotional needs being met. Recently, our shift to become a trauma sensitive and informed school has led to our teachers becoming focused on positive and supportive relationships with all students, no matter their personal circumstances. All of these programs represent cultural shifts towards making sure all students have the opportunity to learn and that they do learn and that they feel connected and cared for while at school.

Festus Elementary has been the recipient of numerous awards over the years. We were designated a Missouri Gold Star and a National Blue Ribbon School in 1999 and again in 2014. We have twice been awarded the Bronze Award for our implementation of PBS. Additionally, we have received accreditation through AdvancEd (now Cognia). In 2013, we were named by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) a Missouri Exemplary PLC School and we were awarded the DESE Sustaining Exemplary PLC award in 2018. In 2019 we were named by Solution Tree as an International Model PLC. These awards demonstrate the quality of programming occurring at Festus Elementary School.

The 1999 and the 2014 National Blue Ribbon awards have helped put Festus Elementary and Festus School District on the map. We are constantly being asked by other schools if they can visit our school and they ask about our curriculum and programming. It is not uncommon for new parents to the district to remark that they have heard of our quality, especially the Blue Ribbon designation, and come to us as a result.

We strive to make the building as child friendly and stress free as possible so that the job of learning can take place in a positive and peaceful environment. When people visit Festus Elementary School one of the first things they remark on is the size. After spending a few minutes in the building they all make the statement that, while we are huge, it doesn’t feel big. We take that as a point of pride. If you spend any time at all in Festus Elementary School, it is easy to see why it is a place where parents want their children to go and learn.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

The staff at Festus Elementary School has a shared belief that every student can learn regardless of race, ethnicity, ability level, or socioeconomic status. This approach begins with the staff's commitment to forming strong relationships with their students. Teachers and staff across the building, in all subject areas and grade levels, reach out to form meaningful connections with their students. In addition to the staff's commitment to building strong relationships, it has high academic expectations which is reflected in the school's teacher-created curriculum and assessments. The last five years have seen the curriculum in each subject area and in each grade level, undergo a comprehensive rewriting and alignment with the Missouri Learning Standards.

The teachers at FES use small group and individualized instruction in all subject areas. Students are put into flexible groups in both English language arts and mathematics instruction where teachers can better meet the needs of each student. Teachers use the information they glean from this small group instruction to guide further instruction and adjust their teaching. Small group work is essential throughout the building and can be seen in regular education classrooms, special education classrooms, Title I classrooms, and special area classrooms.

Using multiple forms of data across the curriculum to monitor student progress is an essential component of the school. This data is used to not only help struggling students become proficient, but to also help advanced students receive enrichment.

1b. Reading/English language arts

To create critical thinkers and lifelong learners who will flourish in a global society, Festus Elementary School implements literacy education through a Balanced Literacy approach. Our instructional practices ensure students will become inquisitive readers, who think beyond texts and across disciplines focusing on a deeper depth of knowledge. Educators in grades kindergarten through third grade have completely aligned our Reading curriculum to the key components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. This alignment ensures each core skill spirals through both grade level and Guided Reading levels, allowing students multiple and varied opportunities for deeper comprehension and greater success. The K-3 curriculum also utilizes Standards Based Educational practices where formative and summative assessments are implemented. Teachers are able to use the assessment data to evaluate best practices and guide future instruction. Through Shared Reading, Guided Reading, Independent Reading and widely varied Literacy Centers and hands-on activities, students engage in instruction encompassing all literature, information, and foundation skills.

In our English Language Arts (ELA) program utilizes a variety of assessments in order to gauge how effective we are at teaching student and how effectively students are learning. We utilize the Star Online assessment three times a year. This gives a good benchmark of what students know and how students are growing. It provides some information to inform teaching. We also collect a Benchmark Reading Level, which is a standardized individualized reading assessment we have developed to give teachers a reading level on every child. It also gives important information about how each student is reading. Finally, we use a series of assessments, both reading and writing, to see how students are doing on particular skills. All of this information is used to inform teaching and ways we respond to kids learning.

For students performing at basic and below basic levels, early identification and targeted intervention are priorities at Festus Elementary School. Through Response to Intervention (RtI) small group techniques, progress monitoring through the Star Test, regularly scheduled instructional planning meetings for each at-risk student, and a rigorous Title 1 Reading program, student strengths, areas of concern and literacy benchmarks are continuously monitored, assessed and refined to provide scaffolded support. In recent years

we have implemented the Heggerty approach to teaching Phonemic Awareness skills in kindergarten through second grade. This, coupled with our structured Saxon Phonics program, has led to more success for our students who are struggling in reading.

Reading instruction for students who perform at proficient or advanced levels is equally important within Festus Elementary School. Students are challenged through small group Guided Reading instruction, leveled Independent Reading, and Book Clubs based on proficiency and interest.

The educators and staff at Festus Elementary School hold all students accountable to a high standard of achievement, expecting individual progress while embracing individual learning styles and needs. We believe rigorous Reading instruction plays an integral part in preparing students to meet the information-saturated challenges of a 21st century society. We strive to facilitate educational opportunities where students become proficient or advanced readers, and have adopted a “whatever it takes” philosophy to ensure student success.

1c. Mathematics

The math curriculum is aligned to the Missouri Grade Level Expectations. Through collaboration and vertical teams, a coherent, focused, well-articulated curriculum that successively builds a deeper and more refined understanding of mathematics has been developed. We work on establishing a strong foundation in math fluency while ensuring that problem solving, reasoning, connections, communication and conceptual understanding are all developed simultaneously. Frequent standards-based assessments provide feedback on individual needs resulting in differentiated classroom instruction.

Our math program utilizes a variety of assessments in order to gauge how effective we are at teaching student and how effectively students are learning. In first through third grade, we utilize the Star Online assessment three times a year. This gives a good benchmark of what students know and how students are growing. It provides some information to inform teaching. In Kindergarten we utilize a series of skill based assessments to ascertain students level of understanding of the material. Finally, we use a series of assessments to see how students are doing on particular skills. All of this information is used to inform teaching and ways we respond to kids learning.

The main instructional method utilized is guided math. Guided math is a structure for teaching in which a teacher supports each child’s development of mathematical proficiency at increasing levels of difficulty, within the context of a small group. During guided math groups, students are engaged in rigorous, standards-based, meaningful learning opportunities where the teacher focuses on a specific concept, strategy, or skill. Learning is facilitated through scaffolded conversations, hands on learning activities, and rigorous questioning.

Guided math provides a structure for teachers to differentiate instruction so they can successfully teach every student. Creating small, flexible groups allows students to work in their zone of proximal development. Students who are working at their instructional level, are afforded the opportunity to learn exactly what they need to know in order to be successful. The short, guided lessons emphasize conceptual understandings, procedural fluency, and problem solving. The flexibility created with guided math provides teachers an opportunity to create activities that address students’ individual learning styles and interests so they remain continually engaged. The small group setting allows teachers opportunities to provide immediate feedback so students can adjust their work, and gives students an opportunity to talk with their peers, ask questions, and justify their mathematical thinking. The ability to enrich, remediate, re-teach and reinforce strategies and skills helps build student confidence in mathematics and ultimately creates a love of learning.

1d. Science

The goal of the science curriculum at Festus Elementary is to introduce students to the concepts of the scientific method and to give students hands-on activities utilizing the scientific method. The curriculum itself is based on the Missouri Learning Standards. Additionally, scientific concepts, problem solving, and

the scientific method are taught through the nonfiction portions of our Communication Arts curriculum and in our STEM special area classroom. We do not formally assess Science for report card purposes at FES. However, teachers utilize a variety of assessment opportunities. They use observation and work samples to better understand how students are learning the science concepts.

A major goal of our science curriculum at Festus Elementary School is for students to learn the importance of all aspects of the scientific method, including hypothesis being proven wrong. We recognize the importance of success and failure in the understanding of scientific theory and questions. We train students to respond to their idea not working in a constructive way, so that they can learn resiliency and deepen their understanding of whatever scientific concept they are learning about.

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

The social studies curriculum at Festus Elementary School is based on the creation of well informed citizens who will someday actively participate in a democratic society. Our curriculum is based on the Missouri Learning Standards. Social studies is taught both independently of other curricular areas, but also as a part of the nonfiction portions of our Communication Arts curriculum.

We do not formally assess Social Studies for report card purposes at FES. However, teachers utilize a variety of assessment opportunities. They use observation and work samples to better understand how students are learning the Social Studies concepts. Of particular importance is the writing projects students perform, many of which are based on Social Studies topics.

In order to create a foundation for later learning, students begin reading informational texts in all subject areas as early as Kindergarten. Social studies topics related to self, family, and community, along with historical figures and events are covered over the course of the year. Nonfiction books are used in whole group lessons, small group work, and station work areas. Students learn how to research and gather information and place that information into graphic organizers or lists. This organization of facts is then used to write a short summary or longer research project, depending on grade level and/or ability level.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The Special Area programming of Festus Elementary School is designed to give students a well rounded experience in a variety of areas. Each student participates in PE, Library, STEM, Art, and Music. These classes follow the guidelines and objectives laid out under the Missouri Learning Standards. These classes are very different from each other, but the teachers all work together as a PLC to make sure that all students are receiving a well rounded and differentiated experience. For many of our students, these special area classes are their favorite experiences, as they tap into areas outside of the traditional academic subjects. These students are able to make the much needed connections to school they might be lacking in reading or math. These connections help them to be successful in school in a variety of ways.

The students of FES receive a well-rounded educational experience during their time in art and music. Art and music teachers work to increase appreciation of and experience with composers and artists and their creations. Art and music curricula spiral through the entire elementary experience and beyond in the upper grade levels. These programs also work closely together, and routinely produce artistic pieces inspired by music or sing songs inspired by art.

Physical education and health are an important part of FES. Students are asked to work on the basics of coordination and exercise. They are asked to look at ways they can be more active and healthy in their daily lives.

Students also have access to a Model Guidance curriculum taught by our school counselors. These

counselors work with students on character development, career interests, small group social and emotional learning, and individual counseling. The counselors work closely with teachers and administrators to constantly find ways to make sure the students of Festus Elementary are receiving a well rounded educational experience.

Finally, the students of FES are given the opportunity to experience Science-Technology-Engineering-Math (STEM) throughout their elementary experience. They receive direct instruction in STEM weekly, and have access to and use technology in a variety of forms daily. The library is a place of support for this technology. The STEM teacher and librarian work closely together to teach students to utilize technology and safely find the information they need.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Festus Elementary has a solid academic achievement record based on meeting the needs of all students, no matter their individual circumstances. We pride ourselves on truly reaching all students. Our academic scores on both state testing and internal testing, regularly show that students from all backgrounds find success. While gaps do occur, especially between our students who receive free/reduced lunches and/or our students with IEPs, these gaps are usually small and in many cases, when compared to other schools in the state, these students from disadvantaged backgrounds perform higher than most schools regular scores.

Festus Elementary also utilizes Title 1 funds to offer interventions to struggling readers. These interventions are conducted by a group of teachers and paraprofessionals who work with students who qualify for reading interventions in what we call 'Reading Power'. The students in this group work daily with their Title 1 teacher to improve in their reading ability. We regularly analyze data to see what students need and if any new students qualify for the program. In third grade we also utilize Title 1 funds to have a teacher who works to provide math interventions. This 'Math Power' program operates in a similar fashion to our 'Reading Power' program. In both cases we are successfully transforming students into students who are ready to transition to the next school building in the district with the reading and math skills they need to be successful.

FES regularly collects and analyzes data on a variety of subgroups of students. These subgroups are broken up into race, ethnicity, gender, lunch status, IEP, 504, etc. We use this data to make instructional and/or curricular changes and alterations so that we can close the achievement gap. This data is analyzed by individual teachers, grade level and area level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the buildings Response to Intervention (RTI) team, the building leadership team and the building administrators. Each group looks at this data in different ways and for different purposes. The two key teams are the PLCs and the RTI team. These teams make decisions that affect groups of kids and in the case of RTI, individual interventions are assigned for individual students. All of this work is designed to close the gap and to lift these kids higher academically.

3b. Students performing above grade level

In a similar way to working with kids performing below grade level, FES utilizes a variety of methods to ensure that students who are working above grade level, receive the attention and challenging curricula they deserve. Again, data is collected and analyzed by a wide variety of groups and people. This data is used to make changes to curriculum and daily instruction. Additionally, the classroom teachers on a daily basis are differentiating the classwork and activities to reach struggling and excelling students equally. Additionally, students in this group are able to, if they qualify, access a teacher of gifted students. This teacher works to create activities to push her students to higher levels and to challenge them and to foster higher levels of thinking.

3c. Special education

Festus Elementary has a robust Special Education team of teachers working with kids functioning at a wide variety of levels. We divide up our Special Education program into a few different categories. Most of our special education students are able to function well in the regular classroom with added support. We firmly believe in an inclusive model and recognize that students need to be in the regular classroom as much as possible. We use the co-teaching model to achieve this goal. Our Special Education teachers work with a partner grade level teacher to implement IEPs and to co-teach with the regular education teacher on a daily basis. The students are pulled out only when necessary and when a smaller group environment is needed to help meet the goals of the IEP. We also have classrooms for students who require a very different curriculum based on their individual IEPs. These classrooms have a wide cross-categorical group of kids with high levels of need. One classroom is completely focused on students with autism who have tremendous difficulty handling the regular education environment. Our primary goal and belief with students of special needs is to ultimately work with them to the point that they are able to be in the regular education environment as much as possible and to build a strong foundation for the remainder of the educational career. We are extremely proud that our students with IEPs routinely perform at a high level on state testing.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

Festus Elementary rarely has a large population of ELL students, but when we do, we work to make sure their needs are met by a qualified teacher of ELL students and that she works to make sure they are transitioning and acquiring the needed language skills to succeed.

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The staff of Festus Elementary is very proud of all of our accomplishments, but we are proudest of the daily relationships that are formed between our staff and our students. These relationships are key to the success of Festus Elementary. We utilize the Positive Behavior Supports philosophy to provide the foundation for all that we do at Festus Elementary. The cornerstone of this philosophy is a school should provide a consistent, positive, and easy to understand environment within which they can thrive. Our teachers take the time to teach students expected behaviors and how to navigate the daily life of the school and the classroom. We further provide interventions in the form of our classroom teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and other staff developing relationships with kids. Each student at Festus Elementary has an adult at school who demonstrates caring for them, who seeks to understand where they are coming from, and helps support them through the difficult times in their lives so that they can thrive at school and beyond.

We have spent the last few years delving into the importance of relationships and how the lives of individual students play such a huge role in their social, emotional, and academic growth. We have also, with the help of our school counselors, learned about trauma and its impact on students' lives and how to support them in the right ways. We have so many stories in recent years of students who have come to us with a history of behavior issues or who come to us in a foster placement, or who start with us in Kindergarten with a host of behavioral and emotional issues. These students, through our careful interventions and emotional support and most importantly the relationships we build with them, based on trust and mutual respect, find success and finally are able to start learning instead of fighting learning.

This success that we have had with students in their social, emotional, and academic needs has produced an environment of success for all students. Teachers see success in others and are eager to find that success also. They work to support each other through the sometimes difficult times with kids so that the entire school is a place of positive growth and success for all students and teachers.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Involving families and community members in the education of our students and allowing them to contribute to our school's improvement is a top priority in our building. It is important to the administration and all staff members to involve others in supporting academic achievement, behavioral expectations, social-emotional learning, and the physical well-being of our students.

Our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) holds annual fundraisers to raise money for purchasing items that enhance student learning and engagement. Parent volunteers help in the classroom and organize family events held both at the school and off-campus. Kindergarten registration and our Kindergarten Kick-Off are opportunities to greet new families and make them feel comfortable with their child's transition to school. This time is also used to educate parents in how they can contribute to their child's overall success before they even begin school in addition to continuing that support throughout their school experience. Parents are also invited by teachers to conferences with them about their children's performance. At these conferences, teachers provide parents with suggestions to help them engage their children in academic activities, ways to maintain consistent behavioral expectations with the school, resources from outside agencies to improve their social-emotional well-being, and resources to help meet students' physical needs.

These outside agencies partner with the school to provide many resources to the students. Big Smiles Dental Care visits two to three times a quarter and offers free dental care including cleaning, x-rays, extractions, and fillings. Brendan's Backpack is a local organization that provides weekend snacks and meals for students who may not eat otherwise. Comtrea Counseling visits the school weekly and provides counseling to several students. The Twin City Optimist Club provides dictionaries for each third grade student. Newly implemented this year, our school has partnered with the Jefferson County Health Department to provide immunization clinics for our students. A flu clinic was held in the fall, and then a kindergarten immunization clinic was held this spring. Our partnership with these agencies ensures that the needs of the students are

met, whether physical or emotional, improving their chances at success.

Festus Elementary understands that communication is important to successful partnerships. The district and building websites, in addition to its social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) provide information to the public regarding policies, schedules, menus, school closings, and teacher contact information. Each week, our building principal sends a newsletter to parents and guardians with updates on academic successes, community involvement opportunities, and upcoming events. In addition to the building newsletter, district and classroom level newsletters are sent home as another means to convey information. We work closely with our local newspaper to ensure that our successes, opportunities, and events are published both in the hard copy form and digitally via the newspaper's website and social media outlets. The School Reach Parent Notification System is also employed to get information out quickly when necessary. This system contacts parents and guardians via phone calls and texts whenever needed.

The relationship between the community and the school is strong because of the dedication of the Festus Elementary School staff and their understanding of the importance of transparency and communication.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Festus Elementary has a dedicated staff of teachers, aides, and support staff. People come to work at Festus Elementary and stay at Festus elementary. One of the biggest reasons for this is how successful we are in making sure everyone feels valued and supported. This sense of belonging that exists at FES has been carefully cultivated by the administration over the last fifteen years. The school is set up around the concept of the Professional Learning Community. The PLC environment and culture of Festus Elementary allows for teachers and staff to be involved in regular discussions and decisions for their individual classrooms and grade levels. The school is also served by representatives from each grade level, special area, special education, counseling and administration have come together to form the Building Leadership Team at FES. They work on the development of the building improvement plan, the guiding document of each school year. They also serve as advisors to the principal and also gives him an opportunity to discuss issues and topics in a professional atmosphere based on trust and mutual respect. One important feature of this group is that the members rotate each year so that there is always an experienced representative and a new member.

Finally, the school has a strong tradition of professional development. The building administration plans for our four scheduled Professional Development days. They base the plans for these days on our Building Improvement Plan, on our PD Day surveys, and our teacher evaluation system building level indicators. We also utilize these days to cover required topics for Professional Development as dictated by state law. We seek to make sure all PD opportunities are real, engaging, meaningful, and impactful. We utilize internal and external presenters. We also routinely send teachers to outside PD opportunities. Everything is based on our building improvement plans.

We are proud of the fact that teachers and staff members stay at Festus Elementary for their entire careers. We credit this to the quality of education that we offer and the positive environment that exists in the Elementary Building.

4. School Leadership:

Festus Elementary is led by a principal and assistant principal. This team of leaders work closely together, sharing responsibilities and working with teachers, both collectively and individually. The relationship of trust that exists between the building administrators is a foundational key to the success of the elementary school. Additionally, the administrative team works closely with administrators from other buildings in the district and district level administrators. The strength at the building level is further supported by the strength of the district administrative team. Additionally, the building level administration works closely with a building leadership team. This team is made up of PLC Facilitators and other teacher leaders from all areas and grades in the building. This 'first team' meets regularly to establish goals, develop and implement the building improvement plan, and to communicate with each other about needs, concerns, and ideas for the entire building.

The PLC is a crucial component of the leadership philosophy of FES. We believe teachers are most in tune with what students need to learn and therefore they must be enabled to make decisions for the improvement of what is occurring in their own classroom, and through the PLC, the grade level or area. The Principal and Assistant Principal are also a part of each PLC collaborative team. This divided leadership allows for a wide variety of voices to come together to make and implement change when needed and to protect what is working when change isn't needed. Additionally, we have a variety of committees, most notably the Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) and RtI committees. These committees have representatives on the building leadership team and work to develop, implement, and maintain the PBS and RtI programs. There is also a variety of committees on things like professional development, the Parent Teacher Organization, and other committees. We also have implemented for the last several years, curriculum committees. These committees are made up of representatives from each grade/area. They write the curriculum and watch over its implementation.

The principal is a key member of each committee, PLC, and team. It is the support of administration that allows for all of these various structures to function properly. No single group operates in isolation and the principal sees to it that they are all aligned in vision and in effort. The school leadership is crucial to the success of the students and operates under the understanding that the quality of the school is completely dependent on the quality and dedication of its leadership.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

We credit the success Festus Elementary School has achieved entirely on the Professional Learning Community it has built and become. The PLC concept is at the foundational level of all things that FES continues to do. We have been a school who practices the PLC philosophy for nearly twenty years. This approach and belief system has become a part of the fabric of our school's culture and identity. Literally, generations of kids have come to school and have been educated under the dynamic and structures of the PLC schools. Our school bases everything on the PLC essential guiding questions; What do we want them to know?, How do we know they know it?, What do we do if they don't learn it? And What do we do if they do learn it?. Teachers work in our collaborative PLC teams each week and discuss instructional, curricular, social-emotional, and other types of issues, concerns and needs of the time. They incorporate ideas from everyone into what they do. They support each other, work through problems, celebrate successes, and work with each other to ensure that each child is getting the education they all deserve.

The structure provided by the PLC has allowed for every change and innovation that has occurred in the last twenty years. Our establishment of highly successful programs such as RTI, PBS, trauma training, Building Improvement Plans, among many other things, can all be credited back to the PLC culture of Festus Elementary School. The careful crafting of our culture into a place of positive academic and social-emotional experiences for our students and staff occurs weekly in the PLC collaborative meetings. The 'Late-Start Wednesday' is a staple of the Festus School District. Parents and the community have adjusted their schedules to allow for school to start an hour later each week. This hour is nearly sacred and is where the true heartbeat of Festus Elementary is.

Our PLC environment has been recognized locally in news articles and programs, at the state level with awards for being an 'Exemplary PLC School, and internationally as a Solution Tree Model PLC School. We have also been awarded with Accreditation through AdvancED (now Cognia). Finally, we have been twice named a Gold Star School in Missouri and twice a National Blue Ribbon School. We are most proud that we have been nominated for a third time as a Missouri Gold Star School and a National Blue Ribbon School.