

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

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

School Mailing Address 3105 West State Highway CC
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Ozark State MO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 65721-0166

County Christian County

Telephone (417) 582-5907 Fax (417) 582-5761

Web site/URL https://www.ozarktigers.org/Domain/16 E-mail ginamcbain@ozarktigers.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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Chris Bauman E-mail chrisbauman@ozarktigers.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Ozark R-VI Tel. (417) 582-5900

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Aaron Johns
(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.

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

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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 7 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	53	61	114
1	56	48	104
2	53	67	120
3	61	46	107
4	63	49	112
5	61	51	112
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	347	322	669

*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):
- 0.5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.1 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 4.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 87.5 % White
 - 6.4 % 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: 32%

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

At West Elementary, our population is economically diverse. We have many students who are below the poverty line and many who are well above the line. One factor in mobility is families moving to the larger city of Springfield to find employment. Another factor in mobility is the women's shelter which is within the area we serve. We frequently have students who attend for a short period of time while their family is staying at the shelter.

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	58
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	154
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	212
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	669
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.32
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	32

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 5 %
35 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 42 %
 Total number students who qualify: 278

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %

67 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>7</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>18</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>26</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1

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.	36
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	18
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
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 19:1

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	95%	95%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

Every member of our school community will connect, learn, and grow to ensure a high quality education for each student's future readiness.

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

Thank you for the privilege of speaking about the wonderful things that occur each day at Ozark West Elementary! In 2007, the Ozark R-VI School District built West Elementary to accommodate growth on the Northwest side of the city of Ozark. The current population of Ozark is about 20,188. Ozark is located between Springfield and Branson in one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri, Christian County. Christian County School Districts are respected across the state and many families move to the county primarily for the schools. West Elementary is located west of the city limits of Ozark surrounded by newer commercial development with well established neighborhoods to the south. Our school houses the English Language Learner (ELL) Program, and the K-5 Gifted Program for the district. The students who participate in these programs are an intricate part of the West family. The demographics of our school are unique in our area with students coming from a wide variety of socioeconomic status and family dynamics. As of the 2019-2020 school year, our free and reduced lunch rate is 43%. The parents of our under-resourced students are among the working poor. Many of these families participate in the school district chapter of Care to Learn- where students' hunger, health, and hygiene issues can be met immediately and discreetly.

Key strategies used within West elementary that have challenged all students to develop their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally are built around our focus on educating the whole child. We have created and utilized units of study culminating performance events based on priority standards from the Missouri Learning Standards (MLS) which give students an opportunity for authentic learning and growth. We have invited parents to participate in culminating unit-of-study performance events put together by grade level teams with a goal of showing parents what students have learned while also supporting local non-profits like the Dickerson Park Zoo. We partner closely with parents so they have a better understanding of our teaching methods and can celebrate with their students all they have accomplished. We recently revamped our Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and invested time and resources into training teachers on the Ozark Instructional Learning Cycle. We made additional time in our schedule to provide Response to Intervention (RTI) for all students. As a district, we have taken innovative steps to address the growing needs in our community by focusing on trauma informed practices and hiring a school social worker. We have benefited greatly from the resources and connections to community agencies and nonprofits to help support West students and families. We are building close family connections from the start of the year by welcoming parents to a "day in the life of a Kindergarten student" to help connect new students and families to our school culture and staff.

Our district mission statement is to provide high quality education for each student's future readiness. The vision of the district is that we are an innovative school district preparing students to use their talents for success. West Elementary faculty and staff exemplify this mission and vision. We are focused on empowering student learning, behavioral success, and meeting the physical needs of all students. West's school mission: Every member of the school community will connect, learn, and grow to ensure a high-quality education for each student's future readiness. We are committed to connect by building relationships and a positive school culture, learn by goal setting, using priority standards and high expectations for the academic and behavioral success of all students and grow by progress monitoring student learning and meeting student needs.

West teachers understand and teach the life skills needed to build successful adults. We strive to educate both the mind and the soul. West teachers are tenacious and resilient. When the going gets tough, West teachers keep going. We are West - student focused and committed to our mission to connect, learn, and grow.

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

Our overall approach to curriculum derives from our mission which is to connect, learn, and grow to ensure a high-quality education for each student's future readiness. We do this with a focus on a vertically aligned curriculum specific to our district and research-based instructional practices. Our instructional practices include strategies to improve students' cognitive engagement and critical thinking skills and formative assessment strategies to monitor students' learning as part of the instructional process. The director of the learning division met with grade level teams across the district to identify priority, supporting, and surface level standards for each content area based on Missouri Learning Standards. Curriculum units of study were developed based on the identified priority standards. Our curriculum is unique to our district and built to lift the standard of learning for our students because it was designed specifically for student's future readiness.

We follow the Ozark Instructional Cycle Model within our Professional Learning Communities (PLC). This is a vital component to the success of every student. The cycle follows an eight-step process which includes creating SMART goals for priority standards within the units of study, determining common measurement/assessments, creating a plan of action of teaching strategies, using student data to inform instruction and analyzing data to direct next steps in learning. Our PLC's continuously reflect on the four questions: What do we expect students to learn? How will we know they are learning? How will we respond when they do not learn? How will we respond when they know it?

Our district initiatives Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy (PCL), a workshop approach and Response to Intervention (RTI), a tiered approach to intervention are utilized to differentiate instruction. We have embedded time in our master schedule to support students performing below grade-level expectations and expand on students' learning. Emphasis has been placed on meeting students at their point of need, providing intentional targeted intervention based on data and a team approach to problem solving. Proficient and advanced students participate in extension activities designed to deepen students' understanding or to apply knowledge and skills learned. We are committed to improving learning outcomes for all students.

1b. Reading/English language arts

West follows the Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy (PCL) Model. This model incorporates research-based best practices. Students receive whole group, small group and one-on-one instruction in reading, writing, language arts, and content workshop blocks. The foundation of our literacy model is based upon differentiation. Our model uses common assessments to determine students' instructional levels of learning. Instruction is tailored to address students where they are in an apprenticeship-type approach. Students are encouraged to practice at their independent levels to take skills deeper and strengthen their literacy foundation. Teachers use the Developmental Reading Assessment: Second Edition (DRA-2), anecdotal notes and running records to determine a student's literacy level. Students are then placed in flexible groups by reading ability and instructed at their specific reading level or given intentional targeted skill instruction.

In writing, teachers use a variety of instructional tools to guide instruction including Lucy Calkins rubrics, writer's workshop materials from PCL, 6 + 1 writing traits, and other research-based resources. All students receive feedback during individual writing conferences. Teachers observe student writing and then discuss with students how they can personally improve their writing skills. The focus is on improving the writer, not just the specific piece of writing. Our writing and reading instruction are closely tied together and integrated with content. Students are immersed throughout their school day with rich text and print to provide them with multiple opportunities to reinforce learned skills.

At the beginning of the school year, a spelling inventory–BEAR is administered to students. Individual spelling levels are determined and differentiated instruction is provided through a reading workshop. Across the district MAP data and building data indicated an area of weakness in grammar and mechanics. Recently,

we implemented a supplementary phonics resource to meet the needs of students in phonemic awareness in primary grades and morphology in upper elementary. According to our dyslexia screener data and quarterly building literacy data reports, we have seen significant gains in student outcomes in these areas.

In addition to the PCL model, our units of study are crafted using priority standards (MLS) to uniquely integrate content areas with literacy through the use of rich mentor texts, opportunities to think critically, respond to texts, as well as, discuss student's thinking with others to provide valuable high-quality instruction.

All students are given the (DRA-2), a reading diagnostic assessment, at the beginning and end of each school year. During the second and third quarter, teachers use benchmark reading assessments to monitor student progress. K-5 teachers collect and input data on student literacy progress to our virtual Literacy Assessment Wall. All information is compiled for each student in one of four performance levels (advanced, proficient, basic and below basic). The information is used to guide next steps in instruction based on student need which may include more intensive classroom instruction, as well as targeted instruction from a literacy interventionist. Teachers, interventionists, and the principal use the data to identify students close to moving to the next proficiency level and set goals to have students reach their potential. Students' mastery of grade level standards is also monitored monthly using an online progress monitoring tool, Evaluate. We use this data to set student personal learning goals, classroom and grade level goals. All these pieces serve to guide instruction.

1c. Mathematics

Our math curriculum is a balanced math approach based on the work of Ainsworth and Christianson which embeds components of an effective math program. Prior to the adoption of this approach, test scores showed we were missing vital components of a math program. We were particularly weak in the area of problem solving. To combat the issue, we have written our own math curriculum based on the Eureka Math/Engage NY curriculum. We are continuing to revise and provide supplementary resources to improve units based on the needs of our students and priority standards (MLS) each year. One such resource is the Math Advantage program from Math Recovery. The training provides teachers with additional tools to assess and differentiate to meet individual needs of students. Every grade level has at least one teacher trained in Math Advantage. Our goal is to continue each year to add to the number of teachers trained.

Math instruction at West consists of a focused lesson using guided practice, independent practice, exploration, questioning, student collaboration and whole class discussion to ensure learning at the optimal level is achieved. In addition, teachers have to strike a balance between conceptual understanding and procedural fluency while regularly incorporating fact practice, problem solving and a spiral review to shore up fundamental math concepts. We value the importance of building on conceptual foundations that students need for future math readiness.

Students are assessed throughout each unit with formative checks determined by grade level teams and a common summative assessment provided by the math instructional coaches. Evaluate, an online progress monitoring tool, is used monthly to monitor students' proficiency grades 2- 5 on MLS to be mastered by the end of year. The data is used to set student personal learning goals, class and grade level goals to improve student achievement. Teachers analyze the data received from assessment tools to inform instruction and construct flexible student groups for remediation or extension during Tiger Time (RTI).

Grades 3-5 teachers use a designated RTI time in the day referred to as Tiger Time to provide remediation or extension to meet the needs of students. K-2 teachers build remediation into their math block utilizing Math Advantage resources to help fill gaps in student achievement as needed. Teachers collaborate on a weekly basis during PLC time to share instructional practice or ideas for intentional targeted practice to meet the needs of struggling students. Teachers K-5 are encouraged to collaborate and work on vertically aligning instructional practices to ensure students are better prepared for the next grade level. Additionally, tutoring is offered as support in this area to provide individualized instruction, guidance and practice. Students performing above grade level are often challenged with extension activities.

Instructional coaches and administration meet in monthly team meetings with grade level teachers to analyze student data and plan strategies for lifting student achievement. Data analyzed comes from MAP, Evaluate and summative data from common district assessments. We are able to triangulate the data from these pieces to ensure students are receiving high quality instruction.

1d. Science

Science state testing is first tested at the fifth-grade level. In prior years, districtwide fifth grade proficiency scores on the MAP test were not acceptable. Our former superintendent and curriculum director determined a transition was needed to provide students K-5 with deeper experiential learning and inquiry. A position of a science specialist was added to our building. Students receive an extra hour of science instruction outside of the classroom each week. This time is built into our related arts schedule.

When students arrive at the door, they are scientists. The lessons incorporate hands-on activities in an inquiry-based curriculum which is aligned to the science MLS. The instructor focuses on helping the students to understand the relevancy of what students are learning applies to their world now, as well as to their future. Our science investigations provide students with a firm understanding of the scientific method. Students learn how to develop testable questions and are guided through the process used by scientists to answer questions and solve problems. Our science instruction also includes aspects of writing from forming hypotheses, to recording collected data and drawing conclusions. We emphasize to students that in the lab students will use skills they have learned about reading, writing, and math throughout the progression of investigations.

A key piece of instruction is cognitively engaging students as observers of the natural world around them and how they can apply learning to real-world situations. Our instruction in the lab setting encourages students to generate questions based on close observation, collaborate with peers, explore how things work and justify answers with supporting data. In the classroom, teachers extend the instruction in the science lab through units of study which integrates science and English Language Arts (ELA) content. Students are given common formative and summative assessments throughout the unit. Instruction is adapted to the needs of the student based on their growth through the unit. Our hope is to impart West students with a love for science and an inquiring interest in the world around them.

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

Our social studies content is heavily integrated in our engaging and informative ELA units of study. In 2016, new state standards were implemented. Teams of curriculum writers including teachers, instructional coaches, and administration worked to identify priority standards that are vertically aligned to ensure students receive an intensive and thorough understanding of the world around them, historical events, people and places that have shaped us as citizens of this nation and world. A variety of resources are embedded in the units of study which includes award-winning and highly recommended mentor texts, extensive primary and secondary sources, as well as guest speakers who are experts in their field. The curriculum writing of our units of study are never finished, but rather are seen as continuous work to improve upon as we narrow our priority standards, incorporate new resources and technology to facilitate learning.

Students are encouraged to become historians through inquiry-based research projects with culminating performance events that tie their learning together and give them an avenue for application of their new learning. For example, our second grade recently conducted a Shark Tank simulation where students were guided through the process of inventing something that would make the world a better place or meet a need. Students learning objects include science, social studies, and ELA standards throughout the unit. The final project and Shark Tank presentation were fun for students, parents, and our school community. Another example is fourth grade design and creation of a Big Top Carnival which raised money for our local zoo as a culminating performance event for the units on economics and structure/function of animal survival.

Teachers use formative assessments to guide instruction and the performance events to both engage and determine mastery of the priority standards. Our teachers work collaboratively in grade level teams and

across the district to continue to update and revise the social studies curriculum cyclically to keep it applicable to the present while preparing students for the future.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At West, our other curricular areas are vital to our mission to educate the whole student for future-readiness no matter the career path they choose in life. Our related arts programs promote self-directed learning, improves school attendance and sharpens critical and creative skills. Every student attends a 50-minute class per week in music, physical education, technology/library, science, and art.

Our music class promotes music appreciation, cultural awareness, self-control, and performance opportunities to support oral language development, learning about instruments, and how to play them. At first, students play ostinato accompaniments then progress to improvisation. Later, they play from notation after achieving success at music reading. Our music instructor focuses on teaching students to understand the language of music - rhythmic and pitch notation, terms and symbols. Sight reading is highlighted. Our music instructor sees value in elementary students becoming fairly proficient in music reading to better prepare them to become accomplished musicians in junior high and senior high school.

West hosts three musical performance events a year. Kindergarten, second, and fourth grade students present a musical for their family and friends. Musicals provide students the opportunity to act, sing, dance and participate in elements of stagecraft. At West we believe that music enhances a student's academic experience. It not only enhances interest and engagement in school; it introduces students to activities they may participate and enjoy throughout their lifetime.

Our art studio is an integral part of our school. Art lessons are extensions of classroom instruction, giving students opportunities to express themselves through art mediums. Content rich vocabulary and cross-curricular connections offer our students opportunities to dream, think, and do. Handwriting skills are encouraged and modeled, further tying our art studio to the general classroom. Art work is proudly displayed throughout our school building.

Our physical education program focuses on aerobic endurance, muscular fitness, goal setting, life-time sports, personal space awareness, teamwork, cooperation, and sportsmanship. Students learn to move and move to learn through brain-based activities to enhance readiness for academic learning. Units of study include: dance, loco-motor skills, basketball, hoops, parachute, scooters, Frisbee, soccer, jump rope, four square, volleyball, softball, and nutrition. Health and wellness topics are incorporated into all physical education lessons. Our PE culminating activity each year is our grade level Skills Day. A day is set aside for each grade level to participate in individual and team activities that incorporate the skills students have learned during the school year. Students get to show their skills to their teacher, parents, and grade level peers. A healthy level of competition is incorporated and students are given the opportunity to be good sports. West Elementary students have an excellent foundation for a healthy lifestyle when they transition from our school.

West's technology teacher and librarian work hand-in-hand to encourage the use of technology across the building and across the disciplines. Keyboarding, presentation, and spreadsheet programs (Google Apps for Education) are taught early and often in order to prepare students for their technological future. Students are taught how to combine technology and literacy to create research projects on science and social studies topics. They are also taught the foundations of coding and robotics both in a plugged-technology based and unplugged- board game instruction. West students are fortunate to have access to the latest technology and programs.

Another essential element of our curriculum is character education. Our counselors do an amazing job of aligning their monthly classroom lessons with our school wide initiatives. In addition to this program, our

counselors provide instruction in hygiene and puberty for our fifth-grade students. When needed, our counselors will meet with grade levels, classrooms, or specific students to provide social emotional learning when additional support is needed. Recently, in response to the need to become more trauma-informed, we trained all teachers to recognize the signs of trauma and how to meet the needs of students who may have experienced trauma. One of the ways we are meeting this need is in using the Zones of Regulation, particularly with our youngest students. This has been highly effective in helping students to learn how to understand and process their emotions to become more self-regulated. Students have to be ready to learn. At West, we attribute much of our academic success to the relationships built with students.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

The 2018-2019 MAP results for ELA show our free/reduced discrepancies at 22% in 3rd grade and 13% in 4th grade and special education discrepancies at 31% for 3rd grade and 36% for 5th grade. For Math, MAP data shows our free/reduced discrepancies at 21% for 3rd grade and 12% for 5th grade and special education discrepancies at 28% in 3rd and 50% for 5th grade.

All teachers participate weekly in PLC's where data is analyzed and students are placed in tiered levels of intervention through our RTI process. Data comes from common formative and summative assessments, monthly Evaluate tests, and our yearly MAP test results.

Our instructional coaches hold biweekly team meetings with teachers and administration to discuss grade level performance on priority standards and adjustments to our instruction to close gaps in student achievement. Teachers guide students in setting personal goals, then set a class goal, and as grade level teams set a building goal. The teachers use this data to move students between proficiency bands.

If a student is not making progress, they receive tier II intervention in Tiger Time. After a period of at least 4-6 weeks with no improvement in tier II, students are referred to our Student Teacher Assistance Team (STAT) and a team of principals, process coordinator, speech teachers, reading interventionists, and teachers work together to come up with a targeted intervention.

To close the achievement gap in our free/reduced lunch subgroup, we are targeting Maslow's hierarchy of needs working closely with parents, students, counselors, our social worker, and community organizations to ensure basic needs such as food, clothing, and hygiene are met. We then provide differentiated instruction and intentional targeted intervention through our RTI process.

3b. Students performing above grade level

For the 2018-2019 school year, in Mathematics, 12% of third graders, 25% of fourth graders, and 24% of fifth graders were advanced. In ELA, 18% of third graders, 28% of fourth graders, and 30% of fifth graders were advanced.

Our PLC and RTI frameworks are instrumental in supporting students who are performing above grade level. At West, we put just as much of an emphasis on extending student learning through enrichment as we do scaffolding students who are struggling. Our team looks for ways to provide the next level of learning based on a student's strengths. We utilize common formative and summative unit assessments, Evaluate monthly assessments, and MAP scores to determine best placement for students.

We are committed to programming instruction for students at every level that promotes growth and future readiness. As part of our RTI process, students who show accelerated understanding in an academic area are given instruction that will challenge them to deepen their understanding. We look at a continuum of growth and will place those students in the class for that subject that meets them at their point of need even if it is not in the same grade level. For example, we have a fifth grade student who excels in mathematics and has competed at the state level in this area. He is transported to the middle school daily to receive instruction from sixth grade teachers and also participates in their Math Olympiad program. We have another student,

first-grade, who joins second grade for reading instruction. For those students who may not be as accelerated but have shown proficiency in the current unit, we provide enrichment through Tiger Time.

During extension, our teachers focus heavily on critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This is an area our district has emphasized and at West, we not only provide practice with those skills in our tier one instruction at the classroom level, but also in our Tiger Time. The teachers of our Gifted program work with our general education teachers to create lessons and activities that will maximize these skills.

3c. Special education

To close the achievement gap in our special education subgroup, we provide differentiated instruction at every tier of intervention. Our special education teachers participate in weekly PLC meetings and work closely with general education teachers to align the goals of each student's individualized education plan (IEP) with grade level expectations. Our special education students have full access to the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible and participate in the same problem-solving approach used in the RTI process to provide intentional targeted interventions. Our special education students receive whole group instruction with their grade level peers during mini-lessons. Students receive resource services with a special education teacher during general education class independent practice. Students receiving services participate in a small group or one to one instructional setting to focus on targeted skills with intentional practice. We believe the success of our special education students depends largely on the collaboration between classroom teacher and interventionist. The use of consistent common language, strategies, and accommodations tailored to students IEP goals and objects enable students to become self-regulated and confident learners.

West special education teachers use anecdotal notes, running records, reading behavior checklists and the DRA-2 to determine students' reading levels and to monitor progress. Math is assessed using formative and summative assessments. Additionally, special education students in grades 2- 5 participate monthly in Evaluate testing, an online progress monitoring tool in the areas of ELA and Math. Data collected from assessments is used to support classroom teachers with strategies to scaffold target skills and/or provide accommodations to meet the individual needs of the student. Special education teachers use the data to guide instruction on specific skills identified and to monitor student progress of growth on IEP goals and objectives. Students are provided exposure to the general education curriculum and assessments in their least restrictive environment to ensure future readiness and success.

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

Although our ELL population is less than 10% of our student population, we have a full-time ELL teacher who provides targeted interventions with these students. The teacher pulls students for one-on-one or small group interventions and provides instruction on specific skills identified by the classroom teacher as needing additional support. Each year our ELL teacher assesses students with the ACCESS test in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The data from this testing instrument is shared with classroom teachers and parents. Our ELL teacher uses the results to inform and collaborate with the classroom teacher on creating strategic literacy groups. Future plans include moving toward a push-in model and the goal is more of a role of a co-teacher/coach for classroom teachers.

Our ELL teacher does a great job collaborating with grade level teachers during PLC and planning times. The ELL teacher is also a part of our STAT team which meets regularly to discuss interventions in place and their effectiveness. The teacher provides a list of accommodations that can be utilized by the content teachers. Upon receiving a list of accommodations, the regular classroom teachers are responsible for reviewing and delivering accommodations that best meet the needs of the ELL student in their specific classroom setting to provide the student the opportunity for success. Much of the ELL teacher's instruction follows a sheltered instruction observation protocol and is connected to building English language skills or front-loading students with the skills needed to be successful in their classroom or on assessments.

Many of our ELL students speak Spanish or Russian as their first language. We have translators in the

district and our ELL teacher works closely with parents through the translators to ensure students have the same access to school communication about their child's progress.

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

Ozark R-VI Schools house their gifted program, Kids in Talented Educational Studies (KITES) at West Elementary. We primarily use the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children - 5th Edition (WISC-V). At times circumstances require an alternative individual assessment, such as the Stanford Binet - Fifth Edition (SB5). There are multiple items used for the screening process, including, but not limited to the following: Renzulli Scales, qualifying score in a nationally normed achievement test, Evaluate, MAP Scores, and student portfolio work.

The following goals of the program drive the academic objectives presented to students: the gifted learner will acquire a superior level of knowledge and skills to gather, analyze, interpret, and critique information and ideas with an advanced degree of independence, an advanced level of knowledge and skills to communicate high levels of thought within and beyond the classroom, a wide range of knowledge and thinking skills to recognize and solve personal and real-world problems in diverse ways, and an advanced level of knowledge and skills to make informed decisions in order to act as a sensitive and responsible member of our global society.

Eligible students are pulled out of their regular classrooms one day a week and attend the KITES Program at West Elementary. In the KITES classroom, students are provided instruction in the following areas: creativity, affective education, critical thinking, and character and leadership skills. Additionally, a quarterly major unit provides for intense and rigorous research and learning about a specific topic that goes beyond what is taught in the regular classroom. In KITES, students are given opportunities for challenge, work both individually and in groups in order to accomplish tasks, and use a multitude of resources in order to rise to their full potential.

Our gifted teachers also support the KITES students by partnering with classroom teachers to address student needs. This collaborative approach is focused on academics, as well as social, emotional, and behavioral needs for the KITES students.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

West Elementary uses Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) as a framework to integrate sound discipline practices to establish a positive, school-wide learning environment for all students. This model provides teachers common language which aids in students knowing the expectation so they can be more focused on learning and demonstrate on task behavior in our classrooms. West teachers do an excellent job of providing frequent recognition of appropriate behavior throughout each school day. Similar verbal feedback is used in all settings by all staff members on a daily basis. We remind students each day of our building expectations and to be bold, be kind, and be awesome in their words and actions. Within classrooms and in the common areas of the school, teachers, and staff provide plenty of praise and intentionally speak words that show kids they are seen, valued, and matter. The Missouri Southwest-Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) School Recognition Program has identified and awarded West Elementary the gold level of recognition for successful implementation of School-wide Systems of PBIS.

One of the ways we motivate students is through our Student of the Month principal breakfasts and “Pawsitive Principal Referral” program. We have a character word focus each month and a brief daily lesson shared during morning announcements. Teachers choose one student from their class who exemplified that character trait and they enjoy a breakfast with the principals and counselors. Teachers can also recognize students who are being bold, kind, and/or awesome with a positive principal referral. Students have their picture taken and are able to choose an item from the prize jar. They enjoy having their picture on the principal’s wall more than the prize.

West strives to foster student growth and resilience. Our First Responders Team, which consist of our counselors, instructional coaches, special education process coordinator (PC), school social worker, and principals, meet to problem-solve around students with social emotional, health, and behavioral concerns to provide support to students and teachers. For example, if a student is struggling with wanting to be at school and is having attendance issues, we will work as a team to problem solve and find creative ways to motivate the student. We might find a job for the student to do, an adult in the building that can serve as a mentor, or give them time in a quiet space to get ready for their day of learning. When students' emotional needs are met, we see a remarkable difference in their well-being including academic performance. It truly takes the whole school community and at West, we have a fantastic team!

2. Engaging Families and Community:

West Elementary faculty and staff put forth a remarkable amount of effort to partner with parents and our community. Our partnership with parents includes: parent volunteers and our outstanding Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which provides fun activities for families and raises funds for classroom or school projects. Together we strive to provide our students many opportunities which will afford them the skills to be successful in school and their future workplace.

West Elementary parents truly want to help their students learn and expect their students to be successful. We encourage parents to read at home with their students (we provide books and reading materials). Classroom teachers encourage parents to focus on review activities throughout the school year. West faculty and staff have worked very hard in the last few years to provide parents with ideas on working at home with their students. The way we teach is very different from what our students' parents experienced while in school. In order to provide an opportunity for parents to really understand our teaching styles, we have hosted a family literacy and math night where parents can observe different aspects of their student’s education. We also indoctrinate parents in our literacy model during kindergarten screening days to ensure that parents know our high expectations before students even enter our school. We strive to be an open book for parents to build a trusting relationship between home and school!

We utilize technology to keep parents and the community informed. We have updated our website to

provide more comprehensive information in a much simpler format and have a Facebook page for quick releases of information. Combined with a monthly newsletter and communication from our district and teachers, our parents are well informed.

West is fortunate to have a very generous community who seeks ways to be involved and serve our students. We partner closely with local churches and the RSVP Reading Buddies Program in a combined effort providing over 20 volunteers who serve weekly to read with and mentor our students. There are countless examples of how this reading program has benefited our students. One example has been with a second-grade boy who was very quiet and unmotivated to work in the classroom. We partnered him with a reading buddy who was a retired school counselor and by the end of the year, he came out of his shell and started participating in classroom instruction more than ever. Several of our classrooms are partnered with businesses and other community organizations to enrich the lives of West students. For example, is a partnership between the Ozark Parks and Recreation department and the school to provide free swimming passes to students.

Dedicated teachers, parent and community involvement, high expectations, and care are a few of the powerful solutions West Elementary has successfully implemented that have impacted student achievement.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

At West, we work to create an environment where teachers feel valued and supported through showing appreciation, listening, encouraging them to take risks, and providing meaningful professional development. We do several morale boosters throughout the year in conjunction with our excellent Parent Teacher Association. In addition to showing our appreciation, our goal is to ensure teachers know they have our full support. We encourage them to take instructional risks if they believe it is what is best for students. At West, teachers have a voice and are given many opportunities to provide input in decisions made for our building. We have a Guiding Coalition Team (GCT) with representatives from each grade level and other groups within the building. The GCT contributes to building level decision making by providing team members' feedback and innovative ideas. Administration has an open-door policy and invites teachers regularly to share their thoughts.

Our district provides many avenues for professional growth. Ozark has partnered with Evangel University to provide a district paid master's degree. West has several graduates of this program teaching in our building. The classes are designed to meet the professional development needs of Ozark teachers. Teachers from across the district have been accepted into the program and the classes are designed to help teachers learn from the strengths of one another and the various strengths of each building in the district.

Twelve hours of professional development are required contractually for teachers in Ozark. At the building level teachers' professional development plans are designed using self-assessment, student performance, and summative reports. The district provides a Professional Development Academy each summer prior to the start of the new school year. Teachers and administrators provide the learning, and participate in the learning. Professional Development opportunities are also offered throughout the school year. Once teachers have fulfilled their contractual requirement they are paid \$25 an hour for any hours above the required twelve. All professional development is tied to four district initiatives (Professional Learning Communities, Positive Behavior Intervention Support, Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy, and Response to Intervention). The majority of professional development in the district focuses on technology and instructional practices.

Our district also partners with other area school districts comparable to Ozark (Nixa, Willard, and Republic) to provide professional development. We share our expertise and learning in the areas of literacy, mathematics, behavior management, intervention, understanding how poverty affects learning, trauma-informed practices and effective teaching strategies. West Elementary teachers and our instructional coaches have shared their expertise as presenters for many of the sessions offered in our district and when we partner with neighboring districts.

combined with outside district opportunities, Friday afternoon early release collaboration times and bi-weekly team meetings, the typical Ozark teacher receives forty plus hours of professional development each school year.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy at West goes back to our mission to connect, learn, and grow. Every single person in the building needs connection. They need to know someone cares. They need to know that what they are doing at work and learning in school is meaningful and connected to future readiness. We are not going to waste anyone's time with busy work. We are all going to learn and we believe in giving everyone a safe place to make mistakes and learn from each other. Everyone in the building will grow and if they are not, our philosophy is to work as a team to problem solve and find a solution so forward movement is possible. That may mean we are removing barriers or fulfilling a socio-economic or emotional need. We will do whatever it takes! Everyone at West will be able to show what they have accomplished and be proud of the work we all do each and every day. We will celebrate each other's wins.

We believe that hard work pays off. Students are expected to attend school regularly, participate in lessons and behave in a way that allows others to listen and learn. Teachers are expected to love their students and provide quality lessons each day. West teachers have a "failure is not an option" fight in them. The administrators are expected to take care of teachers and make sure they have the tools and resources needed to teach. The administrators support teachers in difficult situations with students and parents so that teachers can focus on instruction. The administrators work hard to find funds to provide all the necessary materials that a teacher requires to create quality lessons.

The principals and counselors know each student by name and greet students each day as they arrive at school. We know that every adult connection that a student makes at school is one more opportunity for the student to succeed at school and in their future. These personal connections with students help the children and parents know that each student is loved and cared for. The principals and counselors also know that a student's physical needs have to be met before they can learn, so they work behind the scenes with the school social worker and numerous agencies to ensure the basic needs of students are being met.

Our Student-Teacher Assistance Team (STAT) which consist of the classroom teacher, counselors, PC, interventionists, and instructional coaches meet monthly to problem solve and provide support focused strategies to the classroom teacher to support the academic needs of struggling students. A plan of intervention is created and parents are brought into the information loop. The STAT members continue to meet every four to six weeks on a student to review plan or additional strategies are sought until a solution to the problem is found. The focus on students encourages all faculty and staff to do what is best for students. The group works to find out what gaps have possibly created an instructional setback rather than immediately assuming a learning disability. This building mind set matches what our Reading Recovery teachers believe; if the child is not learning, then the teacher self-examines what they are teaching and how they are teaching it so that the child can learn.

West teachers are known as strong instructional leaders. They are willing to try new things and are flexible. They are known across the district for their professionalism, love for students and instructional strengths. West teachers give 110% everyday!

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At West, the one practice that our stakeholders believe has been the most influential in the school's success is how we collaborate as a team to prepare individual students for future readiness. Within this application we have described how our use of collaboration in PLC's, our levels of intervention through RTI, and our team approach to instruction and intervention has been instrumental to our success as a school and as a district. We still have room for improvement and value the information received from our data collection processes and community feedback. Each year, we set goals as professionals and as a team in order to lead by example for our students in achieving their own goals.

Without this team approach, no one person has the knowledge and skill to meet the individual needs of West's almost 700 students. Our students deserve to be treated as a whole person and not a number. Although at times, the sheer amount of need can seem insurmountable, West has a team that is not afraid of a challenge. We also know we need others outside our building in order to help students be successful. We seek to network with those around us and strive to think outside of the box to problem solve and find solutions even if it takes us a while to find one that works. Our teachers and students are resilient and work hard to be at their best each and every day. Students walk into West Elementary each day knowing there is a large support system cheering them on and helping to pave the way to success.

Student growth is why we do what we do. They are our reason for pushing through barriers and doing our very best to connect, learn, and grow together. West's collaboration, not only with each other, but with parents, students, community members, and other forward-thinking school districts has extended our abilities beyond what we were capable of on our own. This honor of being nominated for a National Blue Ribbon Award is a celebration of the contributions of each of those members of our larger team. We are hopeful we will be able to celebrate this great honor with those who have been instrumental in our student's success. Thank you for the honor of writing about our favorite place and people. West students know they are valuable. We want the rest of the world to know it too. We are West!