

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 4045 State Road 135 South
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Nashville State IN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 47448-9608

County Brown County

Telephone (812) 988-6658 Fax (812) 988-5418

Web site/URL
http://www.browncountyschools.com/school/van-buren-elementary-school/ E-mail gsteele@browncountyschools.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* Ms. Emily Tracy E-mail etracy@browncountyschools.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Brown County School Corporation Tel. (812) 988-6601

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 Ms. Carol Bowden
(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, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

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, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	11	8	19
K	16	15	31
1	19	15	34
2	19	26	45
3	20	22	42
4	18	21	39
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	103	107	210

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.8 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 96.2 % White
 - 2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 12%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	26
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	210
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

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

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

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

Total number students who qualify: 85

8. Students receiving special education services: 23 %
49 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>3</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay | <u>11</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>38</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	11
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	97%	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 2020.

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.

World Class Opportunities, Small School Relationships, Lifelong Impact.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Van Buren Elementary School has been operating with the majority of students attending school in person. Currently, there are only 14 Van Buren students enrolled in our remote learning option. Since the start of this school year, our building has remained open for face-to-face instruction with the option for families to choose the remote learning environment for their children. All Brown County remote learning students in grades kindergarten, three and four are taught by various classroom teachers, throughout the district, using technology and virtual learning tools and applications to help deliver our traditional curriculum offerings. District-wide students in grades one and two are also taught in this way, but students receive instruction from a full-time remote learning teacher.

17. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

PART III - SUMMARY

Van Buren Elementary School is nestled in the southern hills of Brown County, Indiana, and is one of three elementary schools within the school district of Brown County Schools. Our building's district map includes students and families within roughly 90 square miles of the county's 312. This unique part of the county is home to students from families who have attended Van Buren Elementary for multiple generations as well as those who have moved to the area to enjoy the quiet, rolling landscape and its natural surroundings. As such, many of our students and their families enjoy the outdoors. A hard-working demographic, they care for acres of land, farms, and animals while family members also often maintain jobs outside of the county.

While attending school at Van Buren Elementary, students are nurtured through a variety of educational opportunities. Outdoor classroom space sits beside a bubbling creek for a change of scenery and large, green, tree-lined fields with plots of flowers and gardens invite inquiry as well as an opportunity to run and play. Students and families here, accustomed to looking out for one another and helping where they can, engage with their school as the center of its township and the place for children to grow and learn, whether through its robust Parent/Teacher Organization or our community partnership with the local, volunteer fire department. As the heart of the community, the school is also the focal point for many community activities. Traditionally, facilities are used throughout the year for family reunions, child and adult sports and recreation activities, 4-H meetings, and as a meeting place for scouting troops.

All students at Van Buren Elementary School are encouraged and challenged in a variety of ways so that they may develop their full potential before crossing into the next township to attend middle school in the town of Nashville, Indiana. Key strategies used to realize this development include students setting and tracking academic goals through targeted reading initiatives, cross-curricular initiatives wherein students participate in designing and creating projects in our state-of-the-art science lab using the engineering design process, and our school climate/culture initiative for social-emotional learning that is provided by our school counselors using the Second Step curriculum.

Under the targeted reading initiative, with the help of teachers and school leadership, student reading levels are tracked throughout their entire elementary school career, and building-wide as well as individual goals for student growth are determined and tracked through progress monitoring and benchmarking each school year. Student goals are individualized, and students are recognized for achieving their personal goals as well as throughout their advancement along the growth continuum. Intervention supports are in place to assure that every student has an opportunity to succeed under this initiative.

Using the engineering and design process, under our Project Lead the Way and Mystery Science curriculums, students in every grade level are provided with opportunities to develop research, writing, and collaborative learning skills as they innovate and create under our cross-curricular initiative. Multiple visits per week to our state-of-the-art science lab reinforce STEAM knowledge and comprehension for all students with attention to the problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that are crucial to academic and social-emotional development.

Finally, our dedicated school counselors help to implement our school climate/culture initiative using the Second Step curriculum. Weekly visits to classrooms from counselors and follow-up meetings with individual students ensure that every student is provided a positive and supportive environment in which they are free to grow and learn. Topics studied through this initiative include effective cooperation, communication, and decision-making skills. As students build confidence and practice setting personal goals within this initiative, they are supplied with the practical life skills that will encourage their personal and academic growth.

While these initiatives are intrinsic to the development and success of students at Van Buren Elementary School, additional programming and techniques are implemented that support student learning and educate the whole child. One School, One Book programming encourages reading growth and integrates curriculum to develop themed community service projects that are related to the reading material. Van Buren students have read Jacqueline Davies' *The Lemonade War* in class and, through a Lowe's partnership, classrooms

built and decorated lemonade stands in art class, developed their lemonade recipes in science, determined needed supply costs and pricing and profit margins in math class, and wrote marketing campaigns in language arts. Students set up their stands and sold their lemonade to families and school community members raising \$2,800 for Alex's Lemonade Stand - a nonprofit organization that supports pediatric cancer research. This year, students will read Katherine Applegate's *Wishtree*, a novel in which supported themes include diversity, inclusion, acceptance, and kindness. Students will be working together to develop a new theme-related project and corporate partnership that will benefit their school community.

The Van Buren Elementary School community is composed of families, students, teachers, and staff who are determined and equipped to make a difference. They are determined to grow, to seek answers, to learn from their mistakes, and to help others. These initiatives and programs are essential to the character of our team, and our team is devoted to building driven, engaged, and confident students who will leave Van Buren ready for their next chapter, both in and out of the classroom.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Van Buren Elementary School uses a variety of instructional strategies across each of the core curriculum areas to ensure that every student is provided with the opportunity to meet objectives, achieve their goals, and experience success. Students in every grade level are introduced to academic standards and topics through explicit instruction, measurable outcomes, collaborative learning opportunities, and hands-on experiences. Moreover, students are progress monitored and goals are tracked in core subject areas to ensure that transfer is taking place.

In language arts, Van Buren Elementary School teachers use the readers and writers workshop model alongside Lucy Calkins' Units of Study to provide a rich literacy experience for students. Each unit of study uses approximately six weeks and combines instruction and practice with concrete, doable goals for students. Students are introduced to reading and writing experiences that cover a variety of genres while reinforcing vocabulary, knowledge and comprehension, and communication skills. This research-based curriculum is foundational to the suite of tools that are used during language arts, and it has been adopted as the basis of our balanced literacy approach.

Other curriculums that balance out our language arts programming include the Benchmark Literacy series, where students in each grade level are introduced to the foundational grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, and literacy components of academic standards; Words Their Way word study instruction, where hands-on experiences help students develop their word-attack skills and vocabulary; and Fountas and Pinnell where students engage in reading accuracy and fluency practice at their instructional and independent reading levels while gaining comprehension skills. To better support our virtual learners and remote instruction, this year, we have added the Reading A-Z program to our repertoire so that we may continue to provide students with the instructional and independent reading materials that best suit each individual's needs. Each of these supportive curriculum offerings uses whole and small group instruction to reinforce the skills that are being taught through the reading and writing workshop model.

Additional supports for students in reading and language arts include differentiated materials and explicit phonics instruction using the Orton Gillingham method. Based on research and evidence, this approach to instruction is delivered to all kindergarten students, and it continues to be used in intervention lessons for students in grades kindergarten through fourth. Blending a review of essential phonics skills using a multisensory approach has proven, in our experience, to develop student confidence and increase levels of achievement in both reading and writing.

The data that is tracked for students in the area of language arts blends formative and summative assessment results to determine next steps for instruction and/or intervention. Fountas and Pinnell data is progress monitored throughout each year, with summative benchmarks analyzed three times per year. Further, this information is saved and tracked throughout each student's elementary school career. Doing so provides a wealth of information about each student's overall progress and specific needs.

Additionally, literacy skills are tracked and progress monitored using iSTEOP, which helps inform our tiered instruction processes, and academic standard fluency is tracked and progress monitored using Study Island and IXL applications. Summative assessments are given three times per year, with formative assessment intervals driving necessary instruction and/or intervention. So far, between the fall and winter benchmarks of the 2020-2021 school year, Van Buren Students have shown a 19% increase in achieving independent reading levels that meet or exceed grade-level expectations.

In addition to tracking and monitoring student data in language arts, their skillset and progress in mathematics are regularly assessed. iSTEOP and Study Island benchmarks are utilized here, too, with formative assessments happening at intervals that best prepare our staff to instruct Van Buren students. In grades kindergarten through fourth, students grow their knowledge of math and the world around them using the Bridges in Math curriculum. A comprehensive curriculum, Bridges was chosen as the foundation of our math instruction for its rigorous and engaging content that focuses on problem-solving and higher-order

thinking strategies, wherein the students are provided with instruction in key numeracy and computation skills using linguistically, visually, and kinesthetically rich materials.

The opportunities provided during math instruction include number corner, whole and small group instruction, and intervention periods during every school day for both in-person and remote students. This year, virtual learning tools and technology-based manipulatives have been added to Bridges to support remote instruction, and although we are working in a year where average academic growth trajectories are expected to decline, post the COVID-19 school closures, Van Buren students, overall, have shown an average growth increase of 2.25 points in math computation skills in less than one year, between the fall and winter benchmarks, with 87% achieving grade-level or above-grade-level ratings. Additional tech tools and applications that have been added to our virtual learning suite which help achieve these numbers in mathematics computation include Study Island, IXL, Rocket Math, and Xtra Math.

Study Island benchmarks help to drive instruction in social studies and science curriculums, as well, assessing student understandings of the academic standards and determining next steps for instruction for both in-person and remote learning environments. Additionally, Study Island proves to be a great resource for differentiated instruction and student accommodations. Aligned to Indiana standards for grades two through fourth, lessons include printable and virtual learning and assessment tools as well as video lessons and educational gaming opportunities. Furthermore, teachers can differentiate assessments and practice for students through DOK levels of questioning, and options for accommodations, such as read-aloud services, that are embedded within this tool.

Alongside Study Island practice and assessments, students in grades kindergarten through fourth are exposed weekly to Project Lead the Way and Mystery Science curriculums. These problem-based learning opportunities help guide students through in-class or online lessons that address Indiana's science academic standards in engaging and hands-on ways with the use of inquiry, goal-setting, critical thinking, and flexible grouping strategies. In social studies, Van Buren teachers use the Studies Weekly publication and its digital learning tools. Like so many of our other curricula foci, we continue to choose Studies Weekly programs due to their careful alignment to Indiana academic standards and a commitment to deep learning strategies that not only increase student skills and knowledge but also their dispositions for well-being.

The safety, well-being, and education of every student are our top priorities at Van Buren Elementary School. Setting and tracking goals and regularly monitoring assessment data allows us to provide quality tiered instruction that consistently maximizes student understanding and learning efficiency. Through a well-rounded curriculum, a variety of tools for differentiation, and individualized goals for each child, teachers and staff work every day to create a student-focused synergy for success.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

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

Van Buren Elementary School offers a Paths To Quality (PTQ), Level 3, fully-inclusive Preschool Program for children three to five years of age. We are proud to note that our preschool program has grown from PTQ Level 1 to PTQ Level 3 over the past two years. Our partnership with PTQ ensures that high-quality curriculum offerings, learning environments, and safety measures are provided for every learner.

To ensure pre-K students receive a high-quality education, preschool educators use The Creative Curriculum. Here, lessons are based on the Indiana Early Learning Foundations and The Creative Curriculum's Progressions of Development and Learning. These two foundations align the preschool curriculum with the K-3 academic standards. The progressions show widely-held expectations of learning and development for different age groups. Under this traditional sequence of development, teachers can assess each child accurately and use the information to plan instruction.

To further connect to the Indiana academic standards, specific areas of learning for children include social-

emotional, physical education, language, cognitive and literacy practices, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, and the arts. The teachers use six teaching guides throughout the year to help introduce content in a cohesive, sequential manner. The Creative Curriculum for Preschool connects theory and research, how children develop and learn, designing an environment for learning, what children need to learn, caring and teaching practices, and the value of partnering with families. By using the 2015 Indiana Early Learning Foundations as our guide, we provide a comprehensive approach to addressing the development of the whole child.

Overall, looking at the impact of early learning on school readiness and success in primary grades, there are strong connections that can be made. Van Buren Elementary School's progress-monitoring data for this year's kindergarten class shows that 62.5% of the students who attended our preschool program are meeting or exceeding reading benchmark expectations. This percent drops to 35.7% for students who did not attend our preschool program, illustrating the importance of a safe, welcoming, and engaging learning environment for early childhood learning.

Safety has been a matter of paramount concern this year, in particular. As Van Buren transitioned into the 2021-2022 school year, we worked with PTQ coaching to ensure that we maintained the highest level of safety for all students. Safety protocols for entry, daily operations, lunch, and departure all required change. Now, when preschool students arrive, they are greeted at their car to review COVID-19 symptoms with parents, and their temperature is taken before they enter the building. During the day, all pre-K students stay with their classroom (cohort), and masks are worn by all students at Van Buren Elementary, from pre-K to grade four, when a six-foot social distance cannot be achieved. When leaving for the day, students are walked out to their cars to ensure safety while mitigating virus exposure between staff and families.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at Van Buren Elementary School participate in a variety of learning opportunities outside of the core curriculum, such as art, music, physical education, and STEM programs. Grades kindergarten through fourth visit the art classroom once per week where they continue to practice creative problem-solving skills, language skills, and social and decision-making skills while refining their fine motor movement. Art integration with classroom curriculums is a collaborative effort between teachers that students also get to experience during this time.

Music is offered to kindergarten through fourth grade Van Buren students twice per week. During music instruction, students regularly practice skills that are impactful to their core learning. Items such as phonics and syllabication, speaking, listening, and reading skills directly correlate to the success of our students in their traditional classroom. In addition, plenty of movement during music class promotes the physical wellbeing and gross-motor skills our students need for proper development.

Dedicated time for physical education is a staple at Van Buren. Kindergarten through fourth grade students visit our gymnasium twice per week for lessons that are designed to promote wellness and exercise and establish the skills, knowledge, and behaviors that will help them maintain active and healthy lifestyles. Additionally, students continue to develop cooperative learning skills and a heart for community outreach. Physical education programming, such as Jump Rope for Heart, blends math, health education, and gross motor skill refinement to help educate the whole child.

Social and emotional learning is another way that Van Buren Elementary School supports our students' essential skills development. School counselors and educators deliver lessons on social-emotional development to every kindergarten through fourth grade student once per week using the Second Step curriculum. Through this curriculum and its related activities and discussions, students have educational time each week that is dedicated to helping them build confidence through the development of essential skills such as goal setting, working collaboratively, and decision-making strategies aimed at helping students navigate the world more effectively.

As we prepare students to navigate environments in and out of the classroom, Van Buren Elementary also sets its sights on 21st Century skills for the workplace. Our STEM lab, which is visited by all kindergarten

through fourth grade students, uses both Project Lead the Way and Mystery Science curriculums to inspire students to create and innovate using inquiry and problem-solving skills through the engineering design process. Students in kindergarten and first grade are provided with time in the STEM lab twice per week, students in second grade visit three times per week, and students in grades three and four are given STEM instruction in the lab five times per week. This early introduction and continued emphasis on critical thinking and workplace skills in a positive and supportive atmosphere contributes to the acquisition of the essential skills and knowledge that our students will need to progress in their education and the innovative society of today.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has made scheduling for the 2020-2021 school year cumbersome, students at Van Buren have not noticed any change in these routines. Designated hallway times and rigorous cleaning methods, as well as adherence to social distancing and mask wearing policies, have allowed our traditional students to maintain each of these elements that are so critical to their development and education. Likewise, each of these curriculum opportunities has been adapted for our remote learners. Teachers use technology such as Zoom, Screencastify, Canvas, Clever, Seesaw, and other online learning applications to continue to deliver quality instruction in each of these curricular areas and ensure that all of Van Buren's students are receiving equitable opportunities for the development of essential skills and knowledge.

3. Academic Supports:

Van Buren Elementary uses a tiered academic support plan to accommodate and promote student success. At Van Buren, all classrooms are fully inclusive. A partnership with Brown County Literacy Coalition provides tier 1 intervention through after-school tutoring support for any student, and benchmarking is conducted three times a year (fall, winter, spring), using assessments such as iSTEEP, Study Island, Words Their Way, and Fountas and Pinnell. This suite of benchmarking tasks allows the benchmark team to routinely check our student success with our school goals.

Students identified from classroom observations and benchmarking data are provided tailored instruction and in-class interventions to meet their individual needs. If this step is not effective in improving student mastery of the skills, the teacher will refer the student to the General Education Intervention (GEI) team. The GEI team consists of the principal, general education teacher, special education teacher, paraprofessional, and parent. Together, they review and assess current strengths and weaknesses with any interventions that have already been implemented, and they determine a plan for future, more intense intervention methods. The GEI team then determines a date to meet back and review the student's progress, and if the team determines that the specific intense interventions are not showing skill growth, the team has the option of referring the student for special education.

Van Buren Elementary School uses several assessments to help determine instruction and best meet the needs of every student. Based on the most recent data that we have from state summative assessments, students increased their ILEARN Math and ELA pass rates by a combined 29.3 percentage points. In comparing pass rates from ISTEP 2018 to ILEARN 2019, students achieved a 25.3% increase in ELA, and they achieved a 4% pass rate increase in mathematics. When looking at this information by subgroup, two groups emerged as still showing a 10 percentage point difference from the overall school achievement.

Special Education saw a 3.6% growth in ELA and a 21.7% increase in math pass rates. Even with the improvement in ELA, a gap of 22.6 points still exists, when compared to all students. Meanwhile, the Free and Reduced subgroup saw a 16.8% increase in math and a 5.4% decrease in ELA. This decrease resulted in a 13.8% gap difference when compared to all students.

Identifying the ELA gap in both Special Education and Free and Reduced Lunch subgroups, Van Buren Elementary School set a new school goal for the school year 2020-2021--to maintain or increase our students' achievement levels with a focus on growth. Therefore, by May 27, 2021, 80% of Van Buren Elementary School students will exhibit a passing growth effect size in their reading accuracy and comprehension benchmarks from the fall benchmark (Sept. 2020) to the spring benchmark (May 2021). Within the passing growth effect size cohort, 60% of students will exhibit a pass+ growth effect size greater than or equal to .51, given the average standard deviation within their graduating class.

This goal is tied to Van Buren's work with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) and focuses on growth for each individual student. Our intense focus on these goals has allowed us to track and implement school-wide interventions. A data wall in our professional development room displays the most current information for each student, and this data wall is used during professional development to develop curriculum, tailor instruction, and define grouping strategies that promote growth for students at every level of achievement.

Currently, Van Buren Elementary School does not have any students identified as English Language Learners, migrant, or homeless. However, accommodations and provisions are made readily available for these students through Brown County Schools' special services faculty and departments as well as our McKinney-Vento director.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The faculty and staff at Van Buren Elementary School continue to engage, motivate, and provide students with a positive environment in a variety of ways. Although maintaining these strategies during school closures has proven to be somewhat difficult, the creative thinking of our leaders and teachers has helped to make the best of this situation through the use of technology and the dedication of extra time.

Social media has been a lifeline for communication, this year. Through technology and tools such as Facebook and Parent Square, communication is at an all-time high and the engagement of our families has followed suit. Whether communicating about daily school supply and food pick-up times or our principal spending time on Facebook Live reading bedtime stories to students, the connectedness between our families and their school community has been a mainstay since the spring of 2020. This and other forms of technology have provided for many regular and engaging opportunities such as reading challenges, social-emotional learning at-home activities, and continued professional development for our educators.

All students at Van Buren Elementary School take part in our reading challenge where each student is recognized for growth in reading, and a prize drawing is held every month for those who meet their reading goals. Students delight in the recognition and will stop you in the hallway to exclaim that they have met their goal or "leveled up!". This level of engagement in our reading initiative has translated to an average growth of 2 reading levels in each grade level so far this year, which has contributed to the growth we are witnessing in English Language Arts standards proficiencies where an average increase of 18 percentage points, per student, has occurred between the fall and winter Study Island benchmarks.

This increase in student engagement that is modeled by student achievement is made further possible through social-emotional learning activities. Lessons that focus on learning to set goals and positive decision-making skills are provided to both in-class and remote learners with the help of our teaching and counseling faculty. These weekly mini-lessons provide the perspective and opportunities students need in order to practice the essential skills that contribute to the positive environment at Van Buren Elementary School.

As we work to provide our students with opportunities to grow both personally and academically, we are moved to consider their college and career readiness, as well. To aid our students in this growth and level of engagement, Van Buren Elementary School, and the broader school district of Brown County Schools, partners with Regional Opportunity Initiatives to ensure that we continue to provide the STEM instruction necessary to contribute to the 21st Century workforce. Support from ROI has continued through the 2020-2021 school year with virtual professional development for STEM Fellow Educators and subsequent opportunities for STEM instruction with students.

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a learning experience and, although we would never trade face-to-face time with our students and their families, we will take these experiences with us and continue to refine and adapt them so that we may continue to reach out to our school community through multiple means of engagement. The past year has cemented our understanding of school as a place where students are loved, valued, and encouraged, and it is easy to see how this mindset promotes a positive and supportive learning environment as hundreds of smiling faces bound through the front doors of Van Buren Elementary School, each morning, eager for what lies on the other side.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

As our vision statement affirms, Van Buren Elementary School provides world-class opportunities and small-school relationships with lifelong impact. Our small school relationships are built on strong and compassionate communication, empathy, and a desire to support each student's path to success. We know that the support of student success does not begin and end with academics. Many students within the Van Buren Elementary School district are faced with overcoming challenges that could preclude their

engagement with school were it not for the assistance of the school's faculty and staff, parent/teacher organization, and our beloved community partners.

The past year, in particular, has proven to be socially, emotionally, and economically difficult for students and families, so Van Buren Elementary has partnered with members of its community to ensure that every student continues to be provided with equitable opportunities for success. Last spring, as schools were closed, we set our sights on student health and wellness as well as academics. Each day, student families were able to drive to the front of the school building and receive free meals for every family member, provided by our school cafeteria staff. For families who were homebound, or without transportation, our bus drivers delivered meals and supplies throughout the county. Teachers and staff volunteered to help with the distribution, and our parent-teacher organization, with the help of local businesses, stepped up to include goodie bags for students every Friday.

During this time, books were also provided to students, as well as opportunities to pick up and drop off assignments. At the beginning of our school's closure, many of our families opted for paper/pencil school work, due to a lack of internet access, and in our rural community, this appeared as though it would be one of our biggest hurdles to providing equitable instruction for all of our students. Industry partners, Mainstream Fiber (our Robotics Club sponsor) and Verizon Wireless, answered the call and worked with us to provide the lifeline families and students needed by supplying free Wi-Fi access in our parking lot and free wireless hotspots for homebound families. We are forever grateful for their generosity and expertise, which have allowed our students and families wider access to more engaging learning and communication opportunities.

Since the start of the school year, online learning and communication opportunities have continued to remain available, as well as food distribution. Community partners such as Brown County COAD, the Brown County YMCA, TRIAD, the Brown County Community Foundation, and the Brown County Food Alliance have continued working to provide pop-up food pantries throughout the county and in school parking lots. Any family is welcome to stop by our school's pantry to receive fresh and non-perishable groceries and visit with school administrators. Regular updates on Parent Square and other social media outlets keep our school community updated on the whereabouts of pantries each month.

School faculty and staff continue to model supportive teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills in communication with students and their families. Regular communication and assignment updates happen through Canvas classroom pages, Skyward student management pages, and Parent Square. Also, teachers found creative ways to meet for parent/teacher conferences, this year, via phone and video conferencing or outdoor meetings so that they could effectively communicate with and engage families regarding their child's progress.

Our community and industry partnerships are critical to the work we do at Van Buren Elementary to support and engage with our school community. We continue to partner with Centerstone, our school-based mental health provider, to bring our students and families needed supports for wellness, and our cooperation with the Southern Brown Volunteer Fire Department provides emergency safety education and child safety seats to our families. We believe in lifelong relationships that make a difference, and each of these partnerships and strategies has worked together for the improvement of our school and the success of our students.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Van Buren Elementary School's professional environment includes an amazing staff who take part in weekly professional development opportunities. This professional development is primarily based on the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching's instructional rubric and coaching methods as well as the Universal Design for Learning Framework, John Hattie's Visible Learning, and Jim Knight's High Impact Instruction. Within this model, our educators are consistently and thoughtfully provided professional learning opportunities that include various components and provide ideas to enhance methods of instruction, planning practices, and strategies for maintaining a positive classroom environment. These professional development opportunities are embedded into the school day and include coaching and modeling of instruction by a trained leadership team including the principal, a master teacher, and two mentor teachers.

In addition, teachers have opportunities to meet for collaboration time and curriculum development with the master teacher and/or principal, and they are given the opportunity to receive coverage in order to observe teaching in their colleagues' classrooms. Instructional evaluations are given three times per year, in traditional and remote learning environments, and all teaching evaluations include pre- and post-conferences where expectations and supports are clearly communicated and timely, actionable feedback is shared.

With the transition to remote learning, following the COVID-19 shutdown, the instructional rubric has been modified to include the NIET Tool for Virtual Instruction which elaborates on instructional indicators and their descriptors, providing examples of each criterion as they may be met in a virtual environment. This tool has helped teachers provide effective remote instruction that is consistent with their traditional classroom environments and, altogether, our professional development model has worked to build the capacity of our teachers and administration. Since beginning with embedded professional development, the faculty at Van Buren Elementary School has shown growth under every area of our instructional rubric, over three evaluation cycles, and 80% or more of our teachers are currently meeting or exceeding expectations in all three rubric domains after just one year of implementation. These numbers are a testament to the dedication and hard work of our faculty and their leadership team, but they would not be possible without the supportive, positive, and collaborative environment that has been carefully fostered by our administrator.

Van Buren's principal has worked tirelessly to create an atmosphere that thrives on growth and continued learning while working with families to create a parent/teacher organization that continually supports our teachers and classrooms through donations, experiences, and the occasional heavy lifting. Teachers feel well supported when their craft is valued and funding is made available for needed materials so that their students can benefit from engaging educational opportunities in and outside of the classroom. Van Buren's principal makes sure that these criteria are met so teachers feel appreciated. To cite one example, when teachers needed a place for students to plant a garden, our PTO and principal stepped up to build an enclosed space where both children and vegetables could grow. Overall, Van Buren is a special place where personal and professional gains are made each day through its positive, collaborative, and constructive environment, and the exemplary model of leadership from our administration carries through into each classroom.

4. School Leadership:

Van Buren Elementary's leadership structure embraces the philosophy of family. This mindset not only defines our school leadership but the entire school community. Prior to the 2021-2022 school year, Van Buren's leadership team was composed of the principal and a part-time counselor. However, since beginning our partnership with NIET and increasing our district focus on social-emotional learning, the leadership team has grown to include, principal, master teacher, two mentor teachers, and a 50% increase in counseling.

The Van Buren Elementary School principal maintains and oversees every aspect of the building and its occupants. Whether he is handling discipline, participating in professional development, painting a classroom, or climbing onto the rooftop to reset the chillers, the principal here is the backbone of our building. You will also regularly find him working with students, coaching teachers, or covering recess duty. As the head of our family, the principal goes to great lengths to ensure a positive and supportive working and learning environment for everyone in the building.

The primary role of the master teacher in our building is to develop and deliver professional development to our teachers twice per week. Her additional responsibilities have become a means to this end, benchmarking student achievement, collecting and analyzing student and teacher data, evaluating and modeling instruction in classrooms, and coaching teachers with their planning and instruction. The knowledge and understanding that is gleaned from these responsibilities help to determine areas of need and guides instruction in professional development.

Our mentor teachers also play a role in the development of professional learning opportunities. Under their role, mentor teachers primarily observe and coach teachers in individual settings to help them apply their learning from professional development and follow-up with any guidance. In doing so, they are able to assist the master teacher with planning for upcoming professional development opportunities that best meet the

needs of our teachers and students.

Brown County Schools' partnership with NIET brought about student data review processes that have guided our leadership team to focus intently on student learning outcomes. NIET's mission is: Building educator excellence to give all students the opportunity for success. For Van Buren, this means our biggest shift has been standards recovery. Offering teachers the opportunity, during professional development meetings, to make data-informed decisions around planning and instruction has empowered teachers to better lead the success of their students and develop instructional strategies that best adapt to student needs.

Creating an environment where all students and staff can engage in the highest levels of learning came with challenges during the 2021-2022 school year. These challenges inspired the leadership team to look at and review best practices for student learning. As one of three elementary schools in this district, we were able to use this opportunity to collaborate with other principals and their teams about academic and safety protocols, professional development opportunities, and strategies for continuing to build community relationships during these uncertain times. In doing so, we stayed true to our mission and increased teacher capacity through professional development opportunities that would elevate the educational experience for all students.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

In cooperation with the Brown County Schools Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, the district Equity and Inclusion Coach, and the district Social Emotional Learning Coordinators, Van Buren Elementary School remains committed to supporting the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff. To ensure that equity, cultural awareness, and respect in the classroom and the school take place, all faculty and staff undergo training so that they are equipped with the tools necessary to maintain a safe and supportive learning and working environment. Additionally, through our counselor-led Second Step programming, students engage in learning about their value and place in the world through lessons that are rooted in healthy relationship practices, empathy, and compassion.

During 2020, we learned so much as a nation and a community about what it means to suffer loss and experience growth. As a school community, Brown County Schools has responded by setting our sights on ensuring a welcoming, safe, inclusive, and equitable environment where students and staff are introduced to high-quality educational experiences that provide them with the knowledge and tools they need to feel valued and inspired. Collaborations with Indiana University, Learning for Justice, and Panorama have helped to coordinate these efforts.

Van Buren Elementary School values professional development as one way to positively impact culturally responsive teaching and learning. This year, every member of our school's faculty and staff participated in an entire day of diversity, equity, and inclusion training wherein topics of study included cultural awareness, diversity, bias and perception, and inclusive language. Dr. Gina Forrest, Ph.D., of Indiana University, led these efforts with the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee, and trainees took part in whole and small group instruction and participated in follow-up discussions so that we could determine actionable next steps to ensure that the best supports are in place to meet the needs of our students, families, and staff.

To help put supports in place, the district's Social Emotional Learning Coordinators are analyzing surveys through Panorama that have been completed by faculty and staff, students and families, to garner feedback on the school culture and climate in each building. As this analysis is completed and determinations based on the data are made, we look forward to making any improvements necessary to continue to grow and address our population's diverse needs.

awareness to the lessons and activities our students experience, each day. We look for curriculum and reading materials that are representative of a diverse array of backgrounds and that are appropriate to the diverse learning styles and abilities of our students. We continue to provide weekly social-emotional learning and service-minded enrichment opportunities for our students to emphasize the importance of empathy and compassion. It is our belief that these tools will help provide our students with the foundation and tools they need to develop into civic-minded and globally connected members of society.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The practice that has been the most instrumental to Van Buren Elementary School's continued ability to successfully educate and support all students is our professional development model through the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). Under this model, teachers are provided with weekly professional development, embedded into their school day, that maximizes instructional excellence and correlates with student achievement. The comprehensive focus for this professional development is focused on three fundamental domains: instructional practice, designing and planning instruction, and the learning environment.

This is the first year that Van Buren teachers have had the opportunity to experience this form of consistent and embedded professional development, and the growth toward excellence among our teachers has been profoundly instrumental in the growth of our students. Through the explicit instruction and implementation of professional development topics, such as engaging and motivating students, presenting instructional content, questioning and thinking, problem-solving, and differentiation, the improved standards for teaching have had a direct impact on student transfer and the quality of their work.

Van Buren students have each shown an average increase of 18 percentage points in English Language Arts standards proficiencies since the start of this school year and reading scores have climbed an average of two reading levels in every grade. Van Buren third graders also achieved a 90% pass rate, including good-cause exemptions, on the IREAD-3 exam--an increase of six percentage points from 2019. In addition, progress-monitoring benchmark assessments are currently showing 87% of Van Buren students at or above grade-level expectations in math computation standards. High-quality professional development is our key to these levels of student achievement.

Our partnership with NIET began in 2019 and is made possible through the competitive federal Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program. Under this five-year federal grant, all schools in the district of Brown County Schools have the amazing opportunity to build educator excellence and advance student achievement. Through NIET's professional development model we are able to fully deploy the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement, which helps us develop and reward our talented educators while positively impacting student achievement. This comprehensive package evidences marked improvement over previous professional development models, which were often dependent on one teacher's participation and exchange of knowledge.

These days, the culture at Van Buren Elementary School is built on true collective efficacy and a student-focused synergy for success. We sincerely believe that our commitment to professional growth and the value we place on our educators is paramount in our continued quest for ways to best support students and their education. As we continue to provide educators with a common understanding of high-quality and effective teaching and learning practices, timely and actionable feedback and supports, and an environment that fosters collaboration, we believe that we are setting the stage for maximizing instructional excellence and having the greatest impact on our students.