

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 14642 E 126th Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Fishers State IN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 46037-6966

County Hamilton

Telephone (317) 594-4310 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL https://tce.hseschools.org E-mail scurran@hse.k12.in.us

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Yvonne Stokes E-mail ystokes@hse.k12.in.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Hamilton Southeastern Schools Tel. (317) 915-4100

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mrs. Janet Pritchett  
(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**

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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

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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):
- 13 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 7 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 2 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 22 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	0	0	0
K	49	67	116
1	59	53	112
2	76	77	153
3	70	79	149
4	76	62	138
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
<b>Total Students</b>	330	338	668

\*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
  - 10.3 % Asian
  - 7 % Black or African American
  - 8.7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 68 % White
  - 6 % 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: 5%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	16
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	36
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	727
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Non-English languages represented at Thorpe Creek Elementary include: Arabic, Bengali, Berber, Castellano, Dutch, Gujarati, Indonesian, Japanese, Kiswahili, Korean, Mandarin, Marathi, Nepali, Punjabi, Shona, Spanish, Telegu, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Wolof.

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 8 %  
54 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 15 %

Total number students who qualify: 97

8. Students receiving special education services: 5 %

36 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>5</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>6</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>33</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 8

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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	32
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 21:1

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

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

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

At Thorpe Creek Elementary our learners will inquire, grow, and achieve in a collaborative, creative, and identity-safe learning environment.

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.

As a result of the Coronavirus global health pandemic, Thorpe Creek Elementary started the school year in August 2020 with most students learning virtually. During virtual instruction students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) were invited to attend intentional in-person instruction to work on goals identified in the IEP and ILP in addition to participating in virtual instruction with their classmates. Students learning virtually throughout the school year included students whose families elected to remain home due to the pandemic, students identified as close contacts of COVID-19 positive individuals, and students in isolation with illness.

In September students were invited to attend school in-person through a hybrid 50/50 attendance schedule. At this time, Thorpe Creek teachers taught students in-person and continued to provide virtual instruction synchronously and asynchronously.

In October students were invited to attend in-person instruction with 100% in attendance. At this time, Thorpe Creek teachers taught students in-person and continued to provide virtual instruction.

In November Thorpe Creek Elementary returned to virtual instruction for most students due to spikes in student and staff positive cases of COVID-19. Students with IEPs and ILPs were invited to attend intentional in-person instruction to work on goals identified in their IEP and ILP in

addition to participating in virtual instruction with their classmates.

In mid-January Thorpe Creek Elementary returned to 100% in-person instruction. At this time, Thorpe Creek teachers taught students in-person and continued to provide virtual instruction. Additionally, during second semester Fridays were deemed e-learning days rather than in-person school days. On e-learning Fridays students received virtual instruction, with the exception of select students with IEPs and ILPs whose goals were best met in person.

Finally, the in-person instructional day was abbreviated this school year to provide additional time for cleaning, sanitation, and teacher preparation. In year's past, the elementary school day was 8:50-3:40. This year during the global health pandemic the in-person elementary school day was 9:45-3:15.

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**

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Thorpe Creek Elementary is located in the Hamilton Southeastern School district in Fishers, Indiana. Fishers is a vibrant community with innovative businesses and rich public resources that attract and retain many residents each year. Industries in Fishers include life sciences, technology, and distribution. Residents enjoy many beautiful public parks, entertainment venues, sports complexes, and programs. The city has been rated among the most desirable communities in the country for high quality family living, affordability, and safety. The Hamilton Southeastern School district serves approximately 21,600 students in the Fishers area. Once a rural farming community, Fishers experienced an exponential population growth which resulted in the construction of several new schools, including Thorpe Creek Elementary. The current population in Fishers, Indiana is just over 95,000.

Thorpe Creek Elementary opened in 2008 and originally educated preschool through fourth grade students. In 2018 our student population increased to 900 students. As a result, Hamilton Southeastern Schools underwent a redistricting to help balance school populations across the district. Our current population is 668 students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. The leadership team at Thorpe Creek includes a school principal, assistant principal, counselor, teacher-librarian, part time instructional coach and grade level teacher-leaders. The related arts team at Thorpe Creek provides a full year of instruction in art, music, physical education, and discovery as well as a semester of Spanish and a semester of global studies. Thorpe Creek also provides English as a New Language (ENL) services, speech language pathology services (SLP), special education services, occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), and high ability services. A mental health therapist supports students and families in need. Parents and guardians are very active at Thorpe Creek. The parent teacher organization (PTO) actively volunteers and provides financial support to fund innovative projects, assists in funding professional development opportunities for the teaching team, and funds instructional resources for the classrooms. College preservice teachers, high school cadet teachers, and high school interns also work and learn in our classrooms.

Thorpe Creek Elementary educators model and explicitly teach inclusivity and collaboration. Successful collaboration skills are reinforced during our daily routines and rituals. An example of this is the daily community circle, or morning meeting, in each classroom. During morning meetings students and teachers sit facing one another in a circle. Everyone has a space in the circle and has an opportunity to speak and to be heard. This universal practice sets a tone for respectful and engaged learning in a climate of trust. We know that students are more willing to take academic risks when they feel safe and respected. The morning meeting builds and enhances connections among students and between the students and teachers throughout the school year. The meeting increases a sense of belonging and integrates academic skill development with social interaction. The morning meetings conclude with a morning message, read by the students and teachers. The message develops and reinforces academic skills in a meaningful and interactive way and transition students into the rest of the day. Another example of inclusivity and collaboration is the school agreements, drafted and published each year by students. The school agreements articulate our collective high expectations for academics and community wellbeing. This year's agreements are: Do Your Best, Take Care of Yourself and Others, and Show Empathy.

Thorpe Creek teachers provide planned, intense, and sequential universal instruction utilizing the workshop model for reading, writing, and math. Teachers differentiate instruction daily when they confer with individuals and meet with small groups. Students that are in need of additional supports receive daily Response to Instruction (RtI) in reading and math provided by the classroom teacher. Students with exceptional needs (special education, high ability, and English Language Learners) are clustered in classrooms to optimize instruction and increase learning potential for all students. All students add value to the learning community. The ENL and special education teachers co-teach with the classroom teachers in addition to providing direct intensive instruction related to goals in the ILP and IEP.

The intentional physical design of the classroom and school environment at Thorpe Creek encourages the independence of the child. Anchor charts created during the instruction of a lesson are on the walls and contain strategies to foster independence in our academic work. Community supplies including various choices of paper, whiteboards, pencils, staplers, scissors, tape, rulers, and markers are located around the



room and within reach of the children so that learning is not interrupted searching for a tool or waiting for an adult's assistance or permission. Children move about the room and school with autonomy and purpose. Student work is on the walls. Our learning is made visible.

The school library, the heart of the school, contains a robust and diverse collection of high interest books. The school library also contains a think tank for student collaboration, a recording studio for production, a LEGO wall, and a design studio for creation. Students in all grades check out their own books and are encouraged to read any and all of the books in the library.

Adaptions during COVID have included students remaining in their classroom cohorts and not intermingling with other classes, increased hand washing and use of hand sanitizer, universal mask wearing, and increased cleaning and disinfecting.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

Thorpe Creek Elementary engages our students and teachers in reflective student-centered reading and writing workshop structures each day. The Units of Study in reading, writing, and phonics from Teacher's College at Columbia University are our core curriculum and provide teachers with a universal planning structure. These research-based resources are unique as they pay critical attention to methods of instruction that engage our teachers in powerful professional development through their professional learning community work.

The processes, sequences, grade by grade continuity, leveled text lessons, direct instruction methodology and standards-based principles provide a path for children and ensure cohesive and clear instruction throughout the school as we develop thoughtful writers and critical thinking in our avid readers.

Thorpe Creek Elementary teachers effectively use the Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Leveled Text Benchmark System to evaluate reading progress and to determine next steps for guided reading instruction. During our conferring routines, teachers journal student strengths and note opportunities for growth. This allows teachers time to reflect on the individual needs of the children. Feedback and coaching is provided to the students individually as well as in intentional and flexible small groups to move the student's reading and writing forward.

Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) is a research-based balanced literacy intervention used with our readers and writers that need additional support, as identified by the F&P benchmark, classroom performance, and teacher observation. The program uses a leveled book to work on predicting skills, phonics, and phonemic awareness, comprehension, and writing.

Thorpe Creek Elementary educators' commitment to a culture of rigorous and responsive reading instruction is evident in the pass rate of the Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination (IREAD-3) assessment. IREAD-3 was developed by Indiana educators to measure foundational reading skills of students at the end of their grade three school year. Based on the Indiana Academic Standards, IREAD-3 is a summative assessment. In four of the last six years, Thorpe Creek third graders have earned 100% pass rate. This culture of excellence is a tribute to the intentional study and literacy practices in our early grades at Thorpe Creek.

Thorpe Creek Elementary's balanced math model utilizes Everyday Math and Math in Practice resources. Students are engaged in problem solving, number sense, fluency, and algebraic thinking each day. Students solve mathematical problems using more than one strategy and are deeply engaged in hands-on conceptual mathematical development as they mature into algorithmic procedures. Conceptual hands-on mathematical development is evident in classrooms as students work with dice, cards, standard and non-standard measurement tools, scales, clocks, blocks, geoboards, calculators, timelines, and more.

Teachers effectively utilize end of unit assessments in Everyday Math, classroom performance, and observations to identify students in needs of additional supports. During our conferring routines, teachers journal student strengths and note opportunities for growth. This allows teachers time to reflect on the individual needs of the children. Feedback and coaching is provided to students individually as well as in intentional and flexible small groups to move the student's mathematical skills forward.

Thorpe Creek Elementary educators' commitment to a culture of rigorous and responsive math instruction is evident in Thorpe Creek's winter 2020 Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) student growth summary report for mathematics. The student growth summary report provides aggregate growth in a district or school compared to the norms for similar schools. This winter each grade level at Thorpe Creek exceeded the projected growth norms in mathematics.

Thorpe Creek Elementary's approach to science instruction is an immersive, hands-on inquiry model. Students construct scientific knowledge through exploration, discussion, and reflection. Project work is the

heart of our science inquiry. Student projects at Thorpe Creek have included the design, construction, and yearly seasonal care of our school learning gardens. In our learning gardens students in kindergarten through fourth grade get their hands dirty planning, planting, and harvesting. Students complete observational drawings of the gardens, sharpening scientific observational skills.

Thorpe Creek Elementary students are also actively engaged in computer coding, integrating language, math and science. Each year students participate in the Hour of Code sponsored by code.org. The Hour of Code started as a one-hour introduction to computer science designed to broaden participation in the field of computer science. Hour of Code inspired Thorpe Creek students to join a statewide robotics competition that required them to collaboratively design, create, and operate a robot capable of completing tasks in a timed event.

Thorpe Creek Elementary educators' commitment to a culture of hands-on inquiry-based science instruction is evident in Thorpe Creek's first place finish in the Indiana Association of School Principals Science Bowl statewide academic competition in 2019. Students worked together virtually to complete science questions based upon Indiana Academic Standards for grades five, six, and seven and were rewarded for their unquenchable inquiry mindsets and academic skillsets.

Agency, representation, histories, and two-sided stories are cornerstones to our instruction in social studies. We utilize Understanding By Design (UBD) units that include history and civics lessons that were built by teachers and led by Ball State University's Director of History and Social Studies Education. These project-based resources provide opportunities for students to build enhanced understandings and contribute to community project work through a lens of compassion and social justice.

During school disruptions from COVID-19, Thorpe Creek utilized flipped videos for reading, writing, phonics, math, and science and provided direct instruction via Zoom to students learning virtually.

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

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade participate in a related arts class daily for 35 minutes. These classes include art, music, physical education, Spanish, global studies, and discovery. Students also visit the library with their classmates each week to read, listen to books, design and create. All students participate in thirty minutes of recess each day.

Art instruction fosters development of fine and gross motor skills, language skills, social emotional skills, decision making, risk taking, and inventiveness. Students at Thorpe Creek participate in both visual arts class and music class each week. In visual arts, students study the elements of art and principles of design and create their own works of art. Student work includes 3D puppets, tessellations, and Yayoi Kusama inspired pumpkins. In music, students engage their minds and bodies in exploration, creativity, and collaboration with each other in the music making process. Through play, singing, dancing, playing instruments, and composition students gain skills and knowledge that meet them at their developmental level. Both art and music class are safe places for children to explore the world, celebrate diversity and learn how the arts impact social change.

The importance of our overall health has never been more apparent than during the COVID-19 global health pandemic. During the uncertainty, physical education instruction emphasized that we can take care of our bodies and minds through nutrition, exercise, healthy sleep habits, and play. Students participate in physical education class and discovery (a class devoted to device-free play) each week. Students learn personal

awareness, awareness of others, fine and gross motor development, wellness, and integrate academic skills into play in both physical education class and discovery class.

Global studies and world language (Spanish) provide students with experiential opportunities to learn about world cultures, develop vocabulary, and expand our sense of belonging in the global community. Both classes encourage critical thinking and curiosity. Students attend global studies once a week for a semester and Spanish once a week for a semester.

All students have access to a robust school library with a certified teacher-librarian ready to talk about books, assist in book recommendations, and share a love of reading. Thorpe Creek Elementary's school library amplifies student learning outcomes by providing open access to high-interest, diverse books and learning opportunities for each student. Students are empowered by having choice in what they read. Students develop their identities and dispositions as lifelong readers, leading to higher student achievement. The school library is a hub for curiosity, learning, and joy. Students visit the school library a minimum of once each week.

Related arts instruction during virtual learning included flipped videos as well as synchronous instruction.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

Thorpe Creek Elementary teachers provide planned, intense, and sequential universal instruction utilizing the workshop model for reading, writing, and math. Educators are keen observers and responsive to individual student needs. These observations contribute to differentiated instruction and require the implementation of various strategies within the curriculum based on student learning styles, formative observations, skill acquisition, and needs.

Students that are in need of additional supports in reading, math, and behavior receive daily Response to Instruction (RTI) provided by the classroom teacher. RTI includes explicit skill instruction and additional time practicing with the teacher. Teachers utilize research-based interventions while working with students individually and in small flexible groups. The comprehensive and coordinated early intervening services support the student's progress in the general education environment.

Students who are identified with high academic or cognitive potential needs receive curriculum and services that offer rigor, depth, and acceleration. Students receiving high ability services are scheduled in cluster classrooms, optimizing instruction and learning potential for all students. This intentional scheduling provides high achieving and high ability services full time and improves representation of traditionally underserved students. Cluster grouping helps all students improve their academic achievement and educational self-efficacy.

Students receiving English Language Learner (ELL) services are scheduled in cluster classrooms. In cluster classrooms, students are learning the same content as non-ELs and are held to the same grade-level standards. The ELL teacher co-plans, co-teaches, co-assesses, and co-reflects with the classroom teachers in addition to providing direct intensive instruction to students related to goals in the Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). All Thorpe Creek teachers have been trained on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model, derived from the SIOP observation protocol. The instructional framework for English learners, which focuses on the concurrent teaching and learning of both language and content, has been widely successful for our students receiving ELL services and for all learners. Teachers use a variety of techniques to make instruction understandable, including speech appropriate to students' English proficiency, clear academic tasks, modeling, the use of visuals, hands-on activities, demonstrations, gestures, and body language. Teachers provide students with frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion, intentionally group students to support content and language objectives, and provide

sufficient wait time for student responses. SIOP has been a responsive approach to teaching and learning for all of our learners.

Students receiving special education supports are scheduled in cluster classrooms. In cluster classrooms, students are learning the same content as typical peers and are held to the same grade-level standards with scaffolds and accommodations as identified by the case conference team. The special education teacher provides direct intensive instruction to students related to goals in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and supports students in the general education classroom. The speech language pathologist (SLP) implements a 3:1 model to effectively manage caseloads and improve student progress. The SLP provides direct services the first three weeks of the month and uses a co-teaching model in specific clustered classrooms the last week of the month. This model allows the SLP to co-plan with the classroom teacher, model, teach, and facilitate activities that help both the general and special education students to better access the curriculum.

A shared universal belief that all students are unique and capable drives high expectations and responsive instruction for each learner at Thorpe Creek Elementary.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

A simple and predictable classroom environment allows for the most creative and rigorous work. Even with the challenges of a global health pandemic, students at Thorpe Creek have demonstrated strong growth and engagement because they know what to expect and share ownership of the successes in their classroom and in their school. Each classroom operates on a schedule that is visible for all learners. The instructional time is sacred and learning is not disrupted. Students value their time to read, write, problem solve, connect, and create. Students can explain what they are learning and why.

During virtual learning, students have utilized flipped videos for academic instruction. This method allows students to pause, reflect, and replay instruction as needed. This option has been helpful for students that may not have been able to connect with the class due to illness or other factors. Students have also participated in synchronous instruction with their teacher and classmates. This is especially powerful for group work, reading, writing, and math partnerships, and community building. Students also participated in asynchronous instruction with their classroom teacher. This intimate time for direct instruction, clarifying questions, and relationship building occurred during the school day as well as before and after the school day.

During virtual learning, Thorpe Creek offered drive-through supply distributions to ensure that all students had access to the tools needed for learning. Bags for each student were filled with highly engaging books, whiteboards and markers, math manipulatives, pencils, art tools, math journals, and writing notebooks. Students learning virtually were also able to reserve books from the school library and pick them up curbside throughout the school year.

This year a mentorship program was launched between the Black Student Union (BSU) at Hamilton Southeastern High School (HSE) and third and fourth grade students of color at Thorpe Creek Elementary (TCE). The interested students met virtually on e-learning Fridays to build community, celebrate excellence, and have fun! The HSE TCE BSU Club has been an engaging way to connect young students with high school students, increasing a sense a belonging within the schools and community.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Recently Thorpe Creek Elementary convened an advisory council of diverse stakeholders including community businesses, parents, residents, staff, and students. This team participated in a nine-month, rigorous process that reviewed student data, established student outcome goals, aligned efforts to counseling standards, and committed to maximizing the time school counselors spend in direct service of students. This work earned Thorpe Creek the Indiana Department of Education Gold Star award and earned the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program (RAMP) award for comprehensive school counseling.

Thorpe Creek first graders have the opportunity to visit, explore, and learn about Ritchey Woods Nature Preserve and the environment through a combination of curriculum-based activities and hands-on exploration. Led by Fishers Parks staff, students visit Ritchey Woods in both the spring and fall while Fishers Parks staff also visit each first grade classroom two times during the year for lessons in the classroom that are directly tied to academic standards for science and math in addition to learning about nature and environmental stewardship.

Thorpe Creek fourth graders enjoy a multi-day experience at Conner Prairie, a local living history museum. Custom designed by a teacher-in-residence, students experience a unique curriculum that enhances their history and science academic standards by utilizing Conner Prairie's 1,000-acre facility that recreates nineteenth century life along the White River through live historical interpreters, buildings, and reenactments.

Community Health Network provides behavioral health services to Thorpe Creek students learning virtually and in-person and also provides therapy for our students' families. Supporting mental health in students removes barriers to learning and shifts the focus to the success of the whole child.

College pre-service teachers, high school cadet teachers, and high school interns are active participants in the classrooms at Thorpe Creek.

Community experts, authors, and family members visited the classrooms regularly pre-pandemic. During the health pandemic, these relationships and learning opportunities were still prioritized. In an effort to be inclusive and safe, these guests connected with classrooms using video conferencing. These learning opportunities engaged students in conversations, sparked inquiry, and connected units of study with career opportunities and community awareness. For example, during the NCAA March Madness basketball tournament in Indianapolis the Oakland Golden Grizzly men's basketball team read aloud to Thorpe Creek students using video conferencing. The team talked about their visit to Indianapolis, shared how they were feeling about playing in a college tournament, and asked the children to share more about living in central Indiana.

Relationships with our families and community members enrich student learning experiences and provide wrap-around supports that improve student outcomes.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Professional learning communities (PLCs) at Thorpe Creek elevate the work of each teacher and optimizes the learning potential of each student. The leadership team at Thorpe Creek has created a culture of professional study across the school with an emphasis on equity and inclusion, literacy, mathematics, project work, and Thorpe Creek's image of a child.

Thirty-two educators have participated in Undoing Racism training and 100% of our teachers have participated in Equity 101 training with Dr. Erica Buchanan Rivera. Teachers participated in a podcast study of The 1619 Project and are actively participating in the Racial Equity Community Network (RECN). Eight educators have participated in Restorative Practices training. Our school equity coaches offer monthly dialog opportunities for teachers as well as regular opportunities to reflect on social justice education in the context of Indiana Academic Standards.

Ten Thorpe Creek educators have studied at the Teachers College Summer Writing Institute at Columbia University. Together, staff developers at the Project and educators from across the globe studied methods, planned curricula, and revitalized our thinking.

An early literacy leadership team of eight educators recently began working with Dr. Stephanie Loane in Fishers, Indiana. The goal is continuous improvement in our reading and writing instruction which results in avid and voluminous readers and writers.

Eight educators have studied with the Partnership for Inquiry Learning and Mathematical Leadership with Dr. Ryan Flessner and Butler University. The goal is continuous improvement in our math instruction which results in confident and competent mathematicians.

Two Thorpe Creek educators attended the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Annual Conference, the largest conference dedicated to educators of PreK-12 English language learners (ELLs). Sessions examined research-based strategies and instructional practices with topics that included language assessment, leadership, second language development, bilingual education, and family engagement. In 2019-2020, 92% of the students receiving ELL support at Thorpe Creek maintained their current level of proficiency or demonstrated growth on the annual WIDA assessment.

Educators have studied project work and image of the child at the Butler Lab School in Indianapolis, Mary Castle Early Learning Center in Indianapolis, and Reggio Emilia, Italy. As a result, Thorpe Creek educators reflected and articulated our image of the child. We use this asset-based belief statement in all conversations

about teaching and learning.

All educators at Thorpe Creek are active participants in professional learning communities online. The use of Twitter and Facebook professional groups has broadened our awareness, elevated instructional practices, and grown our professional learning community to include thinkers from around the world. We contribute to the online content and make our learning visible because we know that what we are doing matters.

Investing in one teacher's professional development at Thorpe Creek benefits our entire teaching team. The culture of professional study and collaboration among our teachers benefits all students. Great teachers matter and investing in each teacher's growth is a priority.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

Thorpe Creek Elementary's leadership team includes a principal, assistant principal, counselor, certified teacher-librarian, part time instructional coach, and grade level teacher-leaders. A shared leadership model at Thorpe Creek ensures that multiple perspectives, backgrounds, and passions contribute to the continuous improvement of our learning community. Our goal is to outgrow ourselves in an identity-safe learning environment focused upon continuous improvement.

A few years ago, Thorpe Creek teacher-leaders examined the school's practice of requiring school supplies from each student at the start of the school year and again during the year when supplies began to run low. The practice included publishing a list of required supplies for each grade level prior to the start of the school year in addition to pre-selling higher priced school supply kits. The conclusion reached during this examination was that students living in poverty more than occasionally started the year without the required supplies. The teacher-leaders concluded that this practice was unintentionally harmful and shaming. The intent did not match the impact. As a result, the school practice was modified. Now each year an optional list is published for the parents and students that find joy in buying new school supplies. Utilizing instructional budget funds, the school purchases beautiful supplies for each classroom. This responsive action has increased student achievement. We have created a culture of abundance, not scarcity.

Fourth grade students at Thorpe Creek compete yearly in The Indiana Association of School Principals (IASP) academic competitions. These competitions, in partnership with Purdue University, include Spell Bowl, Math Bowl, and Science Bowl. Thorpe Creek teachers coach the academic teams and meet with the students before and after school during the season prior to the statewide competition. Each year Thorpe Creek's academic teams finish in the state's top ten. In 2019 Thorpe Creek's Science Bowl and Spell Bowl teams finished first in the state. In 2017 Thorpe Creek's Math Bowl team finished as state runner-up. While many clubs and extracurriculars were paused during the health pandemic, the leadership team prioritized offering virtual Spell Bowl, Math Bowl, and Science Bowl.

Leadership during a complex novel health pandemic required research, connectivity with education leaders from around the globe, connectivity with local health leaders, and decision making. To keep our school safe during the pandemic, the principal and assistant principal emphasized universal mask wearing, frequent and scheduled hand washing and hand sanitizing, and maintaining classroom cohorts rather than intermingling with students throughout the school. Students and staff were empowered to think critically about healthy habits. During the pandemic the principal and assistant principal could be found sanitizing frequently touched surfaces, substitute teaching in classrooms, and working closely with local health officials to contact trace individuals that were close contacts at school of a COVID-19 positive individual. Most importantly, the leadership team prioritized rich learning experiences focused upon continuous improvement.

#### **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Thorpe Creek Elementary is committed to serving children joyfully. We are actively working to be anti-racist and celebrating humanity in its fullness. Our commitment begins with hiring diverse educators. Additionally, we have courageous conversations and shared expectations that all



members of our Thorpe Creek Elementary team are committed to freedom and justice for all. We examine our implicit and explicit biases and do the self work to continuously improve. We challenge and change policies and practices that are harmful to provide an identity-safe school.

We honor, respect, and celebrate the diverse cultures that make Thorpe Creek special. Parents and guardians visit and video conference with classrooms to share holidays and traditions that are important to their families. We have established a mentorship program between Hamilton Southeastern High School's Black Student Union and third and fourth grade Thorpe Creek Elementary students of color. In our visual art, music, and global studies classes students learn about and celebrate cultures and traditions of the world. Students are empowered to be agents of change.

Teachers and our teacher-librarian have studied Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's vision of Mirrors & Windows in literature. As a result, we have filled classroom libraries and our school library with texts that mirror students' experiences and provide windows into the lives of others, opening doors into the diverse world around them. All Thorpe Creek teachers have been trained on Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance) Speak Up at School: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias, and Stereotypes. Thorpe Creek teachers have identified key places where social justice education and Indiana Academic Standards intersect for intentional instruction.

In the fall of 2020 six Thorpe Creek teacher-leaders presented virtually at the Indiana State Literacy Association (ISLA), a state-wide conference, titled Confronting Bias with Children's Literature. Additionally, Thorpe Creek Elementary has two equity coaches that have led equity dialog in the school, district, and community for the last thirteen years.

Thorpe Creek educators value the importance of doing the internal work of transforming self while transforming the world.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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"There are hundreds of different images of the child. Each one of you has inside yourself an image of the child that directs you as you begin to relate to a child. This theory within you pushes you to behave in certain ways; it orients you as you talk to the child, listen to the child, observe the child. It is very difficult for you to act contrary to this internal image." This theory from Loris Malaguzzi assisted Thorpe Creek educators when we articulated our image of the child five years ago. Thorpe Creek Elementary's Image of the Child is: We believe children are unique, playful, joyful, inquisitive, and creative learners who are caring and capable. We believe our children are world changers.

Our shared image of the child has been our guiding light during the global health pandemic. As circumstances related to schooling changed in response to the pandemic, including stay at home orders, the introduction of virtual learning, a transition to hybrid learning, and an invitation for in-person learning with health and safety mitigation measures in place, the educators at Thorpe Creek remained steadfast in our shared belief that children are capable.

Our image of the child requires us to slow down and observe children closely. It invites us to ask questions as researchers of children and stewards of childhood. It requires us to articulate the strengths and rights of young learners.

As COVID-19 forced school buildings to close, our image of the child reminded us that learning together is a priority and that shifts in the modes of instruction didn't have to hinder our learning opportunities. While learning virtually, children shared their learning with teachers using multiple platforms including Flipgrid, Canvas, and Seesaw. Children participated in video conferencing, blogs, and sent mail through the United States Postal Service. Children became experts on newly acquired interests and skills and proudly shared with their teachers and classmates.

As a learning community, Thorpe Creek Elementary is committed to our image of the child. This shared belief system affects the decisions teachers make every day in their classrooms. As important as understanding theory and curriculum standards, our image unites us in the pursuit of joyful learning that honors all children and childhood.