

**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) [X] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

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

School Mailing Address 600 East Dorothy Lane  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Kettering State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 45419-1923

County Montgomery County

Telephone (937) 499-1910 Fax (937) 499-1929

Web site/URL https://www.ketteringschools.org/15/Home E-mail scott.inskeep@ketteringschools.org

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

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Scott Inskeep E-mail scott.inskeep@ketteringschools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Kettering City School District Tel. (937) 499-1430

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 Mr. Jim Ambrose  
(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):
- 8 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 11 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	26	33	59
1	32	28	60
2	19	23	42
3	35	28	63
4	32	25	57
5	35	26	61
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>	179	163	342

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1.7 % Asian
  - 6 % Black or African American
  - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.3 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 83 % White
  - 6.7 % 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: 11%

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	28
(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)]	39
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	342
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.11
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

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

Khmer, Arabic, Cantonese, and Albanian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
5 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 37 %

Total number students who qualify: 126

8. Students receiving special education services: 23 %  
80 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>10</u> Autism                  | <u>4</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>3</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>15</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay      | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance    | <u>20</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>10</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to 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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

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

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

In partnership with families and community, empower each student to achieve his or her fullest potential in a challenging, engaging, and encouraging 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.

The 2020/2021 school year at Orchard Park Elementary School began with virtual learning. The staff had a delayed start and began on August 24th instead of August 10th. Students also had a delayed start, with their first day of school being September 8th instead of August 12th. The delayed start allowed for the creation of “learning pods.” Learning pods were limited to students who had parents that were essential workers. There were approximately 32 students who were split among three different classrooms. These students received their curriculum virtually but attended in person Monday through Friday with adult supervision. Virtual learning continued for all students until November 9th. At this time, the hybrid schedule began, and parents were given a choice to keep their child in virtual learning or attend in person. Students with the last name that started with the letters (A-K) attended in person Monday and Thursday. Students whose last names started with the letters (L-Z) attended in person on Tuesday and Friday. During this time, learning pod students attended in person on their two days and Wednesdays. This schedule continued until January 25th. On that date, parents could keep their child in virtual learning or have them attend in person Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Learning pod students still attended on Wednesdays, but it was a virtual day for all students. Virtual Wednesdays allowed for deep cleaning of the building, and teachers met virtually with small groups of students. This schedule continued for the remainder of our 2020/2021 school year.

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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“Outstanding People Making a Difference Every Day” are words said by students and staff to start the day at Orchard Park Elementary School in Kettering, a suburb of Dayton in southwestern Ohio. Orchard Park is the third smallest of eight elementary schools in the Kettering City Schools district, with approximately 350 students. Kettering has a rich tradition of ingenuity and perseverance in the community, as seen through Charles Kettering, inventor of the self-starting engine, and Eralm Frazee, inventor of the pull-tab can opener. Their problem-solving and creativity are ingrained in the culture of Orchard Park.

Orchard Park is a small neighborhood school nestled among community parks where most students live within walking distance. Many of our current students are not the first in their families to walk the Orchard Park halls; generations before them attended the school. The school was built in 1956; the same year Kettering was incorporated. Beginning as a K-6 building, the school became a K-5 building in 1995. We are a Title I federally funded school servicing a diverse population. Twenty-three percent of our students have Individualized Education Plans, and 8.3% have Written Education Plans for gifted services. Our demographics vary greatly, including single-family, single-parent, and multigenerational homes, as well as foster children, homeless children, and English Language Learners. In 2015, our building grew to include additional classrooms to serve children with multiple disabilities better. Over the last 65 years, the building has adapted and expanded to fit the needs of the students and staff, but the essence of the school has remained unchanged. We are known for our welcoming and inclusive environment.

Orchard Park encourages students to be engaged collaborators, lifelong learners, critical thinkers, thoughtful communicators, and outstanding global citizens. This mission is the foundation for the district’s Portrait of a Graduate. Academically, our grade-level teachers and support staff collaborate regularly to look at student benchmark data and make decisions to develop research-based plans for intervention and enrichment. Grade-level teams frequently meet to develop and implement the curriculum. We implemented all-day kindergarten, Wilson Reading and Foundations, Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, and small-group targeted intervention instruction. Our school has incorporated 1:1 technology which helps us differentiate reading and math instruction. The Ohio Department of Education recognized us with an “A” rating in the area of gap closing in the most recently published state report card.

To meet the emotional needs of students, teachers and the school counselor lead social-emotional lessons in the classroom using the Second Step program. We partner with our local mental health institution (South Community) counselors to provide mental health support for students. We also use Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) schoolwide to promote respect, responsibility, and safety. Students are recognized weekly for making positive choices regarding academics and citizenship. They are recognized during morning announcements, awarded Spirit Chain charms, and given Firebird Bucks to spend on rewards.

Students have a chance to work with specialized teachers in art, music, physical education, and library sciences. Our partnership with Dayton Philharmonic allows students opportunities to experience live music annually. Classes take field trips to local theatres to expand their cultural horizons. For many, this is their first exposure to the fine arts. These strategies contribute to the development of the whole child.

With various student needs, we have implemented several innovative programs and techniques to encourage student success both inside and outside the classroom. We recently partnered with a local Trader Joe’s to bring more science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) opportunities to our students. This partnership provides us the opportunity to create a school community garden in which each grade level contributes. We are working with our STEAM coordinator to develop a career curriculum to help our students see future opportunities. Additionally, we invite community leaders to teach our students about leadership and careers. We offer various after-school clubs that are fun and educational such as LEGO Club, Cursive Club, Junior Optimist Club, and Manners Club. We also have community activities such as Family Fun Day, May Day, Tough Turkey Challenge, Veterans Day Program, and Community Open House.

The culture of giving is truly second nature here at Orchard Park. We collaborate with charitable



organizations in our community that allow us to support the Kettering Backpack Food Program, a clothing pantry, Thanksgiving food drives, and our Giving Tree, which ensures families will have gifts to open during the holidays.

Despite COVID-19, Orchard Park continues to focus on nurturing the whole child. Our technological capabilities have allowed us to stay connected and continue educating our students. Taking this all into consideration, it is clear that we are Outstanding People Making a Difference Every Day.

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

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

Orchard Park continues to be committed to helping every student be successful in achieving the core content standards, whether they are learning in-person, online, or a combination of the two. This commitment to all students is evident in our personalized and rigorous Ohio Standards-based Curriculum approach that prepares every student to thrive at the next level. No matter the academic setting, Orchard Park focuses on its foundational principles, including making data-driven instructional decisions and utilizing our Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum to build strong relationships with students and families. These established foundational principles enable us to move between multiple instructional settings while helping students be successful in achieving the standards and becoming lifelong learners throughout the ever-changing academic circumstances of this worldwide pandemic.

With the support of an excellent school district, Orchard Park has built an outstanding Response to Intervention (RTI) framework that has become the backbone of all academic decisions for individual students. Student strengths and weaknesses are regularly determined through formative and summative assessments such as the fall, winter, and spring AIMSweb benchmarks and i-Ready Assessments. These assessment results help us pinpoint the individual academic needs of every student and foster a learning environment that allows all students to succeed and grow at their level. Core instruction, intervention, and remediation are delivered through various methods, including whole group, small group, independent practice, and one-on-one instruction based on the specific needs of each student. Data team meetings are conducted regularly to assess the effectiveness of our instruction in meeting students' needs.

Students, whether learning remotely or in person, receive daily explicit reading and English language arts instruction through our Common Core Ohio Learning Standards. The foundation of this instruction begins with a focus on speaking and listening, phonemic awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. Using research-based, multi-sensory systematic materials such as Wilson Foundations and Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, primary students develop their phonemic awareness and phonics skills. All students continue to build their reading skills with Making Meaning and Being a Writer. We use a scaffolded approach by utilizing flexible guided reading groups to meet the needs and interests of all students. By implementing fiction and nonfiction texts, leveled readers, repeated reading strategies, periodicals, and paired readings, we meet the students at their instructional level and help them reach their full reading and writing potential.

Orchard Park strives to create mathematical thinkers and problem solvers who can calculate algorithms and apply computation skills to larger, more complex real-life problems. Students at Orchard Park are challenged to understand the “why” behind the math to help them gain a deep understanding of math concepts versus just scratching the surface. Our core math program, Eureka Math, balances mathematical skills and concepts with real-life stories and number sense to create conceptual understanding for our students. Eureka is used as a guide to help teachers instruct students using the highly effective Concrete, Pictorial, Abstract (CPA) approach to instruction. This approach allows students to experience math concepts using various modalities to foster a deeper understanding needed to build relationships and extend previous knowledge to become fluent in computation and problem-solving through daily explicit instruction. In response, our students can demonstrate their mathematical expertise in Ohio Core Math Academic Standards.

The natural curiosity of Orchard Park students and their desire to understand the world around them help drive our science curriculum based on Ohio Core Science Academic Standards. In addition to using the resource Science Fusion, teachers provide authentic, hands-on, project-based learning opportunities to students. Opportunities include virtual conferencing, a multi-grade level schoolwide garden project, land lab, off-campus field trips, STARBASE through Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and Family STEAM Night. These projects and events help students find answers to their questions while gaining knowledge about science through their community.

Orchard Park continues to be committed to helping every student be a responsible citizen. Ohio's Core Academic Social Studies Standards provide the framework for what it means to be a responsible, engaged citizen. By teaching historical and current events and providing multiple experiences such as Junior Optimist, Veterans Day programs, student council, Kids Vote, and Career Exploration, our students will become well-rounded, contributing members of society.

The foundation of what we do at Orchard Park carried over into our online experience during the 2020-21 school year. The core standards and content that students were exposed to did not change, but the delivery of this instruction to students changed drastically. Fortunately, at Orchard Park, each student was supplied with a Chromebook and a hot spot if needed. This endeavor was instrumental in allowing teachers to make remote learning experiences more effective. We focused on power standards and utilized Google Classroom, Zoom, and video recordings to push out effective high-quality lessons.

**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:**

All students at Orchard Park participate in physical education, music, art, and library instruction for one hour each week. Additionally, students have the opportunity to engage in STEAM education and extracurricular activities. Participation in these educational experiences provides the students with a well-rounded education, and the collaborative experience among the staff offers an integrated approach to learning. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Zoom and Google Classroom allowed us to teach the same lessons to both remote and in-person learners.

Each music class is rooted in the Ohio music standards of creating, performing, and responding. Instruments, singing, and movement are used as vehicles to teach academic musical content in basic music theory, performance skills, and concert etiquette. Students create music every day at Orchard Park. Instruction progresses from simple imitation to recalling information, to understanding, to composing and producing independently. Performance opportunities throughout the year allow students to showcase their knowledge and skill set. Performances include the Veterans Day Program, Sing Around the Tree, and May Day.

Art at Orchard Park Elementary School is not just about production. It is also about integration. Artwork is displayed throughout the building and community allowing others to view progress and spotlight students' creativity. Our Annual N2Art show is a month-long event that displays our students' artwork to their families and the Kettering community. Orchard Park creates a positive environment where students can learn and develop.

STEAM education is integrated into the school culture. Educators collaborate with our district STEAM integration coach to teach grade-level standards through project-based learning (PBL) and engaging lessons. Units include robotics, tower gardens, engineering structures, career education, and social-emotional learning (SEL) skills. Orchard Park partners with a local business to plant and maintain gardens, creating a farm-to-table initiative. STEAM education culminates in Family STEAM night that brings staff and families together to work on aviation and bridge projects.

Orchard Park's Multi-Media Literacy Center contains an expansive range of materials that meet students' individual needs and interests. These resources expand students' love of reading and develop creative and critical thinking. Taught by a certified teacher, the library curriculum includes book organization, digital resource use, proper care of library materials, and online catalog use. Students learn digital citizenship and vetting of research materials to become influential users of information in all formats. First through fifth-

grade students learn typing skills. Annually, the school invites an author or illustrator to share their craft with the children. Other activities include writing workshops, Writing Olympics, and family literacy nights.

Ohio-based standards and benchmarks are the backbones of the physical education program at Orchard Park. These standards range from performance and gross motor and physical fitness skills to game strategies and tactics. Instruction is age-based, with a constant focus on the personal and social skills of sportsmanship and teamwork. Lessons readily integrate core subject areas such as math, science, and language arts. Parent and community involvement are encouraged through the Tough Turkey Challenge, Bring Your Parents to PE Class, Jump Rope for Heart, and a districtwide field day.

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

Orchard Park strives to meet the needs of its diverse population through various instructional practices, assessments, and interventions. Core curriculum objectives are addressed through direct, explicit, and large group instruction in all content areas. The staff collaborates to best support individual needs using periodic assessment and data team meetings.

The Let's Talk Kindergarten Program is offered for pre-kindergarten students who score below the benchmark on their incoming assessments. Seven sessions are provided for children and parents. The program is structured to help each child increase their language skills and gives parents the knowledge and resources to support their language development. Take-home kits are shared with families to reinforce skills learned in the sessions.

Tier I support is provided within the classroom as part of the daily schedule. These students are working at slightly below or above grade level. Teachers utilize guided reading, small-group vocabulary and writing instruction, differentiated spelling lists, and computer-based intervention programs such as i-Ready to reinforce what students learn in the classroom. Additionally, STEAM education is an integrated approach that provides differentiated instruction to solve problems.

Tier II students are provided thirty minutes of instruction daily in a small group of no more than five students utilizing research-based interventions. Students receive instruction in phonics, fluency, phonemic awareness, and comprehension. Programs include: Wilson Foundations, Read Live, Digital ReadWorks, Paths to Achieving Literacy Success (PALS), Six Minute Solution, Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, and Learning A to Z. Students are progress monitored weekly.

Tier III students are provided with intensive, individualized intervention with an hour of instruction daily in groups of three or fewer students. If students do not progress, further testing may be utilized to identify if they need an IEP to meet their specific needs. Special education students who are not served in a resource room receive differentiated instruction in the classroom with support from intervention specialists.

Orchard Park has three resource room settings for students with a variety of disabilities. These classrooms tailor the instruction, targeting students' individual academic levels as they work on the extended standards. Students work at a pace that accommodates their ability to master new skills in all subject areas. These students are integrated into their grade level for art, music, physical education, library, and any academic subject that they can access with some accommodations. These students have an additional class of physical education and library for more specific and individualized instruction.

Students working above grade level and those initially identified as gifted in the 2nd and 5th grades through the IOWA Cognitive Abilities Test receive specialized instruction. Third through fifth-grade teachers are certified in gifted education, allowing all students to receive their classroom

interventions. Also, we have a gifted teacher who co-teaches and works with students in small groups. Beginning in 3rd grade, students can be grade accelerated in math to receive the instruction at their instructional level. Specifically, in gifted education, students participate in the Invention League, where students are challenged to solve problems using an invention.

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

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

At Orchard Park Elementary, we are “Outstanding People Making a Difference Every Day.” Each morning, this motto is cheered among students and staff, who gather for a schoolwide meeting. This gathering is just one of the many initiatives that Orchard Park takes to build rapport and relationships. The meeting provides students and staff an opportunity to connect as a school family and sets the tone for the day. Our entire school shares a common goal: creating a respectful, responsible, and safe environment in which all students can thrive. During this time, our school family celebrates student choices, accomplishments, birthdays, and attendance. This daily meeting was adapted to a virtual format during the pandemic year.

Orchard Park has an effective and motivated staff dedicated to honing their craft. This high level of commitment directly impacts student engagement and achievement. These professional attributes foster a safe and welcoming environment where all students are encouraged to take risks, make mistakes, and persevere through challenges. In a recent PBIS school climate survey, student perception data revealed that 95.5% of students feel that school staff wants them to do well. Thus, it is evident that students do not want to miss a day at Orchard Park Elementary. The engaging curriculum is delivered in a manner that excites learners. Students engage in critical thinking and problem solving through STEAM education and other high-interest lessons that embrace multiple learning styles. These experiences cultivate social-emotional development that directly aligns with Ohio’s K-12 Social and Emotional Learning Standards.

Orchard Park provides unique character-building opportunities that support whole-child development. One specific career readiness opportunity, Team Time, focuses on highlighting career options. After school, SEL enrichment programs include the Manners Club, Junior Optimist Club, student council, safety patrol, and various social clubs. The Manners Club consists of community members who serve as mentors to young men who do not have strong male role models in their lives. Junior Optimist Club is a student-driven club that focuses on giving back to the school and community. Student council members represent the student voices at Orchard Park, and the safety patrol provides students with service and leadership opportunities. Dedicated teachers lead these high-interest after-school clubs.

As each school year ends, our school family lines the hallways to celebrate our fifth-grade students who carry their Orchard Park experience forever in their hearts. We clap them out as they continue their journey as lifelong learners.

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

Orchard Park's staff believes success is acquired through strong partnerships between the school and the community. We engage in collaborative initiatives with stakeholders that promote student growth and achievement. Our staff builds a foundation of positive and intentional communication to build relationships with families. We host a community-wide open house. Visitors are welcomed with a school tour and cookout. Community leaders volunteer at this gathering. During the pandemic, teachers connected with families remotely by hosting virtual open houses.

Community events would not be possible without the support, fundraising efforts, and generous allocation of funds from the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). For example, they fund classroom field trips, which mitigates financial burden. The PTO engages families through Family Fun Day, painting night, family movie night, jack-o-lantern carving contest, and Trunk-or-Treat. Virtual PTO meetings and events continued throughout the pandemic.

Healthy students are engaged students. Orchard Park partners with community resources such as the Kettering Backpack Program to fulfill basic needs. This year, free meals were delivered to all children under eighteen at bus stops and distributed from schools. Staff, families, and local churches regularly donate clothing and personal hygiene items. During the holidays, Orchard Park fulfills The Giving Tree, providing food, clothing, and gifts to students in need. Outreach efforts are supported by Kettering’s Youth & Family

Community Resource Coordinator, bridging the gap for struggling families by connecting them to community resources. We also partner with a local mental health provider for in-school counseling.

Our symbiotic relationship with the community fosters student achievement. In partnership with the City of Kettering, the Kettering Land Lab provides students with a rich, multi-sensory learning opportunity in a natural setting. Teamed with our local Trader Joe's, students learn how food progresses from garden to store. We encourage families to enjoy the bounty of the garden. Additionally, Orchard Park hosts STEAM Night in collaboration with the University of Dayton.

Einstein's quote, "Having fun is the best way to learn," embraces the culture of Orchard Park. Events such as Literacy Night and Kids Read Now spark reading interest. The May Day celebration, a forty-year community tradition, symbolizes the beginning of spring. Fun May Day events include songs, ribbon weaving, and a flash mob dance.

Orchard Park Elementary is recognized as an integral part of the community. The community presented us with the Kettering Neighborhood Pride Award for maintaining an impeccably beautiful property. A well-kept school reflects our school pride.

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

The staff at Orchard Park operates as a unified body. Our motto, "Outstanding People Making a Difference Every Day," is embraced by everyone. It strengthens our belief that our choices have a ripple effect on our personal lives and the community. At Orchard Park, we uphold the value of each team member. Teachers and staff feel supported, heard, and respected. As a result of our core values and positive school culture, a significant percentage of our staff have worked at Orchard Park for more than a decade. New teachers benefit from veteran mentors who guide and support them through the challenges of their early teaching careers.

We are intentional about building a sense of community. As an example, our annual summer staff retreat is a way for everyone to reconnect and share a vision for the upcoming year. It is an opportunity to get to know new team members in a relaxed and playful atmosphere. Mutual staff appreciation continues throughout the year, where colleagues recognize one another for their accomplishments, dedication, and kindness during staff and morning meetings. Our social committee is an intricate part of our school family as we celebrate life events that contribute to positive school culture.

Pandemic year challenges have strengthened our bond, and we have grown in appreciation of what each staff member brings to the team. The district's proactive approach to professional development, combined with our staff's ability to rally together, made us feel valued and supported as we learned new and innovative ways to teach remotely.

In preparation for the 2020-2021 school year, teachers representing Orchard Park designed an exemplar Google Classroom as a resource. There were playlist examples and digital resources that enabled us to begin an unusual school year. The academic calendar was adjusted, allowing for team collaboration, creating Google Classrooms, expanding building-wide safety protocols, and continuing professional learning. The professional development helped us negotiate the various learning frameworks that shifted several times throughout the school year: from virtual to hybrid and back to in-person learning. Additionally, it eased concerns about what content to teach during the remote learning period and prioritized building relationships with students. We are confident that our positive and professional culture has had a beneficial ripple effect on student engagement and learning. Support from our leadership made it possible to continue the tradition of making a difference together.

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

Orchard Park embraces the collective goal of shared leadership. Stakeholders, including students, families, staff, administration, and community members, contribute to problem-solving and working toward achieving growth for every student. Our culture is built around the philosophy that each voice is important,

and leadership does not always come from the principal's office. While the principal effectively and consistently models integrity, strong and clear communication, the ability to delegate, collaborative involvement, visibility, and empathy, she understands that building trust with her staff is imperative to promote collaboration in a positive environment. The principal has provided stability and security, reinforcing this shared vision and building relationships to enhance leadership in various areas. In the school motto of "Outstanding People Making a Difference Every Day," outstanding people refer to all stakeholders. School community members strive to make that difference by working together, setting goals, problem-solving, and celebrating student success.

Leadership roles are implemented through various committees. Some examples are the building leadership data teams, department chair leaders, and the PBIS committee. Building leadership data teams are comprised of grade-level teachers, Title I teachers, the school counselor, intervention specialists, and the principal. These teams meet regularly to review and problem-solve using student data such as academic achievement, interventions for students, attendance, and social-emotional information. Elementary Department Chairs attend monthly district meetings and support the staff with district initiatives and expectations centered around teaching, learning, and assessment. The PBIS committee uses a tiered approach to intervene with students and teach, promote and acknowledge consistent behavioral expectations. Students may earn "Firebird Bucks" by exhibiting safe, responsible, respectful qualities. These may be redeemed for various incentives. A few examples include purchases made from the Firebird store or a fun event held quarterly.

During the pandemic, administrators adapted and worked together to keep our schools safe and functioning. Surveys were sent to families, and community forums were held so that all voices could be heard and considered. Our superintendent held weekly administrative meetings to discuss updates and safety guidelines. In addition to redesigning instruction for remote learners, we also created new and innovative ways of serving students of essential workers and students with special needs during the pandemic by organizing learning pods. Principals consulted with each other through group texts and regular meetings with Human Capital and Teaching & Learning departments to create new safety protocols.

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

At Orchard Park, we prioritize supporting every student's instructional level and selecting curricula representing the rich ethnic and cultural diversity of our student population, families, and staff. Our curriculum supports the development of our learners as global citizens. We include thematic units with an interdisciplinary approach through which students get acquainted with the literature, history, customs, and traditions of different cultures. Throughout the year, students participate in cultural activities such as celebrating Black History Month, building awareness about holidays around the world, and integrating culturally diverse literature in lessons. Students also learn songs in different languages and delight in performing these songs for families and the community during long-standing traditions such as Singing Around the Tree and May Day.

In response to the current events at the start of the 2020-2021 school year, the school counselor set the tone for cultural inclusivity by implementing a social-emotional unit on anti-bullying, specifically addressing racial targeting. Additionally, teachers continue social-emotional lessons that are culturally responsive every week. Schoolwide, students are recognized for demonstrating respect for others through our weekly Sensational Six nominations. Teachers choose one student from each grade level who exemplifies our school values.

Orchard Park creates a welcoming and supportive environment for all students and families, including those who have recently emigrated. The school has connected them with resources such as interpreters, housing, food, and medical assistance. Teachers work closely with district support staff to overcome linguistic and communication barriers through a team approach.

To alleviate the effects of the pandemic for families lacking transportation, Orchard Park delivered



free meals. We ensured access to free Wi-Fi hot spots and a Chromebook for all students to complete school assignments and connect with teachers and peers daily. Upon returning to a hybrid learning model, the instructional day was adjusted to provide teachers time to support students who have continued to learn remotely.

Ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities and resources is an ongoing effort. Annually, the Kettering Backpack Program provides weekend food assistance to meet the basic needs of our students and families. In partnership with the Youth and Family Resource Coordinator, we assist families in receiving monetary, food, clothing, insurance, job search, and mental health services. South Community directly serves students in the school setting to aid in mental health and social needs. By meeting the diverse needs of our students, we set the foundation for their academic success.

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

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At Orchard Park, we provide the highest quality of intervention support to our students, regardless of the educational setting. We employ data-driven decisions to drive our intervention programs. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, we quickly pivoted from in-person to virtual to hybrid methods for intervention. Using data collected from the previous academic year, we grouped students based on historical progression and teacher input. This ensured students received immediate support at the beginning of the current school year and eliminated intervention gaps.

Due to continued closure, our team overcame several challenges; foremost was effectively engaging with students. Intervention assessments were initially offered through virtual means, with students using district-issued Chromebooks and hot spots. However, the virtual environment was not well suited for all assessments. Our innovative team met this emergent need by adapting the existing research-based assessment program to a virtual environment.

Since the beginning of the school year, students who needed intervention services were supported through daily Zoom meetings. Support staff members met individually with students struggling to complete online assignments independently. The excellent collaboration between our reading support staff and classroom teachers enabled focused interventions when we transitioned from virtual to hybrid learning. Our teams were able to use every available minute, meeting with small groups before, during, and after school. Virtual students attended these groups remotely.

The Orchard Park team continued to find intervention success during a challenging year with unprecedented impacts on education. Our data shows overall improvement: fewer students requiring intervention services across first through fifth grade between fall and winter. Three percent of our students in grades three through five moved from Tier III to Tier II intervention. Our current i-Ready pandemic data ranks higher than national norms during a typical school year, and our AIR scores are 20-30 percent higher than the state averages.

This level of success is consistent with our student performance in prior years. We credit our foundational reading and number sense skills, delivered to our kindergarten through second-grade learners, as a primary contributor to our consistent ratings above national averages for students in grades three through five.

At Orchard Park, we are incredibly proud of our intervention program and the faculty who relentlessly worked to ensure its success during the COVID pandemic. This demonstrates that our entire staff genuinely are Outstanding People Making a Difference Every Day.