

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2022 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 Ms. Jennifer Peloquin  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 12700 S 104th Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Palos Park State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60464-1510

County Cook

Telephone (708) 448-6888 Fax (708) 923-7064

Web site/URL https://www.palos118.org/west E-mail jpeloquin@palos118.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\* Dr. Anthony Scarsella E-mail ascarsella@palos118.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Palos Community Consolidated School District 118 Tel. (708) 761-5815

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

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Ms. Nadine Scodro  
(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 signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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	30	22	52
K	59	37	96
1	43	55	98
2	46	42	88
3	56	52	108
4	45	49	94
5	53	43	96
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>	332	300	632

\*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
  - 2.5 % Asian
  - 1.7 % Black or African American
  - 12.2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 79.7 % White
  - 3.6 % 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 2020 - 2021 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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	23
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	33
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	632
(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):

Albanian, Arabic, Assyrian, Croatian, Greek, Hindi, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Pilipino, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 19 %  
117 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 31 %

Total number students who qualify: 199

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 25 %  
159 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 with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>11</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>28</u> Developmental Delay    | <u>27</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>60</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>4</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>4</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.	33
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	18
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	8

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	96%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2021.

<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.

Palos Community Consolidated School District 118 is a fiscally responsible school community that engages all students to become confident, adaptive and productive life-long learners. Our Vision is all students reaching their full potential.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

[www.palos118.org/parents/parent-notification-list/notice-of-non-discrimination](http://www.palos118.org/parents/parent-notification-list/notice-of-non-discrimination)

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Palos West Elementary, a public school located in Palos Park, Illinois is not just a school but a family. From the moment you walk through the doors, you feel a cheerful, welcoming, and caring vibe. The level of pride and accomplishment is evident as you walk through the hallways and experience positive interactions between students and staff. Palos West proudly houses 632 students from preschool through fifth grade. Our school's success can be attributed to several factors.

First and foremost, we have hard working students demonstrating high levels of proficiency who strive to excel not only in the classroom but outside of it as well. Whether through speaking another language, playing sports, being a peer mentor, participating in band, choir, or one of the many after school clubs, our students are well-rounded individuals.

Our Palos West families and the community also take an active role in our students' education and are not only supportive, but also involved. You will see parents assisting in classrooms, volunteering for school events, teaching an "Art Chat" lesson, assisting in the library just to name a few examples. Our Parent Faculty Association (PFA) and our Educational Foundation provide the school with many resources and support. They plan in-school assemblies, arrange community events, and participate in fundraising efforts to support the students and staff. The dedicated community members who serve on the Board of Education provide a clear vision and set high expectations, as well as provide leadership during challenging times. However, their primary focus is expanding and enhancing opportunities for all students in the district.

Lastly, our staff is made up of highly educated teachers and staff that make it their priority to prepare students for not only the next grade level but for life. Teachers collaborate with grade level colleagues as well as in vertical teams to ensure there is common language and a cohesive transition for students. In addition to attending professional development for their own growth, our teachers frequently present at staff meetings to share their knowledge and expertise. Staff works tirelessly to provide academic support and goes the extra mile to meet students' social emotional needs. You will see staff taking time to connect with students by listening to their stories, nurturing them when needed, and giving high fives and fist bumps along the way.

A high priority that attributes to our success is our work being done in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and our Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) model which allows us to look at all of our students and provide them with differentiated instruction, interventions and enrichment as appropriate. Our professional development is centered on Professional Learning Communities as we strive to grow in our methods of collective inquiry, data analysis, goal setting, and adjusting practices to ultimately increase student achievement.

What sets us apart is our Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) approach to promote school safety and good behavior. We take a proactive approach to create and promote positive behavior and climate in the building for both students and staff. We teach expectations, involve staff and students, use common language, and make student recognition a priority. We teach growth mindset and focus on character traits each month, celebrate each quarter with assemblies, and involve students in the daily morning announcements. We have teacher to student mentor programs, peer buddies, friendship groups, student jobs throughout the building, and participate in philanthropic events throughout the year.

As a school community, we are extremely proud of how our school adapted to COVID-19 and the challenges surrounding the pandemic. For the 2020-2021 school year, we were able to start in September with in-person learning for Special Education, EL, and preschool students while the remaining students were learning remotely. Shortly after, we brought all students back to in-person learning on October 7th, 2020, with the motto "We Got This!" We offered a robust remote program for families that opted to stay at home. We were able to follow the safety guidelines ensuring students were social distancing and wearing masks all while still providing a high-quality curriculum. We were able to continue interventions, support services, and specials while also planning for outside snack and mask breaks. We made adaptations to our PBIS program so that we could include all students both in-person and remote to ensure there was equity with our

programs and services. We had monthly virtual assemblies with all students, virtual morning announcements, virtual lunches with principals, virtual and in-person student recognition, and even home visits for student awards. We certainly lived up to our motto “We Got This!”

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

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

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

Palos West school has an engaging and rigorous curriculum that is aligned to the Illinois learning Standards in all areas of study. Over the past few years, District 118 has embarked on using the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at Work Process which entails students master grade level essential learning standards to ensure that all students will be successful as they enter the next grade level. This work has led to a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all learners. Incorporating the belief that “All Students Can Learn at High Levels,” the professional staff at Palos West works in collaborative teams to unwrap the most important standards into specific learning targets, determine pacing, identify levels of proficiency, create common formative assessments, and review the data to plan for interventions and extension activities.

This process is cyclical and ongoing. The school is currently phasing in each of the core subject areas using the Professional Learning Community process. Beginning with English Language Arts during the 2019-2020 school year, grade level teams selected standards that ensured readiness for the next grade level, endurance needed for future learning, leverage across all subject areas, and standards that were common on local, state, and national assessments. The same process is now underway in mathematics. Teacher teams use the data from common assessments to differentiate instruction for their students. They identify specific learning targets from each standard and group students appropriately so they can obtain a high levels of proficiency and reach their full potential.

By working in Professional Learning Communities, teachers participate in job-embedded professional development focusing on effective instructional practices, including but not limited to, differentiated instruction, scaffolding, cooperative learning, hands-on learning, and incorporating the “Four C’s” (critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication). Teachers use the data from common formative assessments to determine which instructional strategies are most effective.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Palos West Elementary School provides students with a rigorous and engaging Reading/English language arts curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and best practices in early literacy instruction. Students receive explicit phonics, phonemic awareness, and guided reading instruction in the primary grades leading to the development of comprehensive vocabulary, comprehension, grammar and writing skills. This balanced literacy framework leads to competent and confident learners who are well prepared to reach their full potential.

Palos West utilizes a wealth of resources to focus on standards-based instruction through the elements of reading literature, informational text, foundational skills, writing, speaking and listening, and language and grammar. Beginning in the primary grades, teachers skillfully develop lessons around the Illinois Learning Standards using materials including, but not limited to, Wilson’s Foundations, Heggerty’s Phonemic Awareness, Fountas and Pinnell’s Guided Reading, McGraw Hill’s Wonders Program, the 6-Traits Writing Workshop Model, etc. These resources provide rich text materials that incorporate all genres and allow for differentiated reading and writing instruction throughout the grade levels.

Teachers at Palos West work in grade level Professional Learning Communities following pacing guides that focus on essential learning standards as identified by a committee of the reading/English Language arts teachers using a process that collected input from all teachers in the district. The essential learning standards have been vertically aligned to ensure a coherent progression as students move throughout the grade levels. Units are developed around each essential learning standard as teams unpack each standard into learning targets, identify levels of proficiency, develop common formative assessments, and share data to determine effective teaching methods and plan for differentiated instruction.

Students at Palos West receive 145 daily minutes of Reading/English language arts instruction in the primary grades and 135 daily minutes at the intermediate level. A 30-minute block of time is specifically used for Targeted Intervention, Differentiation, and Enrichment (TIDE) in Reading/English language arts. TIDE time is blocked at the same time of the day for each grade level so that students who receive support from specialists do not miss any direct instruction of core content from their classroom teacher. Students who remain in the classroom during this time work on targeted reading and writing skills that are on-level or slightly above-level to advance individual learning outcomes. Teachers utilize leveled readers, short stories, novels, and rich literature as well as other resources to differentiate learning. Groups are flexible, and adjustments are made frequently based upon data.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The math curriculum at Palos West Elementary School has been developed based upon the Common Core State Standards and best practices in mathematics instruction. The kindergarten through fifth grade curriculum reflects a scope and sequence that considers short-tasks, performance-based tasks, sub-claims, and mathematical practices. Curriculum maps focus on developing a conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application.

Teachers at Palos West utilize a multitude of resources for math instruction including, but not limited to, EnVision Math 2.0, Dreambox Math, MAP Accelerator, Reflex Math, Project M3: Mentoring Mathematical Minds, and Hands-on Algebra. The combination of print, digital, and hands-on resources, along with strong instructional practices lead to high levels of learning in the areas of Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Number and Operations in Base Ten, Number and Operation - Fractions, and Measurement and Data. Lessons are designed to challenge students and allow them to apply their mathematical knowledge to real world situations.

Teachers at Palos West work in grade level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) following pacing guides that focus on essential learning standards as identified by a committee of math teachers using a process that collected input from all teachers in the district. The essential learning standards have been vertically aligned to ensure a coherent progression as students move throughout the grade levels. Units are developed around each essential learning standard as teams unpack each standard into learning targets, identify levels of proficiency, develop common formative assessments, and share data to determine effective teaching methods and plan for differentiated instruction. This practice ensures a guaranteed and viable curriculum for every student who moves through the grade levels at Palos West.

Students at Palos West receive 85 daily minutes of math instruction in the primary grades and 90 daily minutes at the intermediate level. A 25–30-minute block of time is specifically used for Targeted Intervention, Differentiation, and Enrichment (TIDE) in Math. A PLC math coach is on staff to support teacher teams and individual teachers with professional development on effective practices in math instruction, planning and pacing, developing assessments, data analysis, evaluating and coordinating resources, and modeling instruction.

Palos West believes in enriching students who demonstrate exceptional abilities in math. Using flexible grouping, these students are homogeneously grouped in grades 3-5 to work on advanced skills two periods per week learning and applying on-level and above grade level concepts. These students are identified using a combination of local common assessment data and nationally normed benchmarking data.

### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The science curriculum at Palos West is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards which provides rigorous and meaningful learning experiences for students. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade focus on developing an understanding of the four disciplinary core ideas: physical sciences; life sciences; earth and space sciences; engineering, technology, and applications of science. The scope and sequence ensures that students are learning age-appropriate content and skills with all disciplines as they progress through the grade levels.

The performance expectations in elementary school develop ideas and skills that will allow students to explain more complex phenomena in the four disciplines as they progress to middle school. Teachers model and provide opportunities for students to comprehend science concepts through the utilization of texts, inquiry-based activities, hands-on experiments, and modeling. Students actively construct knowledge by observing, questioning, problem-solving, predicting, evaluating, and communicating ideas.

Lessons are designed by topic and performance expectations incorporating the science and engineering practices, disciplinary core ideas, and crosscutting concepts. Using a three-dimensional approach, students build their science knowledge through trial and error as part of the inquiry process, and they demonstrate understanding through speaking and writing using a Claim, Evidence, Reasoning format for assessment. This process is phased in from the primary grades through fifth grade so that students are well prepared for the Illinois Science Assessment.

Teachers utilize a wealth of resources, including but not limited to, Mystery Science, STEMscopes, Pebble Go, Science A-Z, Brain Pop, Discovery Education to build student knowledge in science and assess using formative and summative assessments along the way. Additionally, all grade levels embed science into the Reading/English language within the context of informational text and writing.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The social studies curriculum at Palos West is designed to build a conceptual understanding through the study of historical events while developing student inquiry, civic awareness, geography, and economic and financial literacy.

Teachers utilize inquiry-based instruction, real-life experiences, project-based learning, and technology integration to create engaging lessons that are aligned with the Illinois Social Science Standards and the C3 Framework. Students learn to become informed, socially responsible citizens. They make connections with how past events have shaped our nation while exploring a wide range of historical people, events, and eras.

Teachers use a variety of resources, including but not limited to, TCI Social Studies Alive, McGraw Hill's Wonders, C3 Teacher Inquiries, Discovery Education, Nearpod, Newsela to develop lessons that are age-appropriate and engaging for students. The social studies curriculum is often embedded into ELA instruction allowing students to practice critical reading and writing skills authentically. Students develop the ability to analyze evidence and draw conclusions about the world around them from a historical and global perspective. Student progress is measured through teacher-created formative and summative assessments which include quizzes, tests, projects, essays, and presentations.

Our school media center also provides a wealth of resources and support to the social studies curriculum. Students work with our media specialist for one 40-minute period per week where they learn to construct research questions, locate resources, and evaluate sources through different print and electronic mediums to engage in meaningful learning experiences that teach them to think critically about the past, uncover connections to the world today, and prepare for a better world tomorrow.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Our district's at-risk Preschool Program is housed at Palos West. The core curriculum used in preschool is Creative Curriculum. Creative Curriculum is a research-based whole child curriculum composed of individualized instruction. Teachers utilize the GOLD formative assessment which automatically connects assessment data to daily instruction. The GOLD Assessment follows expectations for children from birth through third grade. The curriculum is aligned to state Early Learning Standards and covers all areas that research has shown to be critical for a child's success. The goal of the preschool program is to ensure that

students are ready for kindergarten. District officials analyze Aims Web Kindergarten data of students who attended our district's at-risk preschool to determine the program's effectiveness.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Students at Palos West Elementary School attend classes in art, physical education, music, and media daily. First through fifth grade students participate in art, music, and media for one 40-minute period per week, and physical education/wellness for three 40-minute periods per week. Full-day kindergarten students have physical education one day per week for the duration of the school year, and they rotate art and music for one day per week during each semester. All courses incorporate activities and reinforce social-emotional learning through the Responsive Classroom Program.

Students attend a visual arts class each week where they learn to express themselves through a variety of mediums where they create, present, connect, and respond. The art program is aligned with the Illinois Fine Arts Standards, and students are exposed to artwork from a variety of people and places around the world. During the school year, student artwork is displayed proudly throughout the building in hallways, classrooms, and the office. Palos West holds an annual Fine Arts Fair displaying art from all students. This showcase is well attended and appreciated by the entire learning community. Additionally, select pieces of student artwork are displayed at the local McCord Art Gallery and Cultural Center each year to promote community and a love of the arts.

In music, students learn through creating, performing, listening, and evaluating. The sequential curriculum introduces concepts and critical thinking skills to children through music. Integrated activities promote an appreciation of the arts, encourage participation, and foster exploration. At all grade levels, students learn about the concepts of melody, rhythm, texture, tone, and form. Palos West has a wide variety of musical instruments for students to play, as well as class sets of keyboards and ukuleles so students can learn to perform together. Additionally, students have an option of joining the band program in 5th grade. Together, students make beautiful music while attending Palos West.

Our physical education department follows state and national standards as the program builds a foundation for conceptual knowledge and creates an environment for understanding how physical activity and wellness contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Teachers develop curriculum units designed around movement skills, physical fitness, team building, promoting health and wellness, and understanding growth and development. Teachers build a sense of confidence, determination, and pride within their students through various athletic experiences and programs throughout the year. At Palos West, we believe that physical education is a lifelong process which is the primary responsibility of the student. However, the school, home, and community also play a vital role in shaping a child's physical and emotional wellbeing.

In Media, students learn about key 21st Century skills as they progress through the grade levels. First and foremost, our media center fosters a love for reading. The facility was redesigned in 2006 to be a bright, aesthetically pleasing space that allows for flexible learning arrangements and the incorporation of instructional technology. During media class, students learn a range of skills from selecting appropriate books and resources, information literacy, digital citizenship, coding, presentation skills, and so much more. Media class at Palos West supports learning targets in all subject areas and grade levels.

## **3. Academic Supports**

### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Palos West tailors instruction by using a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) approach which allows us to truly individualize and motivate students. Using data to drive all decisions, we systematically look at each student to identify academic, behavioral, or social emotional needs and provide individualized interventions. We complete benchmarking three times per year. We schedule "Data Days" to meet with teams and support staff to review data and determine interventions. Our meetings consist of homeroom and special education teachers, English Language staff, various specialists, our building psychologist, the assistant principal and principal. In addition to "Data Days," teams meet weekly during Late Start Wednesday as well as during a

weekly common plan time. Through this collaborative process, we identify different methodologies and specific interventions to be used for targeted instruction.

Every grade level has a 30-minute English Language Arts Targeted Interventions Differentiation Enrichment Time (TIDE) and a 30-minute Math TIDE Time. Students who qualify for Reading, English Language, or enrichment support get pulled out during this time. Teachers continue to differentiate and provide interventions and support to the remaining students in their classroom.

For students performing below grade level, we use district criteria to determine which students are eligible for interventions. We look to see who may qualify for additional reading, math, or English Language services, for example. For kindergarten and 1st grade students, we look at the AimsWeb Reading assessment. Students who fall below grade level performance expectations are eligible for a reading intervention. Students in 2nd through 5th grade who fall below, qualify for reading support if their Reading RIT score on the NWEA assessment was below the national or grade level mean minus the standard deviation. For math, we also use Aimsweb and NWEA data and look for students who do not meet grade level performance expectations. Students qualifying for additional math support are invited to participate in an Early Bird Math Intervention group that takes place one hour before school for three days per week. Students qualify for English Language support based on their ACCESS score. For both our reading and math interventions, we look at baseline data and complete progress monitoring for at least six weeks to determine if the intervention is working. If the data shows that no progress is being made, we move to more intense interventions.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

For students performing above grade level, we look to see if they qualify for our Accelerated Learning Program for Students (ALPS). For ALPS, we look at students in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades who have at least two scores at the 85th percentile or higher on NWEA in addition to the student's CogAT score. We use district criteria along with grade level assessments to determine students to be pulled out for flexible enrichment groups for our primary students. Our enrichment facilitator also collaborates with grade level teachers to support them in enriching students within the classroom. Furthermore, we provide students with real world opportunities such as the Chicago Toy and Game Fair where students invent toys and games.

This is our first year we have a PLC Math Coach at our school, and this position helps to support all students. We also offer an extended school year program in the summer to students in our at-risk preschool program. In addition, we offer summer intervention programs for students who qualify based on spring benchmarking data.

Using data to drive decisions and a collaborative approach, we continuously identify, analyze, implement, and reflect on students throughout the school year.

### **3c. Special education:**

Palos West tailors instruction to meet the needs of special education students. Palos West has 4.5 certified special education teachers providing specialized instruction and accommodations to students with disabilities in general education and special education classrooms receiving instruction on grade level standards along with researched-based interventions targeting deficient areas. Palos West has four speech pathologists, two social workers, and one occupational therapist providing therapy to students in the general education classroom, special education classroom, and therapy room. Palos West also houses the district's primary functional program providing services to students with significant intellectual disabilities. Palos West has 17 paraprofessionals supporting students academically and socially assisting with implementing services. To close the achievement gap, Palos West continuously analyzes benchmarking and progress monitoring data of special education students to drive interventions.

### **3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

Palos West offers English Learners academic and language development through push-in and pull-out supports. EL teachers collaborate with general education teachers by creating differentiated lessons, scaffolds, and differentiated assessments to best engage English Learners in learning. English Learners have full access to the grade level curriculum through differentiated instruction and scaffolds that ensure every student has the opportunity to fully engage in classroom discussion at every language level. English Learners are also supported through a pull-out model. English Learners are pulled out during small group instruction time to work closely with EL teachers on English Language Development Standards that assist students in their language acquisition journey as well as making targeted language proficiency growth on ACCESS. In addition to English language supports, bilingual Arabic and Polish students receive supports in their native language to enrich their learning.

If a student is struggling, supplementary support is put in place depending on if it is an academic or a language need. English Learners in need of more academic supports receive tiered intervention during small group instruction by the general education teacher, reading specialist, or EL teacher. English learners in need of more targeted language supports, such as newcomers, receive additional pull-out times to work on survival language skills and foundational reading skills.

With the district's vision of "All students reaching their full potential," Palos West strives to ensure that English Learners have a multitude of opportunities to showcase their learning. With the supports in the general education classroom, EL/bilingual classroom, and the additional targeted instruction we believe that every English Learner will reach his or her full potential.

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

Palos West has a handful of students receiving supports for homeless status. These students receive transportation provided by the district to ensure no interruption to student's education. Breakfast is provided, if needed, along with free lunch. School supplies are provided to ensure each student has all materials needed to participate fully in school. Palos West has also provided clothing and personal hygiene to students. The goal of Palos West is that all homeless students fully participate in school daily.

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

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

Involving students and celebrating students is a top priority at Palos West. We start off each day with video announcements in which we choose students to recognize and lead the announcements with the building administrators. These videos are posted on Seesaw for all students and staff to watch. Students get WOW Certificates from staff for going above and beyond socially or academically. Students can also earn Cardinal Cards throughout the day from any staff member when they demonstrate the character trait listed for that month. In addition to getting recognized by their teacher for Cardinal Cards, when these cards are pulled, students can participate in an upcoming assembly or other activities throughout the building. Each week, student work is recognized on the “Principal Honor Board,” where students are called to get kudos from the principal and have their picture taken. Students also have the opportunity to recognize other students through our Bucket Filling Program. Lastly, when you walk around the building, you will see student-centered bulletin boards and student work hanging throughout the hallways.

We also engage students by creating a fun, inviting atmosphere in which students learn. We host spirit weeks, and take opportunities to celebrate days like Peace Day, 101st day of school, 2/22/22, Dr. Seuss Day, Dot Day, and other special days. For example, we celebrate Peace Day each year on September 21st by having classrooms incorporate International Peace into a lesson, students and staff dress up in tie dye clothes, place large homemade pinwheels outside in front of the school, and encourage community members to honk “for Peace” as they drive by. It is small, simple acts, that when done together, have a big impact on the culture of the building.

We also strive to make the playground a positive place for play. We take time to teach students “peaceful play” and incorporate playground expectations into our beginning of year lessons. We have chosen games on the blacktop area that have a purpose to engage students. We installed “Buddy Benches” to promote student inclusion. We have designed a rotation between areas on the playground to promote structured and safe play. We work with supervisors to teach conflict resolution strategies, and we also recognize students for positive play and making good choices on the playground.

Even when schools closed in March of 2020, we continued to recognize students and maintain a level of engagement. We moved to virtual assemblies, student work was recognized on a virtual bulletin board on the Principal’s Bitmoji page, we recognized and celebrated students via Zoom, we hosted spirit weeks, and we even organized a parade for the last day of school so staff could come together to wave to students and families as they drove by.

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

Palos West prides itself on having positive and collaborative relationships with families and our local community. The school year starts off with a “Back to School” picnic in which staff and student families attend. There are food vendors, games, music, alumni, board members, and first responders. It is a well-attended event where the community comes together to kick off another school year.

Throughout the school year, families come to school for events such as Meet and Greet Days, Curriculum Night, Parent-Teacher Conferences, Grandparent’s Day, Choral Concerts, holiday parties, Fine Arts Fair, Book Fair, and Celebration of Culture. We are fortunate to have a Parent Faculty Association (PFA) and a Foundation that plans events such as Laps for Literature, Read-A-Thon, Spirit Lunches, and much more. It is not uncommon to see parent volunteers in the building assisting a group of students, being a guest reader, teaching an “Art Chat” lesson, decorating the lunchroom, and or participating in school sponsored events. Pre-pandemic, we partnered with individuals from the local retirement village. Students partnered with elderly residents and became “Email Pals.” The residents enjoyed visiting Palos West students, and we were invited to take a field trip to their home as well and enjoy lunch and a tour of the retirement village.

In addition to collaborating with our families and community, we participate in philanthropic efforts as well.

We have organized a Mitten Drive for over 30 years each November and December. Mittens and gloves collected are donated to a local school in need. We collect pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House every year in February. For over 20 years we have participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring food drive in which we collect non-perishable items and donate to our local food pantries. Our Student Wellness organizes a Toys for Tots collection in December, and our Student Council has led the school in a clothing drive for the Alliance for Children. Just recently we held a fundraiser to collect donations for Ukraine.

In addition, we have collaborative relationships with our local first responders who deliver fire safety presentations to students, assist in the car rider line and parking lot, or walk the building ensuring student safety. We are fortunate to have these valued partnerships.

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

Happy teachers equate to happy students, so it is essential to ensure that teachers feel valued and supported at all times. As a former teacher, the principal, strongly believes that one must always remember what it is like to be a teacher in the classroom, especially when making decisions as a leader. Just as it is a priority to recognize students, we also feel it is just as important to celebrate our teachers. We start off each staff meeting with celebrations allowing staff to share any excitement or news with colleagues. We make it a point to recognize the staff and teams during building meetings as well. Each week in our digital newsletter, we have a section for staff kudos where we recognize both individual staff members as well as groups. In addition, staff can recognize other staff in our “Staff Shout Out” digital form. We treat our professional staff to lunches and goodies throughout the school year such as a “Stock the Lounge” day, Green River floats on St. Patty’s Day, a Fiesta lunch before winter break, breakfasts, S’more bar, and more. We plan for staff events such as a cookie bake off, chili day, and costume contests. We get creative with staff scavenger hunts, office games, staff raffles, incentives, and bulletin boards to showcase staff just to name a few. We recognize that teachers need time, therefore we will eliminate additional meetings if we can relay the information in an email or create a flipped pre-recorded video meeting.

During the pandemic, we provided teachers with more professional development to ensure they felt comfortable with technology platforms and remote teaching. We worked with social workers to incorporate self-care for staff. For example, we had a Self-Care Bingo bulletin board, administration offered to cover classes for classroom read alouds, outside break areas were established so staff and students could take mask breaks, virtual assemblies gave teachers some time to breathe, and professional development and speakers were brought in focusing on self-care and emotional well-being.

We also know how important it is for teachers to have the resources they need to successfully do their job. Providing teachers with necessary resources helps to alleviate any unnecessary stress. Whether it be interactive dry erase boards, guided reading books, manipulatives, technology, requested apps, or other necessities, teachers at Palos West have access to an abundance of resources to meet the needs of their students.

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

The administrators in the district work very closely and collaborate on a daily basis. Once a month, principals from all three schools, all district directors, and the superintendent meet to discuss best practices, procedures, and various topics. In addition, the two elementary buildings have an additional meeting each month with district administrators to focus specifically on elementary building practices. Collaborating closely with all administrators allows us to ensure the continued success of all teachers and students in the district.

At Palos West, we have a School Leadership Team which includes a variety of staff members who represent primary teachers, intermediate teachers, support staff, specialists, and principals. We focus on building-level school improvement plans, professional development, acquiring reflection and feedback, and promoting collective efficacy. In addition, we have several teacher leaders who represent Palos West on our District Leadership Team.

Palos West has a PLC Math Coach who meets with principals on a weekly basis to plan, discuss building or grade level needs, review data, and discuss interventions. Our coach meets with teams weekly, as well as with individual teachers to assist in effective classroom differentiation and results-driven PLC meetings.

We have a “Yellow Team” that is made up of our two social workers, the psychologist, principal, and assistant principal that meets monthly to review student discipline data and social emotional data to ensure students have proper supports in place. For example, if a student has several office discipline referrals, we may recommend the student for Pride Check which is a program to offer motivation and support to students to reach their goal. In addition, we have a “Green Team” which consists of a variety of teachers who lead our Positive Behavior Interventions and Support program providing new ideas, feedback, and ways to positively impact and motivate our students building wide.

Palos West wouldn't be complete without its student leadership components as well. With support from teachers, students model positive leadership for various programs. We have a 5th grade helper program where students can apply for a variety of jobs around the building such as teacher helper, safety patrol, recycling team, lunch duty, office helper, etc. Student Council members as well as Student Wellness members step up to lead school events. Students shine in our “Peer Buddy” program where students are paired up with students in the special education program to act as role models.

Through shared leadership, our principal works collaboratively with our assistant principal to ensure that Palos West feels like home to students and staff - a positive and safe environment where all students can reach their full potential.

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

Palos West is a culturally diverse school. Students' needs are met in several ways. As a school, Palos West utilizes Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed. PBIS creates a school environment where respect is held to high standards among students and staff and students of all cultural and diverse backgrounds feel welcomed and appreciated. To ensure all cultures and backgrounds are welcomed, general education teachers use culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching helps bridge the achievement gaps of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Teachers focus on the assets their students bring into the classroom by connecting students' life experiences with what they are learning in order to make learning more meaningful. These connections ensure that all students have access to a rigorous curriculum with high expectations.

In addition, Palos West offers multiple programs for multilingual learners including Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs in Arabic and Polish. Bilingual Arabic and Polish teachers support the needs of bilingual students and provide language strategies to general education teachers to utilize with English Learners in the classroom. Palos West also has a Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) for students who speak a language other than Arabic and Polish. Furthermore, support is in place for Newcomer students. Students who are new to the U.S. are provided with a survival curriculum to help them acclimate to their new environment. EL teachers collaborate with all grade level teachers to ensure that the background knowledge of English Learners is utilized to maximize their learning. They work together to create scaffolds for English Learners to guarantee equal access to grade level curriculum. To ensure that students are working at their highest capacity, Palos West utilizes Collaboration Team Meetings to discuss the academic, language, and social and emotional needs of struggling students.

Palos West values the importance of having parents of all students be involved in their child's education. Communication is a key factor to ensure transparency between school and home. Communication sent to families is translated into Arabic and Polish. Teachers also communicate with families via Seesaw in many languages. To support our multilingual families, Palos 118 has a district Bilingual Parent Association Committee that consists of multilingual parents, teachers, and a district administrator. Meetings are currently held in English, Arabic and Polish which supports the needs of parents of culturally diverse students.

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

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There are so many reasons why Palos West is successful but if we had to pick one practice that has been most instrumental in our success, it would be our work in Professional Learning Communities (PLC). This is an on-going process where we encourage working together in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for all of our students.

Functioning as Professional Learning Community allows us to address multiple key factors. First and most important, professional staff meet to discuss all students to determine what students need to be successful. Within our PLC model, we have a late start every Wednesday which allows teams to have extended time to meet. We also ensure that our schedule allows for at least one common plan time each week for additional PLC time. During meetings, teams review pacing guides, student data, proficiency scales, and discuss teaching strategies. Agendas are based upon the four critical questions of a PLC: 1) What do we want all students to know and be able to do? 2) How will we know if they learn it? 3) How will we respond when students do not learn? and 4) How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

Our building schedule incorporates two TIDE (Targeted Instruction Differentiation & Enrichment) times. One focused on ELA and the other math. During TIDE times, many students are pulled out for interventions specific to what they need based on data. Teachers further differentiate for the remaining students in the classroom to target their specific needs as well.

Our coach, specialists, and enrichment teacher all serve as resources to teachers to further analyze specific student needs. Building administrators provide the structure needed and support teams to ensure they have all the resources and materials they need to be successful.

Social Emotional Learning is also incorporated into our PLC model. Teachers discuss student needs using data from the check in program Rhythm that students complete daily. Our building social workers check in with teachers and students regarding students' social emotional wellbeing.

Our building professional development is centered on the PLC process. Teams share with each other colleagues' effective meeting strategies at monthly Learning Meetings. Staff members attend professional development seminars and observe model schools functioning as a PLC.

Finally, none of this can be done without maintaining a positive building culture where students and staff feel safe and respected. We believe our building success starts with our positive environment which is the foundation for our Professional Learning Community.