

U.S. Department of Education
2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 305 Franklin Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Valparaiso State IN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 46383-4753

County Porter

Telephone (219) 531-3030 Fax (219) 531-1251

Web site/URL https://valparaisoces.valpo.k12.in.us E-mail hsarkisian@valpo.k12.in.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Jim McCall E-mail jmccall@valpo.k12.in.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Valparaiso Community School District Tel. (219) 531-3000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Jennifer Bognar
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

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

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The 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

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):
- 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 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	0	0	0
K	9	13	22
1	12	14	26
2	12	13	25
3	9	8	17
4	9	10	19
5	12	14	26
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	63	72	135

*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):
- 0.7 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 3.7 % Black or African American
 - 18.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 71.9 % White
 - 5.2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2020 - 2021 school year: 14%

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

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	19
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	135
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.14
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	14

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 10 %
14 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 53 %

Total number students who qualify: 71

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 30 %
41 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>4</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	6
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1

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

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

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

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

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

Central Elementary School will be a caring environment where all members are accountable citizens helping the whole child thrive.

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

<https://go.boarddocs.com/in/valp/Board.nsf/Public#>

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

Nestled in the heart of Northwest Indiana, Valparaiso is a Chicagoland suburb full of small businesses, long-time residents, and young families. As the seat of Porter County and home to Valparaiso University, Valparaiso is often the center for government and community involvement making education a top priority for city officials and local residents. In this small city, colloquially known as “Valpo”, live just over 34,000 residents with a growing number of Hispanic families adding welcomed diversity to the town. The increase in Spanish speakers suits the town as Valparaiso means “Vale of Paradise” in Spanish. Just north of the bustling downtown on historic Franklin Street sits Central Elementary School, founded in 1817 and rebuilt in 1938.

The town’s changes in diversity and socio-economic status are directly reflected in the student body at Central Elementary School. We serve kindergarten through fifth grade including programs for students with disabilities, special needs, speech and language delayed, emotionally and behaviorally challenged, at-risk, and general education students. The changes in our student body have positively impacted our educational methods, reflected in consistent and high performance on state measures of student achievement.

Central values relationships and the ability to work collaboratively. The staff is family, taking care of each other and truly valuing one another’s contributions. The principal and staff have a close bond and strong dedication to their school, as many of them are graduates of the district themselves.

During COVID school closures, Central continued to focus on the relationships with students and families. The staff conducted two neighborhood drive through parades, stayed in touch by phone, and offered numerous Zoom opportunities, not only with teachers, but with the principal and counselor as well. Going into the 2020-2021 school year, in addition to the relationship building teachers conducted to make remote learners feel connected, the principal and counselor made a home visit to each remote learner to check in and make a personal connection. When the district implemented an e-learning day on Wednesdays to give teachers more opportunities for professional development and planning, the district was able to offer child care assistance through funds donated to the district, which eased the financial burden on families.

Another wonderful aspect of Central Elementary are the extracurricular activities. Some examples include spell bowl, math bowl, science bowl, robotics, STEM, student council, Team Lead, art club, after-school sports, yoga, and choir. Central consistently performs well in the academic competitions such as Math Bowl and Spell Bowl. We are especially proud of our 2020 State Champion Spell Bowl team.

Central has several unique programs that contribute to our success. One is the weekly social emotional learning (SEL) lesson with the school counselor, which is possible due to our small size. Recently the school counselor received yoga training and obtained a grant for yoga mats, so she is able to offer yoga before school twice a week.

The staff at Central Elementary understands that students come from diverse backgrounds with different experiences and expectations. We meet students where they are and seek to develop each student’s full potential academically, emotionally, and socially by providing curricular programs that are designed to meet the needs of the whole child. Students receive the core curriculum as well as art, music, physical education, STEM, library, and social/emotional learning. Technology is integrated into the curriculum and classrooms to enrich student learning. Differentiated instruction is provided by highly effective classroom teachers and instructional assistants to benefit all students of all abilities. The staff at Central Elementary collaborate with each other to promote a positive learning environment for academics, emotional and social success.

Central participates in Our School Reads each year and our student council does several collections, such as an annual food drive for our district Backpacks & Snacks program.

With our Central PRIDE program, students earn PRIDE tickets for demonstrating positive character traits. Each Friday, three tickets are drawn and the students selected get to spin a prize wheel with the principal.

Our principal is the handler of one of the district's therapy dogs. He comes to school each day and is loved by students and staff alike. He is available to help students regulate their emotions and he is an incentive for students who want to earn time with him.

At Central Elementary, each member works hard to build personal relationships with all of the students, not only those in their class. The unique structure of the building, one class per grade level, allows for students to develop lasting bonds with not only their classmates, but all of the staff in the building. The students know they belong, and everyone is looking forward to seeing them grow and succeed. We encourage students to reach their full potential by ensuring all students feel welcomed and accepted. These positive relationships contribute to the success of Central Elementary School.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Central Elementary follows the Indiana Academic Standards for all academic areas. These include math, science, social studies, and English/language arts. The Central community understands the importance of having a clear curriculum for our teachers and staff to utilize that best meets the needs of all students. Curriculum maps for Valparaiso Community Schools are available digitally on the district website. At Central Elementary we recently developed a new vision statement; Central Elementary will be a caring environment where all members are accountable citizens helping the whole child thrive. We collaborated not only as a school staff to create the new vision and philosophy, but also included the thoughts of Central parents and guardians. As a staff, we answered and discussed the questions about the ideal environment for both students and teachers, the kind of learning we value as educators, our ideal school, what students of today need most to prepare for the future, and what they need to be successful adults. From there, we looked for recurring themes as well as possible roadblocks. We then sent families a survey asking similar questions about the learning environment they envisioned for their children while at school. The major themes for both staff and families were the importance of collaboration between students, teachers, and families, consistency for students, meeting students where they are both academically and emotionally, balancing rigor and fun, creating a space where students feel safe and loved, developing the whole child, and making our school a place where students learn to be good citizens. After we identified the big themes, we highlighted words and phrases that would encompass all the ideas to make our school vision a reality. We work toward our vision and philosophy each day both in and out of the classroom.

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

Benchmark Advance is the core reading/English language arts curriculum. This program encompasses literature, reading, and writing instruction. It is set up in a spiral review format to continually practice with evolving skills at each grade level. Students are immersed in a curriculum with a large focus on developing readers through guided reading. The guided reading books are heavily focused on science and social studies topics to help give additional instruction and knowledge to students in these areas. All ten units are comprised of three weeks of instruction in both reading and writing. All teachers received professional development and training in guided reading through a literary consultant. She also comes to observe teachers to help grow and develop skills with effective guided reading lessons.

Each unit has a writing focus where students work through the entire writing process to focus on a specific writing genre for each unit. Benchmark Advance is also used for assessments as multiple assessments are available. Both formal and informal assessments are used throughout the week to see how students are understanding the current focus, weekly assessments to mark how students have done with the focused skills that week, and unit assessments that look at both reading and writing skills that have been focused on during that unit. Reading A-Z is used to supplement small groups as well as weekly book bags that are sent home with our youngest developing readers to help increase their reading fluency. Small group instruction in reading and writing is also given to students who are performing below grade level to help boost their reading development.

Study Island, Reading Eggs, Kids A-Z, and IXL are utilized for individualized instruction for students. All of these programs can be differentiated so that all students can work on skills and reading strategies that meet their current needs and goals. These programs give data that teachers can analyze to give remediation or enrichment to students. Primary grade levels also integrate programs such as Jolly Phonics and Heggerty Phonics to ensure mastery of early literacy skills. These programs incorporate multi-sensory methods of teaching through a synthetic phonics approach, which is developmentally appropriate and addresses multiple learning styles. All students are given a Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) assessment three times a year to look at their current reading level. This data helps teachers and administrators to make sure all students are being

met at their current placement and are receiving any necessary interventions. All teachers have been trained in using F&P to note errors students make while they are reading as well as scoring how well they can comprehend a text using questions that key understandings within the text, beyond the text, and about the text. Along with F&P, our NWEA assessment is also given three times a year to track student progress. IREAD is given in third grade and was given in second grade during the 2021-2022 school year. ILEARN is given in third, fourth, and fifth grade to assess students' reading and writing proficiency.

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

Our mathematics curriculum, Pearson Envision, follows guidelines mandated by the Indiana standards as well as our district guiding principles. We employ multiple components to ensure that all students are given instruction on all standards at their grade level. These include visual learning videos to guide instruction, guided work in a traditional math workbook, time for independent practice, and quick checks to gauge understanding. Spiral daily reviews are also used to continue practice in different topics while keeping a focus on the current unit. The quick check is an online component that helps students show their current understanding while also practicing online quizzing that will be similar to what they will experience for state testing. This provides immediate feedback for the teachers so they can form ability groups for small group instruction on particular topics or skills. Students are better equipped to apply math skills to the real world and are encouraged to ask questions during the learning process. This approach also encourages higher order thinking and allows for more student collaboration, discussion and investigation.

A large focus of our school improvement plan is on our mathematics instruction, particularly in the areas of fluency and computation. We have implemented this through focused instruction during our Response to Intervention (RtI) time throughout all grade levels. We continue to improve by providing small group instruction for students in need of extra support in these areas. Programs are also used to supplement student learning and to meet students at their current individualized level. To work on students' math computation we deploy 99 Math as well as XtraMath to help with their fact fluency. IXL and Study Island are used to look at students' RIT band to be able to individualize differentiated instruction for students. In our third, fourth, and fifth grade, MAP Accelerator is used to individualize instruction for students based on their NWEA Assessments throughout the year. We use a quarterly diagnostic test on Study Island throughout all grade levels to see specific growth in the areas of number sense and computation to further our school improvement goals.

For students who are performing below grade level, RtI instruction is given to students who have been identified within our Tier 2 and Tier 3 program for small group interventions. During this time, students are pulled into small groups with a focus on the skills where they are underperforming for their grade level to focus on closing the gap that we see between them and where they should be for their grade level. In terms of additional assessments we also use NWEA to assess students three times a year to see their progress as well as the ILEARN assessment in third, fourth, and fifth grade. All of the data from these assessments are used to help guide instruction and make adjustments to interventions for students.

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

Our science curriculum, Pearson Interactive Science, follows inquiry-based modules to allow for students to be active in understanding the scientific process. It is an interactive program that helps students learn each science topic with both online and paper components. Assessments for each lesson are available to teachers in order to quickly gauge student understanding after a lesson as well as a unit assessment to measure understanding of the unit overall. Throughout each unit, students are engaged in hands-on learning experiences that will help them to investigate, analyze, and be able to discuss scientific findings with their teacher and peers. All units have experiments and labs that can be conducted within the classroom to help students work through the scientific process and put their knowledge into practice.

Along with our science curriculum, our reading curriculum includes many books that are based on science topics that are discussed at that grade level. This helps to make the connection with nonfiction reading skills as well as the application of literacy skills within the context of science. Along with the small books, our unit consumables are also focused in science to enable the cross-curricular learning of these topics. Through

investigation, students also have the opportunity to analyze, notate, and discuss their findings. This aids in bridging the gap between language arts and its connection to nonfiction topics and ideas. Multiple science topics are also touched on through our STEM curriculum that all students participate in each week. These topics include engineering, computer science, biomedical standards, pushes and pulls, structure and function, flight, properties of matter, Earth space, changing Earth, energy, and light and sound.

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

The Social Studies curriculum at Central Elementary follows the Indiana Social Studies Academic Standards and is designed with these standards in the forefront. The curriculum used for social studies varies for each grade based on what is best suited to the individual goals for students in each grade level. Kindergarten students use a curriculum through Scholastic. First, second, and fifth grade students work with curriculum provided through McGraw Hill. Third grade students learn through a curriculum with Pearson Realize. Fourth grade students learn using Periodicals through Time for Kids with weekly editions. Within each program, students are helped to gain knowledge, process information, consider the importance of values and beliefs, and learn how to actively participate in a democratic society. Students are able to gain knowledge, process information, consider the importance of values and beliefs, and learn how to participate in a democratic society. All of these programs include digital and textbook components to help students engage with each topic. Assessments are used for each lesson along with overall units to help gauge student understanding. Students are engrossed in hands-on activities that promote an awareness of civic responsibility and engagement in their communities. Along with the curriculum provided, our reading curriculum includes many books that are based on social studies topics that are discussed at that grade level. Along with the small books, our unit consumables are also focused in social studies to continue to touch on current events and topics that are included in our social studies standards. Students are engrossed in hands-on activities that promote an awareness of civic responsibility and engagement in their communities.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

As of 2021 Central Elementary has had one teacher teaching all four specials classes; music, art, PE, and STEM. Students engage in a variety of activities that meet the standards of each curricular area and parent and community volunteers have been utilized to provide real world experiences that connect to their learning.

We use an art curriculum developed by the Valparaiso Community Schools' district art staff, which is based on the Indiana State Proficiency Guide. Student performance is assessed by willingness to experiment and try new ideas, effort and enthusiasm, and responsibility and use of time. All K-5 students attend art class once a week for one hour. The Art Appreciation Program provides additional art exposure to students in their classrooms.

At Central, the music curriculum addresses Indiana music standards and is designed to introduce and develop individual enjoyment, interest, and appreciation of making music. All K-5 students attend music class once a week for one hour. Students are exposed to elements of music theory, major composers, and music from various ethnicities, time periods, and styles. Student performance is assessed by participation, skill development, and behavior. Students attend various concerts, ballets, and demonstrations to increase their knowledge and exposure to musical culture. Students have the opportunity to perform for audiences with occasional school recitals and a schoolwide caroling event throughout our downtown neighborhood each December.

Our physical education addresses the Indiana State standards and is designed to help students develop enjoyment and appreciation for engaging in regular physical activities and understand how physical activity contributes to a healthy lifestyle. All K-5 students attend physical education class for one hour a week. Students are assessed by behavior, sportsmanship, and knowledge by written and/or oral tests, teacher observations, and performance of skills.

The STEM curriculum, Project Lead the Way, is designed from the Indiana State Standards. All K-5 students attend STEM once a week for one hour. Students create, plan and collaborate with peers to solve problems, learn and practice coding, evaluate and improve a project using technology, and use science and math skills to solve problems.

The health curriculum meets the state standards and consists of the Body Works textbooks along with supplementary materials designed to develop health and safety concerns, habits, attitudes, and promotes personal well-being in children from K-5.

Central strives to provide opportunities for our students to become proficient, competent readers. Our library contains wonderful literature for children. Library time is scheduled once a week for all grade levels where students may check out books as well as throughout the week. The students also have access to online ebooks.

Students can extend their learning through STEM clubs, robotics, choir, art club, after-school sports, as well as field trips and activities to provide experiences in the community that extend beyond the classroom. Students are given multiple opportunities to engage in other programs and curriculum focused groups throughout the school year.

All students at Central are given focused social-emotional learning instruction for 30 minutes once a week by our school counselor who draws from a variety of resources including the curriculums of MindUp, The Zones of Regulation, and Second Step. Students learn about the brain, recognizing their emotions, and strategies for managing emotions. The Monique Burr Foundation Child Safety Matters curriculum is used for child and body safety lessons. We focus on our PRIDE traits of perseverance, respect, integrity, dependability, and empathy during this time. This coordinates with small group instruction to be able to practice role playing and using these skills in social scenarios with their classmates.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Students who are performing below grade level are provided with many different opportunities to increase their growth. Within the classroom, teachers and assistants conduct small group instruction for reading and math based on students' performance. During these groups, the instruction is geared toward the students' levels. While the teacher and assistants are conducting their small groups, independent work is completed by the other students. During independent work time, the students use technology based programs that are individualized pathways. These programs may include Study Island, Map Accelerator, IXL, Raz-Kids and Reading Eggs.

When students are identified as needing additional support, they are placed officially in Response to Instruction. During this RtI time, the instruction is based on the students' levels and implemented by the Title I teacher and/or classroom assistant. The Title I teacher uses various programs to meet the needs of these students. The programs include Fountas and Pinnell, Heggerty, Brainspring Phonics First, Common Lit, and Study Island.

Students who are performing below grade level are invited to our before school tutoring program, which is offered five times a week for 40 minutes. This opportunity is first offered to subgroups of students who are below 10 percentage points of achievement on ILEARN testing. We first offered tutoring to EL students as well as students with low socio-economic status.

In addition to the before school tutoring program, classroom teachers use the assistance of Americorp and/or University students who come in multiple times per week to work with students in a small group and/or one-on-one.

We are proud of the growth of students noted as performing above grade level on ILEARN in ELA growing from 32 percent in 2019 to 39 percent in 2021.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students who are performing above grade level are provided with many different opportunities to increase their growth. Within the classroom, teachers and assistants conduct small group instruction for reading and math based on students' performance. During these groups, the instruction is geared toward the students' levels. While the teacher and assistants are conducting their small groups, independent work is completed by the other students. During independent work time, the students use technology based programs that are individualized pathways. These programs may include Study Island, Map Accelerator, IXL, Raz-Kids and Reading Eggs. Junior Great Books is used to continue to help students grow with deeper level comprehension. These are used in small groups of students who are ready for more challenging texts to be able to expand their skills and knowledge. Junior Great Books uses an inquiry-based approach to deepen comprehension, critical thinking, speaking and listening, and writing skills. This program has a large focus on discussion in small groups so that students can learn from not only their teacher but also from each other.

In addition to the small groups, students may have the opportunity to work with our Instructional Coach in small groups with a focus on technology enrichment STEM activities. In addition to these enrichment groups, classroom teachers also use the assistance of Americorp and/or University students who come in multiple times per week to work with students on above-level work in a small group and/or one-on-one setting.

We are proud of the growth of students noted as performing above grade level on ILEARN in ELA growing from 30 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2021.

3c. Special education:

Students who have been identified needing an individualized educational plan are instructed by our special education teacher and/or assistant in small groups and/or one-on-one by either pushing into the classroom to assist the learning or pull out the student to work on individualized skills.

Along with our special education teacher and assistant, the district behavior specialist works with children within the classroom and/or one on one. The special education teacher works very closely with all classroom teachers to be able to best meet the needs of those students. Using a variety of resources, the special education and general education teachers work to modify work to help students reach success as well as individualizing assignments to meet them at their current instructional level.

Some of these students also receive affect instruction from a special education co-op teacher. This affect instruction focuses on skills such as forming friendships, proper interaction and responses, and dealing with anger or disagreements in an appropriate way.

Within the classroom, teachers and assistants conduct small group instruction for reading and math based on students' performance. During these groups, the instruction is geared toward the students' levels, with a focus on meeting individual goals and making growth toward grade level standards. While the teacher and assistants are conducting their small groups, independent work is completed by the other students. During independent work time, the students use technology based programs that are individualized pathways. These programs may include Study Island, Map Accelerator, IXL, Raz-Kids and Reading Eggs.

We are proud of the growth of students noted as performing above grade level on ILEARN in ELA growing from 30 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2021.

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

Based on a home language survey given to all families at the time of registration, the school works to identify students who are learning English as their second language. These students are then placed in our EL program to receive extra services. Students with an Individualized Learning Plan receive instruction from our EL teacher and/or EL assistant either in a small group and/or one-on-one.

Annually the EL teacher gives the students the WIDA assessment and uses the scores and feedback to guide her instruction. The EL teacher meets with students on a weekly basis and pulls them out during non-instructional time to work on individualized skills for their language development. This can be with a focus on vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Along with the EL teacher, we have one EL assistant who pushes into classrooms daily to help support all EL students in their general education setting. They meet with small groups, administer classroom tests in a small group setting, and provide individualized instruction.

Within the classroom, teachers and assistants conduct small group instruction for reading and math based on students' performance. During these groups, the instruction is geared toward the students' levels. While the teacher and assistants are conducting their small groups, independent work is completed by the other students. Accommodations are made on tests and assignments for EL students as noted in their Individual Learning Plan.

We are proud of the growth of EL students on the ILEARN exam in ELA growing from 0 percent of the five EL students in testing grades in 2019 to 25 percent passing in 2021.

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

The other population we strongly focus on is our low socio-economic population. When families register for school, we determine whether families need financial assistance. When we transitioned to a one-section building, we saw a large increase of students in our low socio-economic population.

For students who are in this low socio-economic population and have qualified for Medicaid, we offer in-school mental health services to students. This program is called StudentWise. Students who participate in this program meet one-on-one with a bachelor's level social worker to develop healthy emotional and social skills.

Along with this, our school counselor does daily check-ins about these students either with the teacher, principal, or meeting with the students themselves. This is a time when she is able to help with any hardships that the students are facing in and out of school that might be impeding their learning during the school day.

In regards to the above populations previous math test scores, our 2021-2022 School Improvement Plan math goals are number sense and computation. The entire school population consistently works towards increasing our proficiency in these areas. Teachers use a variety of resources including Study Island, IXL, 99 Math, Gimkit, and Kahoot. Students take a quarterly Study Island diagnostic test to show growth and earn ribbons for their classroom door to show mastery of lessons. The principal along with teachers then meet to track this data and make any necessary adjustments to instruction or small groups to make sure all students are actively working towards their growth goal.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Students at Central Elementary are given many engaging opportunities and activities throughout the school year. We strive to focus on the whole child and start this process by kicking off with Central PRIDE traits of perseverance, respect, integrity, dependability, and empathy each year. We have regular assemblies where we discuss the trait that we are focused on as well as times to celebrate all of our hard work. Students are invited to celebrations for showing our PRIDE traits throughout the school day. The celebrations have included a time to play board games with classmates, engage in a BINGO game for small prizes, and extra recess with other grade levels. During remote learning times we continued to focus on our Central PRIDE as well as making sure to put a large focus on developing relationships with both remote and in-person learners.

Throughout our time of blended synchronous learning, we conducted weekly informal virtual class meetings in each class. This was a time to focus on having fun and building social relationships among all of the students. These included read alouds, games, and relationship building activities. Remote students were also given opportunities to have regular check-ins with the school counselor.

Along with PRIDE we also put a focus on making sure all students are engaged through weekly social emotional learning (SEL) lessons with our school counselor. Our focus on the whole child continues and we work with our district behavior specialist when we are working with students who need further interventions with their social and emotional growth.

As we have resumed in-person learning this year, we have also continued with the relationship building that had a heavy focus during our time engaged in blended synchronous learning. This has included continuing with morning meetings with our students as well as using restorative circles with students to help develop their communication skills with their peers.

Another opportunity for students to engage in our school is through our multiple groups that are offered. The groups offered include Spell Bowl, Math Bowl, Science Bowl, Student Council, Robotics, Art Club, After-School Sports, News Crew, Morning Yoga, and Tutoring. Our Spell Bowl, Math Bowl, and Science Bowl have had the recognition of placing in the top 10 in the state of Indiana several times over the past years.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging with families as well as businesses in the area has always been an important piece of our strong community. Central Elementary families are encouraged to have an active role in their student's education. The app ClassDojo is for individual parent communication and a news feed of activities and student achievement. This allows parents to stay connected with their child, happenings in the classroom, and school events.

Families are encouraged to participate in Back-to-School Night, Curriculum nights, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) events, Love and Logic Parent Sessions and other informational meetings. Central also engages in ongoing communication with parents through schoolwide newsletters, classroom newsletters, email, phone calls, and social media.

Many of our students go to Walt's Place in the College Hill neighborhood. This is a time where students can have a hot dinner, receive homework help, and engage in fun activities with their peers.

Our district offers many programs for students and families in special circumstances or who have unmet needs. Backpacks and Snacks is a program that sends food home each weekend with students who may be food insecure. We offer a Holiday Assistance Program where families may sign up and receive holiday gifts for their children. Other families and staff sign up to be donors. Participation (both as a recipient and a donor) is kept anonymous. Twenty-nine percent of students participate in the Holiday Assistance Program.

Dressed for School and School Closet by Lotus Reach are local organizations that provide our families new clothing at no cost for their children. This not only addresses a financial need for our families, but students feel confident wearing new outfits. Fourteen percent of students participate in Dressed for School and seventeen percent participate in School Closet.

Many of our students attend the Boys & Girls Club. They provide before school care, Kidstop, as well as after-school care for students. During this time they are able to work on homework, receive tutoring, and play with their peers.

Since we are home to Valparaiso University, we are extremely fortunate to have multiple college student volunteers as well as Americorps who help with small groups of students through tutoring or additional help at school. VU has a chapter of College Mentors, a nationwide organization that pairs elementary students with college student mentors to do weekly activities introducing them to the college experience. Central students have the opportunity to participate in this and the school supports participation by providing bus transportation to campus and an after-school snack for the meeting.

A non-profit we work closely with is Our Greater Good. This organization offers Love and Logic classes to parents throughout the year and provides volunteers for the Lunch Buddy program who come to eat lunch at our school once a week. This continues to foster relationships with our students and community members.

Our staff and school works closely with our PTO to be able to provide opportunities for our students and families to help flourish our community. Our staff and PTO are in constant communication with families to highlight the great things happening in our classrooms. We do this through weekly classroom newsletters that keep parents informed of what their learner is currently working on at school as well as reminding families of important dates coming up during the school year.

Another community based program is DARE. Police officers from the Valparaiso Police Department come in to help teach our children about safety at school, at home, as well as in the community. This program touches on different topics that are appropriate for each grade level.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Central Elementary recognizes the importance of ongoing professional development programs for all staff members to increase the effectiveness of their education practices.

In 2018, Valparaiso Community Schools integrated the use of technology coaches who later transitioned into instructional coaches. Central Elementary embeds professional development opportunities through the coach, incorporating individual needs and schoolwide initiatives. The coach collaborates with the principal in order to provide on-demand assistance through coaching and co-teaching as teachers are learning new skills or incorporating new programs.

Transitioning to distance learning and asynchronous blended learning overnight in March of 2020 was an understandable challenge for everyone. Canvas LMS (an online learning tool) was already used by the district, and all teachers had some sort of Canvas presence for district level trainings. Every teacher now has access to a district Canvas page with recorded training sessions for reference.

During the 2020-21 school year, professional development was accelerated. For a portion of that time, every Wednesday was an eLearning. This allowed time for voluntary professional development (PD) by instructional coaches over Zoom. Group PD was followed with individual coaching with Central's instructional coach to address specific teacher needs. Professional development sessions were determined by teacher need, thereby validating the teacher experience in this new format. PD session development was relevant to the blended asynchronous learning model teachers were using during this time. Teachers needed ways to engage in-person and online learners. Topics like using Screencastify and EdPuzzle were necessary to engage all learners. Content and sometimes recordings from PD sessions were added to a Canvas course for elementary teachers. In addition to these specific coaching supports, a Coach Newsletter was sent

regularly.

Central acknowledges the need to support teachers and staff in working with the unique social and emotional needs brought on by the pandemic. Teachers were trained in restorative practices, learning how to help resolve a situation quickly and effectively. This has helped reduce some emotional outbursts of students, and allows students to more quickly rejoin the class. Central has also gone above and beyond to recognize the hard work of teachers and ensure that their emotional needs were and continue to be met. A leader of cooperative learning practices, came in to set a tone of teamwork and collaboration. The school counselor created a staff mindful minute room, where teachers can go to relax in massage chairs while enjoying a treat. This helps teachers to unwind and be better prepared for the challenges that these past few years have brought. The principal also provides 30 minute pop-ins, where she takes over the class so the teacher can have an additional 30 minutes to prepare, relax, or do whatever they need at that time. In a weekly weekend check in email, the principal recognizes great things that are going on at the school helping boost teacher morale. These strategies create a positive climate, where teachers know they are valued and respected.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership at Central Elementary supports the philosophy that all students should be given the same opportunity to learn and should be provided opportunities to reach their full potential. The principal believes that students deserve to be in a safe and caring school environment, feel supported by the staff, and be engaged in a climate that focuses on learning. Our building has a family atmosphere which creates a close-knit culture between students, families, and staff. With our school being a one-section building, the principal is able to be immersed in the classrooms on a daily basis. The students also have a close connection with our therapy dog who is with our principal each day to help support students and staff. Students can earn reward time with the therapy dog throughout the school year. This time can be playing in the office, going on a walk around the outside of the building, or having the therapy dog visit their classroom for some instructional time.

The principal plays a critical role when we carry out this philosophy. She attended Valparaiso Community Schools and was an elementary teacher in other Valparaiso elementary schools before becoming principal of Central Elementary. She is able to implement the district's vision and philosophy as well as her own. She works to continuously improve instruction through collaboration with the staff. She promotes shared leadership by encouraging members to take on roles that play to their strengths. The leadership team works with the principal to ensure policies and programs focus on student achievement through effective training, professional development, and modeling. She collaborates with teachers on the programs that will be used to make sure that all staff members are able to weigh-in on these important decisions. The principal understands and respects all of our teacher's opinions while making decisions in regards to scheduling, instructional materials and schoolwide policies and goals.

Parents and their involvement is important to students' success. The principal respects their crucial role as stakeholders and encourages collaboration and teamwork with parents and families to maintain a dedicated school community. She believes students excel with a strong home-school relationship to ensure students' success. The principal encourages parents' involvement through various school activities and promotes open communication.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At Central Elementary we have a diverse group of students. We are able to address the needs and backgrounds of these families through curriculum put in place as well as additional resources that we have made available to our students and families. We have a large amount of books on diverse topics through our adopted reading curriculum, in our school library, and in individual classroom libraries. The topics of our curriculum are regularly shared with parents and guardians to be able to keep them up to date on what their children are learning about in the classroom.

We have many English Language Learners at our building, and extra resources have been put in place to

help support those students as well as their families. We have both push-in and pull-out services for these students to help them directly in the classroom as well as work on their development with language individually. When meeting with the parents of our English Language Learners, we offer a translator to be able to make communication clear about their students and their growth and development.

To communicate with parents on a regular basis we also use Class Dojo as a messaging program to be able to easily communicate with parents. Class Dojo offers translation services into multiple languages, which many of our parents utilize to be able to easily communicate with teachers and staff. If requested, staff has also worked to be able to provide different items translated into Spanish such as newsletters, permission slips, and club opportunities. Our district and school websites also have a feature in which parents can select the language in which they want to view the pages.

The MindUp practice supplies students with social and emotional support embedded into daily classroom routines. These lessons help teach students multiple strategies to help focus, improve self regulation, build resistance to stress, and develop a growth mindset. This curriculum has been critical to help students when transitioning back to regular in-person learning from the remote learning environment that they have been in since March of 2020.

When discussing respect, equity, and cultural awareness in the classroom this is presented in age appropriate levels through our social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum time. This time helps students to think through and process different situations and how they can treat both themselves and others with respect. Our school counselor also employs the lessons to teach children about personal safety.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most instrumental factor to our school is our social-emotional approach to students and always focusing on the whole child. With our many focuses on this throughout the building, we work hard to make sure that all students feel loved, safe, and valued at Central.

We regularly come together as a school to celebrate our Central PRIDE. We do this through focusing on the traits that help us show our pride throughout the day. We have two celebrations per quarter to help celebrate our students who are working their hardest for themselves and our community by showing their Central PRIDE.

Our school counselor is instrumental in our day to day activities providing social emotional learning (SEL) lessons, individually meeting with students regularly or those students in crisis, small groups during lunch, and teaching the Zones of Regulation. Our school counselor wrote and received a grant for a Sensory Room in our building and the principal found funding for a Sensory Path for students to use.

A small group of staff recently went to a training on restorative practices and was so excited to come back and share this with the entire staff. We have worked closely on our language and how to best talk to students, focusing on building relationships, while also holding students accountable for their choices. What we learned has been successfully used many times since to guide conversations towards a positive resolution to specific conflicts.

Building relationships has always been at the forefront of our focus through our morning meetings throughout the building. Since we have a small school we have also been able to foster relationships with different students with our Buddy Classes. An intermediate and primary class are paired together and have time to work with their individual buddy on exercise, games, and activities to help them foster a relationship outside of their classroom.

Our staff works closely with our District Director of Social Emotional Learning, behavior specialists both with Valparaiso school and the Special Education co-op to be able to make sure that we are focusing in on making sure we are always considering how to best educate our students on being the best person that they can be for our community.

Creating a caring environment where all members are accountable citizens while helping the whole child thrive is what we strive to achieve daily at Central Elementary.