

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. Shari Rooks
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 1747 North Andover Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Andover State KS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 67002-9488

County Butler County

Telephone (316) 218-4620 Fax (316) 733-3648

Web site/URL https://andover1.gabbartllc.com E-mail rookss@usd385.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Brett White E-mail whiteb@usd385.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Unified School District #385 Andover Tel. (316) 218-4660

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 Dr. Jennifer Seymour
(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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 1 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	41	26	67
1	34	36	70
2	36	21	57
3	56	28	84
4	49	37	86
5	52	24	76
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	268	172	440

*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):
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 6 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 3 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 84 % White
 - 0 % 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: 10%

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	33
(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)]	45
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	440
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Telugu/Hindi, Chinese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %

9 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 22 %

Total number students who qualify: 97

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 23 %
101 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>14</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>12</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>7</u> Developmental Delay | <u>32</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>27</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>4</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: 19
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.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	32
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 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	94%	94%	94%	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.

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.

We will work together at Cottonwood Elementary to be responsible, respectful, and resourceful. We will do what is right.

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

<https://www.usd385.org/>

Notice of Nondiscrimination: Andover USD 385 does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its employment practices or in its programs and activities, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Persons having inquiries concerning USD 385’s non-discrimination policies and compliance therewith may contact the school district’s Compliance Coordinator at 1432 N. Andover Rd., Andover, KS, 67002, or call 316-218-4661.

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

Cottonwood Elementary School (CES) is part of a suburban school district outside of Wichita, KS. Andover is a true bedroom community. The largest employer in the city is USD 385. Many parents commute into Wichita for employment, which is home to three major aircraft plants, McConnell Air Force Base, Koch Industries and Wichita State University.

Cottonwood was established in the year 2000 because Andover patrons in 1998 believed in small neighborhood schools and creating opportunities for more students. The bond issue helped create three new schools. In the past 20 years, the community has passed two additional bond issues, which have allowed for expansion, remodels and construction of new facilities. This support exemplifies the commitment for doing what is best for students, which is a very important expectation of our community.

Our boundaries include a range of property values from low-income to million dollar homes. Housing can be expensive, as well as limited. When families move to Andover, it demonstrates an understanding of the value of high-quality schools.

CES is located across the street from Andover High School (AHS) and Andover Middle School (AMS). Our proximity to the secondary schools creates many opportunities for us. We can walk over and watch their fine arts productions, and they can walk over to share time with us. Several of our staff have children at AMS or AHS who come over after school and contribute by working with small groups of students or helping with teacher projects. Additionally, many staff in those buildings send their children to CES because of proximity. This only adds to the family feeling our school frequently showcases. We care for our families and we care for our school, and often the two merge.

CES has several unique populations. While the district shows a 50/50 split in gender, CES has nearly one-hundred more boys than girls. That means we have to think through activities that are offered, and teachers must be aware of the higher energy levels that may be seen, particularly in our K-2 classes. Our boy-heavy classes are filled with active learning, questions, movement, and engaged learners. We also house the district's self-contained classrooms, providing special education learners with a high quality education that is designed with their needs and abilities in mind.

Like everywhere, the pandemic has presented significant challenges, but our community has made the best of it. After closing in the spring of 2020, students at CES were in person during the 2020-21 school year, with masks and social distancing required. This school year has continued to provide challenges, with new expectations for wellness and learning. Despite the difficulties, our staff works together to meet the needs of the students and partner with our parents and community.

Cottonwood's mission statement reads: We will work together at Cottonwood Elementary to be responsible, respectful, and resourceful life-long learners. We will do what is right. This mission guides our daily work and shapes our long-term goals. Our staff is willing to adapt, learn and make changes to meet the needs of our students. Programs have been added over the years to facilitate that mission and to help kids become more responsible and respectful. An example includes the Second Step curriculum, which encourages positive friendships and builds problem-solving skills. We know not every child comes to school ready to learn, so we provide support to help them adjust. We know relationships before rigor isn't just a phrase, but a good way to start each day.

To continue building relationships and adding to our resourceful learners theme, Explorations were added prior to Covid and have recently restarted. Every student chooses between a host of activities taught and run by CES staff. Because of the number of opportunities, our students are able to work in small groups of 10-12 students of mixed ages. From origami, Irish dance, Trick Shots and Magic to a walking club and Yoga, students are able start the day with an engaging activity: one that they have voice and choice. Explorations began in 2019 as part of our school redesign, and the activities help students find their passion and work with learners and educators they don't typically see. We've also restarted Rise and Shine, an all-school assembly on Friday mornings that allows us to build connections. During that time, we celebrate birthdays

and student successes. It reinforces the family environment and connections at CES.

Our school continues to be a place of opportunities for students, engaged learning that inspires students, and a committed staff whose positivity and love for their work is clearly evident. We are dedicated to helping each child grow through a thoughtful use of resources, a commitment to respect, and a push towards responsibility for self and others. We know life-long learners are grown, with deep roots and strong branches.

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:

About 10 years ago, the district reworked the elementary report cards with the help of a committee of parents and teachers. Our goal was to share information about student progress through standards mastery rather than percentages. We are dedicated to making sure standards are known, understood, addressed, and assessed. Utilizing standards-based grading, teachers have developed several forms of assessment to validate mastery of content. Although not every child may achieve mastery on all standards, every child can show improvements and progress over time. We meet children where they are and build on their existing skill sets to fill learning gaps.

Tiered instruction through a strong MTSS program helps students make gains. CES has two interventionists, both of whom are gifted in utilizing data to provide instruction matched specifically to students' needs. They provide leadership to our instructional aides, equipping them to pull small groups through explicit and systematic teaching. Using current data from STAR, DIBELS assessments, and i-Ready, the interventionists, classroom teacher and Special Education teachers meet quarterly to discuss student skill needs. The data and professional judgment help guide the best placement for students in small groups. This system has proven to be successful, and the number of students receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 services continue to decline.

Technology integration at CES allows for experiences where students' active engagement in developing knowledge and skills, critical thinking, higher order skills, and communication are given the opportunity to shine. Each classroom has an interactive whiteboard where students are able to engage with grade level content and interact with various forms of media. Students also have access to Chromebooks and iPads in order to independently create and practice skills using resources like Google Classroom, Seesaw, and i-Ready. ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) Standards have been adopted by the district, and CES is currently working on integrating them into daily practice.

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

Staff have been trained in the five components of reading, with an emphasis on phonics. As part of a statewide initiative, teachers have also received training on dyslexia and research-based practices. Primary teachers and interventionists have received extensive training with the Pathways to Reading program, a multi-sensory systematic approach teaching phonological awareness and phonics. An hour and half each day is dedicated to the language arts block. This time is intentionally planned to incorporate systematic, explicit scaffolded and differentiated instruction. Heavy on comprehension, Journeys has served our students well. Leveled readers and decodable text are used daily to instruct students at their individualized levels. Writing is integrated across the curriculum including in ELA, science, social studies and math. Student learning is enhanced by reflecting on multiple texts and using this new knowledge in various writing forms, including paragraph writing, structured paragraphs, attention to conventions, and spelling application.

We know that helping struggling readers is crucial. Our staff participated in MTSS training and have been using that structure for approximately ten years. Cottonwood has a reading interventionist that is a vital part of our family. MTSS time is thoughtfully planned to ensure that students receive 30 minutes for Tier 2 and Tier 3. Aides are available during that time to work with predetermined groups of students on specific skills. These skills are identified through the STAR, DIBELS, Quick Phonics Screener (QPS) and Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST). Tier 3 progress monitoring occurs weekly and Tier 2 is done bi-weekly. Groups are adjusted as needed, with a thorough review of all data and anecdotal evidence occurring quarterly. These reviews require the interventionists to meet with every classroom teacher, verifying correct student placement for MTSS groupings. This systematic and detailed process also means students receive the differentiated instruction required for gains in specific target areas. As we reviewed intervention programs, we chose Phonics Leveled Library, a systematic, explicit, and scripted program that

provides the structure students need while utilizing the strengths of aids and educators alike.

Accelerated Reader (AR) is a student driven, teacher guided reading practice program that has been utilized by students in grades 3-5 for several years. We use AR as an incentive and motivation tool. Students set personal goals each quarter and those who achieve them celebrate. Goal setting is a crossover to Social Emotional Learning. For Cottonwood, this program is not used as anything other than an incentive. Students are not penalized if they do not attain their personal goal. The library is instrumental in providing books, encouraging variety and cheering on our students. The Cottonwood Parent Teacher Organization is committed to purchasing this reading program, as it aligns with STAR reading and allows parents to be involved by monitoring student reading progress.

All of these opportunities strengthen student understanding and comprehension, while instilling a love of reading and lifelong learning.

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

Math instruction is an area in our building that has been strengthened through the reliable use of our new i-Ready math curriculum. A commitment to implementing i-Ready with fidelity, using training provided by curriculum experts from the company, and ongoing support from district-level instructional coaches, is helping staff and students feel more confident in their math skills. i-Ready data is immensely and immediately helpful, providing on-time learning for every student through their personalized learning plans.

Similar to reading, interventionists and teachers create small groups using i-Ready assessments, STAR data, and anecdotal evidence. Further, teachers can instantaneously identify what students' needs are by reviewing progress through their individualized lessons. As a result, groupings can be flexible and all students can quickly receive the support they need based on daily work.

We believe in active learning, and math is no different. Utilizing engaging whole group instruction with interactive white boards, small group strategy work, and individual work with manipulatives as needed, students are provided ongoing opportunities to learn through multiple modalities. i-Ready curriculum requires teachers to encourage student discourse, reading for meaning, and develop a mathematical mindset. Kagan Cooperative Learning strategies are used so all students are actively involved and engaged.

This year a math interventionist position was added. She provides instruction to students who need intense, systematic support in order to make gains and close the achievement gap. Once again, data is utilized to make these groups, and the flexibility allows students who are struggling to get support as soon as they need it. The Bridges to Intervention curriculum is used with Tier 2 and 3 math students, giving them the practice and reteaching they need through a highly reliable curriculum. Recent STAR data indicates this system is working and the number of students receiving Tier 2 and 3 services continues to decline.

Our district is committed to offering summer school for students who are not meeting standards. Fortunately, ESSER funds have made this possible, and summer school will continue through at least 2024, and likely beyond. We know students fell behind during Covid. These summer sessions provide targeted support to our learners in the bottom quartile in reading or math. Hosted by Cottonwood and another school in the district, summer school provides opportunities for direct instruction in reading and math skills with small class sizes (10:1 ratio, with an aide). This school year was our first time using i-Ready and Pathways to Reading. As a result, fewer students were referred, indicating yet again that targeted and thoughtful use of curriculum and intentional interventions are capable of closing gaps and increasing achievement.

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

Andover has adopted the NGSS Science standards, and teacher lesson plans are based on those standards. We use Mystery Science as the building block for our units. This science program provides hands-on, cooperative learning experiences, while encouraging investigations, problem solving and teamwork. Lessons can be integrated into math and language arts lessons. Teachers use end of unit assessments, rubrics and observation to assess student knowledge. Our fifth graders also take the Kansas Science Assessment to

determine their understanding of important science concepts.

We believe in hands-on learning; therefore, you will see a variety of science experiments throughout the year. With Zoom and Skype, distance is no longer a barrier and teachers connect their classrooms to scientists, zoos, habitats and other specialists, near and far so that students can get a better understanding of our world.

Fifth graders attend Starbase at McConnell Airforce Base, a unique opportunity for students. They are engaged in 25 hours of Common-core aligned inquiry-based curriculum with its "hands-on, mind-on" experiential activities. The program is delivered at no-cost to the participating school. Starbase staff pre and post test to measure student understanding and growth. The data is used to continually improve the program.

Our outdoor classroom and habitat center allows students to observe life cycles of plants and animals. Ducks arrive every spring and make a nest, and the entire school looks forward to the day the baby ducks make their arrival. While bittersweet, there's always a little pride as they waddle out of the habitat and head to the nearby ditch. Butterflies and chicks are hatched by various teachers with opportunities for all students to monitor the growth. Finally, when possible, dissections are an engaging way to learn about the world, with owl pellets being a favorite of our students.

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

Cottonwood's social studies curriculum is driven by the Kansas History, Government and Social Studies (HGSS) standards. We believe in the power of experiences and we want our students to be prepared citizens of both their community and the world. Teachers were trained in project-based learning from a Buck Institute specialist. We aligned standards, and started testing units and assessments. Our goal was to provide meaningful opportunities for students to share their learning with authentic audiences. Students would be assessed on their knowledge and growth with teacher generated rubrics and student self reflection. Covid required us to shift our focus and instead of real world projects, our students completed independent research projects, with more emphasis on direct instruction. As we plan for next year, we want to review the standards and create meaningful projects that will address the competencies.

Students participate in various learning experiences that allow them to know their community and the world. Every grade learns about Kansas geography, government, historical places and famous Kansans. We emphasize the importance of respect and responsibility for ourselves and others. Students participate in service learning projects to promote community involvement and the importance of helping others.

With the help of technology, our staff can teach and explain the concept of research. Students start in Kindergarten, picking out details and explaining their topic. First graders, continue with research and write a paragraph about their favorite animal. Second graders become famous Americans at our Wax Museum. Fourth graders share their state projects and fifth graders tell about a Native American custom or tribe. Our walls are decorated with student work, sharing their new found information.

Economics, history, government and geography are the topics that are assessed on the progress report, using rubrics and teacher made assessments. With the adoption of the HGSS, fourth graders are expected to participate in a classroom based assessment that promotes inquiry based learning. This assessment emphasizes supporting claims with evidence, which flows nicely with our emphasis on research and learning.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Library, Art, Music, and PE (LAMP) allows kids to explore creativity through sharing music, creating art, reading, and physical movement. Library is once a week for every class, and AMP is provided daily, with the students going to art, music, or physical education. In the library, students learn how to safely navigate the internet. There is an emphasis on reading for enjoyment and finding your passion. Using the art standards, students are exposed to different artists and mediums. In music, there is an emphasis on feeling the music and performing one's talents. In PE, students are encouraged to participate, while learning about healthy lifestyle choices and being respectful to one another. Students in these unique content areas explore their creativity, share interests, and move in ways that aren't always possible in the classroom.

Our fifth grade students also have the opportunity to start learning more about band. Band is a safe place where students can develop practice skills, teamwork and persistence. Being a part of the band in elementary school gives students the opportunity to participate in middle and high school. It is another way to connect students to their schools and communities.

We are fortunate to have a school counselor who utilizes Second Step and the Social Emotional Learning Standards. All students participate in guidance lessons. The counselor also provides small group opportunities for students who are new to the building, those who are navigating a parent divorce situation, or students needing to build social skills that will help with developing friendships.

Cottonwood has been able to use Title funds to hire a Technology Integration Specialist, who collaborates with the staff in order to help students integrate technology effectively. She encourages staff to utilize technology within the curriculum so that students are consistently engaging in the 4 C's (Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication). The integrationist also helps to provide opportunities for students such as Lego Club, Coding Club, and various STEM lessons that address the ISTE Standards.

We know that relationships matter, so the more students can get involved with other staff the more likely they are to feel seen and noticed while at school. Grant money is used to add books and buy necessary supplies to further enhance these important spaces. We know academics can be challenging for some kids; providing and supporting specials provides yet another way for students to be seen, challenged, and supported.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Cottonwood has a strong intervention program for students who need support. Multi-Tiered Support Systems provide students with academic help at their level. We are fortunate to have two highly qualified interventionists. One is a former special education teacher and the other has a master's in school psychology. As a result, these educators make sure the data from STAR assessments and i-Ready are fully disaggregated to inform groupings and the skills that most need addressed. The interventionists provide support for our students, as well as training and support for aides. Teachers communicate regularly with aides and interventionists to ensure students' needs are being met.

Within the walls of the classroom, teachers make sure there are ample opportunities for kids to find success. Novel units, based on ability, provide opportunities for kids to read books in small groups and work at their individualized level. Classroom libraries and leveled readers provide reading materials for all kids. Pathways to Reading training for all teachers in grades K-2 allow them to support struggling readers with the structured literacy that research shows is key to learning to read. Additionally, Accelerated Reader is utilized for goal setting and motivation. i-Ready provides a math path that is individualized for every learner.

Finally, Cottonwood utilizes a team approach for early identification of students with learning and behavior needs. Our model is referred to as the Student Based Support Team (SBST). On occasion, classroom interventions may not be enough to meet the needs of a student. When this occurs, the classroom teacher, or parent may refer the student to SBST. The Student Based Support Team will work to protect and foster an

environment which is conducive to learning through consistent programmed prevention, early identification and intervention. SBST is organized by the counselor, and consists of the interventionists, school psychologist, the principal, educators and the parents. This team meets with parents to discuss student strengths and weaknesses in both academics and behavior. Together the team reviews data and other pertinent information to determine if testing for special education is warranted.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

SBST provides a system that allows parents to work with teachers in determining if students should or should not be tested. Kansas and the Butler County Special Education Interlocal have set standards for qualifying for the Gifted program. For students who qualify as “gifted” per testing, the Extended Learning Program (ELP) meets daily, which is a rare feature for an elementary school. Here, students work on projects more on track for their level of thinking. The program is designed to enhance learning in the areas of leadership, teamwork, logical thinking and problem-solving.

In the classroom, reading levels are differentiated so students who are excelling, whether identified or not, are given opportunities to read more challenging texts through classroom selections, library support, and novel units. Oftentimes, students are allowed to create presentations to share their knowledge. As noted above, the i-Ready math curriculum allows students to work on their individualized plan. Teachers use the enrichment activities, which are available in the i-Ready curriculum.

3c. Special education:

Recognizing the increasing number of students needing support, CES was able to add an additional half-time special education teacher for the 2021-2022 school year. Every child receives the needed support to meet their IEP goals. Each of our special education teachers has several years of experience, which is invaluable in this hard-to-fill area. The services for our students are in close proximity to their classrooms, meaning little time is wasted traveling between classrooms. Special education teachers develop strong relationships with their kids and communicate regularly with the teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents to guarantee the best education in the most appropriate and least restrictive environment.

Additionally, CES hosts the self-contained program for Andover. The self-contained classrooms are for low-incidence students. Most of these students have multiple disabilities, Level 3 autism, Down Syndrome, or other exceptionalities that cause severe academic delay. Many of these students are non-verbal. We have three classrooms with three special education educators. A ratio of one paraprofessional for every two students is maintained to ensure adequate support. These students work on skills at their level, but also enjoy lunch with peers in the cafeteria and participate in LAMP as appropriate. Prior to Covid, these exceptional learners spent more time in general education classrooms with their peers as a part of their homeroom assignment. We look forward to their return in the fall. When our new playground was built, we intentionally planned for equipment that allowed for inclusivity. The goal is to provide each student as many inclusive opportunities as possible.

CES works diligently to make sure all students, regardless of placement, are in their least restrictive environment and making the appropriate gains, regardless of ability. Both the resource room and the self-contained program utilize paraprofessionals to their fullest ability, matching paras with students’ personality and needs. Para’s receive training in academic and behavioral support throughout the year.

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

CES has a limited number of students receiving ELL services, so we share an ELL teacher or aide with other schools in the district. The students who qualify for this program receive pull-out services as needed; the results of the Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA) dictate how often those services occur. The interventionists in the building work with the ELL educators to make sure student needs are met and to fill in any gaps. There are a limited number of bi-lingual educators in the building, but their skills are utilized as needed, such as meeting with parents or providing a good listening partner for students who want to share in their native language. Some staff have received an ELL endorsement by attending coursework

and adding the hours onto their teaching certificate. The endorsement allows teachers to develop a better understanding of linguistics and language development.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The amazing culture we have at CES is one of our greatest strengths. All who enter CES know that relationships are everything in our school. We take tremendous pride in the family environment we provide, and the care we show to all students and staff members.

Teachers plan lessons diligently, ensuring that students have opportunities to engage in relevant, meaningful learning. When Covid forced the closure of schools in the spring of 2020, educators worked hard to make sure learning was as engaging and enjoyable as possible. Teachers provided daily check-ins on Zoom, whole and small group teaching, read-alouds, and lunch bunch. Interventions and special education services continued in a modified way, and the LAMP teachers provided opportunities through Flipgrid. The Cottonwood staff wanted students and families to feel like they had a place to belong and learning was going to continue.

Last year, students attended onsite the whole school year, with masks required, little intermingling between grades, social distancing when possible, and desks in rows. While difficult for everyone, our kids were here, and we made it work. In many ways, our CES family grew stronger during this time.

At CES, we want every student to feel welcomed and included. We do that through morning announcements, sharing Second Step tenets, which encourage responsible learners and student written jokes of the day. Our Rise and Shine assemblies on Friday mornings allow staff and students to come together, celebrate accomplishments, birthdays, rave review students, and build school community. Chants taught through Rise and Shine keep our community strong. A well-thought-out seating plan has classes sitting next to buddy classes. The Cottonwood song, mission statement, and character lessons are an integral part in bringing together kinder through fifth grade.

With Covid restrictions fading, more school-wide events are returning. We look forward to adding the staff versus students basketball game this year and sharing time together. Helping students re-engage with one another across grade levels is an important goal as we end the school year. CES is taking advantage of every opportunity to bring parents and kids together to celebrate our learning community. This spring we will be hosting our first Family Movie Night on the nearby football field, sharing a meal and fun time together. We look forward to adding more of these moments as we return to pre-Covid conditions.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The CES community is dedicated to getting more done by working together. We start each school year with a Meet Your Teacher event, which opens our building for two hours to all families. With Covid, we adapted and met with one family at a time, either in person or via Zoom. Meeting one family at a time gives teachers the opportunity to start the year building connections. This change, because of the pandemic, is something we will continue.

We have always been fortunate to have strong parental involvement. Over 95% of our parents attend parent-teacher conferences. Teachers share data and student work so that parents feel connected. Several of our teachers use student-led conferences to share student progress.

Prior to Covid, parents were in the building to volunteer in the classroom, attend special events for school, and birthday parties. We held family engagement nights as a way to involve families in their students' learning. A variety of STEM activities, curriculum presentations, and math games were available for students and their families to enjoy. Newsletters, Facebook and SeeSaw have been utilized to communicate with families and keep them engaged.

We have an active PTO that provides support to teachers through treats, snacks, surprises, and grants. They are committed to bringing our families together by sponsoring a night out at a local amusement park, hosting

a family bowling night, and organizing CES nights at local restaurants. The school Site Council is a group of parents that meets regularly to help provide guidance and support for the school.

Parents or community members have been brought in as guest speakers. Our guests are able to share their occupations for the annual Careers on Wheels and their hobbies during Explorations days. Because of proximity to the high school, we are able to take advantage of their community service workers. High school students serve as helpers, readers, and tutors throughout the year. Recently, a club of middle schoolers agreed to come over once a week after their school day ended to read to our students.

As Covid restrictions are lessened, we are hoping to restart our relationship with a local nursing home. Located within walking distance of the school, students carol at Christmas and provide crafts and cards throughout the year. Service opportunities continue to be explored. In the spring of 2021, fifth-graders celebrated their 1,000th day of school by creating a domino train of more than 1,000 cereal boxes running throughout the school. Donated by community members and students, little ones lined the halls and cheered as one cereal box after another was tipped over. Fifth graders then walked the boxes to the local food bank. Additionally, a food drive and mitten drive are held annually to support our community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The teachers at CES worked diligently from the onset of Covid to provide support to students, parents, and one another. Some staff had no spring break in the spring of 2020 to make sure there were videos and documents readily available to teachers as they made the difficult and quick shift to teaching online. Others made sure Chromebooks were available to pick up for all learners. Paraprofessionals and aides helped distribute meals to students and their families. It was all hands on deck. While challenging, teachers felt supported because of this “just in time” training.

CES teachers know what it takes to build a community of adult learners who thrive. In March of 2020, teachers wanted to hold a parade for students, traveling through the CES boundaries to wave at kids and remind them how much they were missed. Teachers planned and orchestrated the event to create memories for students and staff alike.

Teachers are respected as professionals and given the freedom to determine what’s best for them and their students. Teachers have autonomy; they have the freedom to serve on committees, can ask for more responsibility, and can visit with the principal when times are challenging or just to grab a piece of candy and chat. We are a community and a family. With the support of a teacher dedicated to social and emotional learning, and another to provide ongoing technology support and integration, teachers have options and teammates when they want to try new things. Teachers have other professionals to help them better engage their students and address their needs, whether they’re academic or social/emotional.

Our PTO coordinates with educators to provide pick-me-ups as needed. The kitchen staff makes extras and shares with the staff. We celebrate birthdays, welcome babies and check in on one another during the hard times, whether personal or professional. The recurring word used to describe CES is “family,” and it’s accurate. We value one another as learners and educators and are there to make sure everyone can be their best — for one another and for the kids.

4. School Leadership:

CES is fortunate to have an administrator who is present and values relationships. She knows her staff and her students by name, all 500+ of them. She is dedicated to providing what’s best for her students and giving her staff what they need to reach and teach all kids. Detail-oriented with an eye for trouble, she sees what needs to be addressed, does so efficiently and respectfully, and keeps the building running smoothly. When a student is sent to her, she addresses the big needs and recognizes consequences are necessary but also adjusted based on the student. She is in and out of classrooms daily, and her therapy dog Brinkley adds another layer of support and love for kids. She is the consummate professional, but leads the way by building relationships and expecting respect.

School leadership is shared. While the principal is the noted and observed leader, she continues to seek advice and counsel from others. The GOAL team (Growth Opportunities for All Learners)/Building Leadership Team meets monthly with the principal to determine the next best steps for school improvement. Data is considered and informal needs assessments help determine what skills need addressed and how staff need support.

Grade-level PLC's have always been a priority. Time is built into the calendar during professional learning days for teams to meet. Teachers use that time to share academic and social emotional successes and identify areas of concern. Teams review data, adjust lessons and pacing in order to meet current student needs.

Redesign is a Kansas initiative giving school communities a voice in making decisions, meeting the needs of their population in the areas of student success skills, community partnerships, real-world application and personalized learning. Our school staff voted to be a part of this initiative, because we know that the field of education is ever changing. We want to be able to provide our students with opportunities for success and we want to continue to be innovative, to meet the needs of our community. As the leadership team learned about the change process and design process, they were responsible for sharing information with staff. Teachers self-selected research groups to ensure strategies were research based. Things like Explorations, class meetings, Second Step, the family calendar, problem-based learning and personalized learning were areas that were explored and implemented. It is and has been important for everyone to have buy in, in the process, planning and implementation.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

While the majority of our students are similar culturally, CES works to make sure every student feels safe, seen, known, and valued. Family trees in all of their various forms are celebrated. While Covid has temporarily halted many of our special days, it's also given us a chance to rethink them. Instead of Muffins with Mom and Donuts with Dad, we have moved to Building with Buddies and Donuts with Grown-Ups. We want to give our students a chance to not only share time with a grown-up, but to share their learning. We're thoughtfully moving away from "your mom and dad," and utilizing phrases like, "your grown-up" instead. Whether it's mom, or an aunt, or a foster parent, celebrating the people who love our kids the most and allowing them to spend time together is the objective, and a child shouldn't be alienated because of a unique family situation or a working parent.

We also are making sure our library and classroom libraries are reflective of the world we live in, showcasing books by various authors featuring kids from various backgrounds. The William Allen White reading list is always encouraged, and this compilation of diverse literature allows our kids to see stories of kids whose lives don't mirror their own but instead are a window to another world. We make sure students see artwork and prints of various learners, and our projects in art and social studies often focus on other cultures and various influential people of different eras, with an emphasis on minority groups.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Relationships. That's the cornerstone of our school and the roots of our cottonwood tree.

It starts with a staff that cares for one another. We believe in the value of each member, and we model respect for each other to our students and community members. We are a relationship-driven school, and we function as a family.

These relationships are carried into the classroom. We know students who like school and who like their teachers are more likely to engage with their learning and make good choices. Students are empowered in these structured and family-like classrooms, which allows them to take on challenges and set higher goals. It's easy to be brave when you feel seen and supported.

Teachers go to their students' events, keep in touch beyond the school year, and reach out to former students. Once a CES student, always a CES student. It is not unusual for former students to return to see the principal and check in with former teachers. They know they are welcome, and they keep showing up.

Students who feel safe reach out and cheer for other students. Buddy classrooms, Clubs, and Explorations allow students to make connections with students and staff all over the building. Every child has an extensive school family, and that's empowering to many of our students.

Similarly, community members know they are welcome at CES. Explorations, Career Days, and volunteering in classrooms provide opportunities for various stakeholders to become a part of our CES family. We create a rapport based on respect and building new relationships, and this keeps our volunteers returning time and time again.

Not all kids trust and believe in these relationships — not initially. We continue to add to our social/emotional toolbox, understanding the role trauma plays in a child's behaviors. We are adjusting our methods, recognizing many students need practice with behaviors much like they need practice with sight words. We know that ongoing professional learning will help us not only teach the most challenging kids, but reach them and provide the support they need to move forward academically and socially.

At CES, it begins and ends with relationships. We cheer for one another and work through our differences. We are a group of learners, educators, students, workers, readers, mathematicians, scientists, historians, artists, musicians, athletes, and computer specialists — working with one another to grow stronger roots and branches. We are family.