

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

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

School Mailing Address 905 Dickinson Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Chillicothe State MO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 64601-2698

County Livingston County

Telephone (660) 646-4255 Fax (660) 646-0801

Web site/URL https://www.chillicotheschools.org/o/dewey E-mail mrucker@chillicotheschools.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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Dan Wiebers E-mail dwiebers@chillicotheschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Chillicothe R-II School District Tel. (660) 646-4566

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Lindy Chapman
(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.

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

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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	67	59	126
5	58	55	113
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	125	114	239

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90 % White
 - 5 % 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: 13%

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	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	31
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	239
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Spanish, Vietnamese, Filipino

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41 %

Total number students who qualify: 97

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 18 %
44 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>0</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>22</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</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: 12
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.	10
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 24:1

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%	97%	96%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

To prepare every student for success. The vision is to build a brighter future for our children and our community.

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

https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/430908/Notice_of_Non_Discrimination.pdf

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

From our demographic numbers or the view from our street, Dewey Elementary School appears as standard as any other elementary school in Missouri; yet, our school is anything but average. Over the past decade, we have embraced a specific core foundation, which we display as our Pillars (descriptive guides for the adults who work here) -- progressive, student-centered, community-focused, and growth-minded. Holding the foundational pillars together are our Ribbons: leadership, relationships, and collaboration. We know we have a high rate of students receiving free-and-reduced lunches and families living in poverty, an ever-present drug use, declining parent involvement, and an aging building structure, but we do not use those issues as excuses for low performance. Instead, we push our staff and students to still reach for greatness, to build better lives than many see modeled, and to keep our small community relevant and thriving.

Years ago our school district was considered a great place to work -- competitive salaries, a Blue Ribbon high school, a state-recognized primary school, and an influx of quality teacher applicants. Sadly, as modern living shifted many middle class families toward suburbs, it left small towns like ours with higher poverty rates, less taxed income, more drug use, and underserved mental health needs. To combat those struggles, we get mass support from our city, school district, and foundation leadership. Even with the exodus of many middle class families from Chillicothe, our city councils, mayors, and developers of the past two decades continue to bring new businesses and public events to the local citizens. Our superintendents and school boards have also remained progressive ensuring that we passed bonds/levies to build a new high school and new early childhood school, and they also worked with staff to implement a K-12 one-to-one technology initiative to keep students' learning up-to-date. Furthermore, our small town has more community-based foundations than any other small Missouri community of which we know. The Chillicothe Education Foundation, Virginia Wall Foundation, Jenkins' Foundation, Lillian DesMarias Foundation, and Livingston County Community Foundation are not even half of the powerful foundations at our disposal for new dreams and ideas within our schools and community. These organizations have helped us build a state-of-the-art track/field/football/soccer stadium, added air conditioning to all older buildings, implemented an elementary STEAM Club, built parking lots and roads, bought updated classroom furniture, updated aging libraries, and more. They even recognize annual Teacher and Support Staff of the Year with monetary gifts to appreciate and encourage staff. While other small towns around us are dying, Chillicothe strives to remain a strong Missouri town.

While these examples prove our small district still has robust support in place, we must also acknowledge that these come with very high expectations from our community. Residents expect constant, clear communication from our schools, require detailed, worthwhile reasons for any levies/bonds before approval, and have little patience for poor performance. Because many of our residents grew up knowing Chillicothe R-II as a top performer in the state, they will never accept anything less. Therefore, as the only fourth and fifth-grade building in our district, Dewey Elementary School takes specific steps to maintain our constituents' trust. First, we have wholeheartedly instituted a Sting Time for twelve years; during this time, students receive Tier-II intervention support or advanced enrichment opportunities by rotating to different teachers' classrooms for 30 minutes daily based on their AIMSweb Reading skill scores. This dedicated instructional time allows our instructors to remain student-centered by differentiating based on individual needs as well as growth-minded by ensuring that all our students show a year or more of growth in their core academics. Throughout those same years, we have also met quarterly with a building-level data team to rigorously track all Tier-II and Tier III struggling students to guarantee we are providing them with the best interventions possible.

Dewey has also retained the same principal for the past twelve years, which is unheard of in today's academic setting. Continuous leadership helps teachers thrive. In addition, our administrator set aside a weekly common team plan for both grade levels, which allows for purposeful collaboration. During this time, staff work through their common pacing guides with high-quality curriculum resources -- Lucy Calkins's ELA Units of Study, EngageNY Math, Generation Genius science, Study Island review, and more. Finally, over the past two years of surviving education in a COVID landscape, we have specifically focused on building deep relationships with staff and students. We have utilized grant monies to fund social emotional learning curriculums and outdoor learning furniture, have planned student team-building times in

our weekly schedules, have lessened the outside interruptions to gain back more instructional time, have added a full-time behavior support specialist, and have surprised staff with more treats and happy moments, all to purposefully combat the stresses of pandemic teaching and learning.

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:

Our faculty and staff share core beliefs in our approach to teaching and learning. First, we build yearly pacing guides with clear expectations on the units and lessons to be covered. Initially, this was a difficult transition for some staff to fully embrace as many of our strongest teachers wanted to continue utilizing the units they loved most, but after many collaborative work sessions over the past several years, our teams reached the realization that the scope and sequence of the curriculum provided for teacher autonomy within our curriculum while still sticking to the same lessons and pacing as a team. Having growth mindsets and collaboration, the staff determined that in order to provide clarity in learning for every teacher and student, pacing, curriculum, and teacher autonomy must all be involved. Consistency and rigor within our curriculum and pacing guides are non-negotiable now as we have a year-long pacing guide for each grade level in grammar, writing, reading, math, and science. Another philosophical ideal we all agree upon as a building is a commitment to rare instructional interruptions. We are purposeful about when we schedule trips and guest speakers so that these special events happen on early-out holidays or after state testing because we acknowledge that we need every instructional day possible to teach our curriculum. A third core tenant of our building-wide educational philosophy focuses around the power of individualized interventions. We set aside 30 minutes every morning where students transition to intervention and enrichment teachers in ELA to provide direct instruction focused specifically on their individual learning needs. While we have previously attempted to build our interventions into homeroom minutes, we find our work to be far more purposeful and impactful with this dedicated building-wide intervention time.

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

Dewey Elementary School believes the best resource to teach the five components of literacy within the English/Language Arts curriculum is our teacher/student relationships. This has been proven over the last few years and even more since the mandated school closure due to the pandemic. Our students returned to the classroom a bit broken but resilient and eager to form relationships with their peers and staff. Once we identified the immense impact the pandemic had on our students, we slowed down instruction, filled in missing pieces from the interrupted year, and focused even more on building relationships.

Tier II students receive focused comprehension and fluency instruction in a small-group setting daily for thirty minutes. Students in these groups are monitored bi-weekly for progress. At the same time, Tier 1 students rotate through math, social studies, and writing enrichment groups about every six weeks.

All classrooms have a 90-minute protected ELA instructional block. Teachers use vetted teaching resources to instruct, give students time for independent practice, and confer with individual students and small groups. Our primary resource for instruction is Lucy Calkins's Units of Study incorporated with the workshop model. Since the adoption of Lucy Calkins, we have seen an increase in reading enjoyment and a deeper level of thinking in our students. Additionally, we use Study Island as an instructional tool. This program teaches students ELA standards in a fun, engaging way. The incorporation of Study Island helps students navigate the digital format of the state assessment with rigorous questions. The teachers at Dewey have spent innumerable hours checking and cross-checking our resources to ensure we teach all Missouri Learning Standards. We incorporate Write Bright and Mentor Sentences into our writing instruction with Lucy Calkins. Write Bright uses a variety of writing activities that keep students engaged while teaching larger writing tasks in smaller chunks to prevent students from becoming overwhelmed with the writing process. Mentor Sentences is a grammar program that focuses on one exemplar sentence each week. The students work with this sentence to identify parts of speech, writing style, and punctuation. These activities provide opportunities to see sentences used in context and encourage writers to mimic those sentences. We have found that the use of these resources along with Lucy Calkins gives the students a well-rounded writing experience. Our common assessments are rigorous and carefully designed to assess standards using a variety

of question types. Post-assessment analysis conducted by grade-level teams ensures the questions stay relevant and aligned to the rigor and stamina students need to show increased proficiency in reading and writing on state assessments. Additionally, bi-monthly data meetings consist of the classroom teacher, reading interventionist, special education teacher, and the principal. During this time, we discuss students that are at-risk or above grade level academically and determine research-based interventions or enrichment strategies that will be utilized to ensure we are meeting each student's individual needs. The goal is to close learning gaps and provide opportunities for students to advance beyond grade-level competencies.

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

At Dewey Elementary School, we believe students will advance mathematically when they are engaged in rigorous problem-solving. Our curriculum is based on the Missouri Learning Standards. We carefully plan our yearly scope and sequence and guarantee to teach all state-identified priority standards. We strive to teach students to think, strategize, and problem solve by engaging them in relevant content, direct instruction, and formative assessment. During 2019-2020, Chillicothe R-II School District began using Engage New York, Zearn, and Edulastic in grades K-5. This has given the students coherence within their math instruction. They now see the same models, problem-solving methods, and common vocabulary. This content is challenging and develops a deeper conceptual understanding of mathematics. In the beginning, we were worried our struggling learners would be left behind by this curriculum; however, we have discovered the opposite. We are finding that all students are achieving more. Two teachers were reassured at a recent professional development conference hosted by the Missouri Council of Teachers of Mathematics where presenter Kim Bounds said the key to success in all students, including struggling learners, is a strong teacher-student relationship and rigorous work.

In addition, our teachers deliver content in a variety of engaging ways. Teachers design lessons based on the needs of their students. This might include whole group, small group, co-teaching, or individual instruction. Lessons often include multimedia components. Another resource we utilize is Study Island. This program is game-based and competitive while providing standard-based practice that drives proficiency. Edulastic is the platform we use for assessment that allows us to quickly identify learning gaps and monitor progress toward standard mastery. Questions reflect the depth of knowledge that students will see on our summative state assessment at the end of the year. Questions are similar to question types on the grade-level state assessment such as multiple-choice, constructed response, performance events, or technology-enhanced question types. We use the data from assessments to plan further instruction and to provide remediation opportunities. Besides remediation that takes place within the classroom, we also offer other opportunities. For example, our instructional coach provides math pull-out Tier II instruction every day on fact fluency. We offer a math enrichment rotation where students review and preview mathematical concepts while other students are in Tier II instruction based on data analysis. Chillicothe R-II is also committed to a three-year plan with an educational consultant. The consultant works with teachers to further develop common assessments that reflect the rigor and format of our state assessments. Math is discussed weekly at our team collaborative meetings. Teachers share pacing plans, ideas, data, successes, and struggles currently happening within their classrooms. Math is also a topic at our data team meetings where students who are struggling in math are discussed and ideas are shared to help further their mathematical understanding. At Dewey Elementary, mathematical content, instruction, and assessment are thoughtfully designed, implemented, and analyzed, so students develop enduring knowledge that will serve them year after year.

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

One of the areas our building has substantially changed its practices in over the past three years is science. Fifth grade always felt the pressure to teach a full hour of dedicated science time daily because they are MAP tested in the subject. However, in our younger grades, this subject gets cut short far too often due to a lack of time to cover all the core ELA and math standards. After watching our science scores drop considerably over the past decade our principal realized drastic steps must be taken to remedy this gap in our teaching and made a one-hour science rotation mandatory at both grade levels. This ensures two critical pieces happen daily -- science instruction is protected and never cut short, and each teacher becomes an expert in one science unit and then teaches the unit to each class as they rotate through the units about every six weeks. We saw a stark turnaround in our science scores after only two years. We also guarantee to have

that science hour every single day of the year unless it's an early out day. To be even more proactive, we held meetings with the K-3rd grade teachers in our district to further express the need for improved, protected science time at their grade levels. Finally, we have also invested in multiple high-quality science curriculum resources in recent years including Nature Unleashed from the Missouri Department of Conservation, Generation Genius, Mystery Science, STEMscopes, and Study Island. We find it takes numerous science resources to cover all of our standards properly, and there is not one perfect science tool on the market for Missouri Learning Standards.

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

In our building, we believe social studies is an important subject, but with the demands of science, math, and ELA, we struggle to find the time in our day to give it its own dedicated time slot. Using the Lucy Calkins resources in reading and writing provides meaningful opportunities to cover the Missouri Learning Standards for social studies in the course of our ELA instruction. Now, students are spending time researching, reading, and writing about important topics in our country's history. Fourth graders cover topics such as the Thirteen Colonies and the Revolutionary War, while Fifth graders learn about events in the United States from 1800 to 2000, including Westward Expansion, the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. In both grades, instead of memorizing dates, students focus on the impact events had and continue to have today. Students learn the "how" and "why" of events and the people who were instrumental in the growth and development of our country. Students look at the first-hand accounts of individuals well-known to the events, but they also research the perspective of others whose stories remain untold. Over the last three years, we have seen a marked increase in the interest and engagement of our students in learning about the history of our country and its people. Students use schema from the fourth grade and apply it to the events discussed in the fifth grade. This skill gives them the ability to critically look at the causes, consequences, and impacts on our world. Additionally, during our 30-minute Sting Time, students participate in a social studies rotation, learning how to research, analyze, and report on significant events in the history of the United States. This extra time connects their work in ELA throughout the year, providing a solid foundation for future educational research.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our specials teachers are phenomenal at Dewey Elementary and provide stellar academic experiences for our students to support their learning across all subject areas. First, our district recently separated physical education and health into two different positions. This allows our students to receive the proper number of exercise minutes each week but also receive direct instruction on health, fitness, nutrition, the human body, and more. These concepts specifically help our students live healthier lives but also perform even better on the fifth-grade science MAP test. In art, our instructor chose different historical artists and time periods to focus her lessons around, so the kids are receiving core social studies knowledge within their art class. Music courses have always been well emphasized in our district, never being cut due to budget constraints. Our district has a proud history of nationally known high school band groups and instructors, and our elementary music courses develop both vocal and instrumental music techniques to help feed our upper-level programs. In addition, the music concepts our kids learn early in life help enhance their counting and mathematical concepts. Our library media specialist has transformed our library spaces over the past five years to be inviting, loud, collaborative spaces. She incorporates Makerspace, design thinking, digital citizenship, research, book passion, and more into her weekly library lessons. Our LMS even supports our fourth-grade teachers in moving through more of their science standards by helping teach the experimental design process and all its corresponding elements through a month-long experiment at the library. Furthermore, our librarian helps purchase tons of newer, diverse literature each year, helping open kids'

eyes to the bigger world outside our small county. She also helps supplement book club sets for the Lucy Calkins's curriculum to make sure we have sets that compliment all reading abilities. Lastly, our school counselor has worked hard over the last five years to drastically increase our social-emotional learning curriculum, teacher training, and grant monies to better support students' Maslowian needs. By first bringing TraumaSmart training to our staff, we began to realize that if students' basic human needs are not met, academic learning is practically pointless. After this training, we begged to dig further into resources that would teach us how to best help our students coming with trauma, so our counselor used grant monies to fund our SEL curriculum, Second Steps, which teaches students self-regulation. We continue receiving TraumaSmart refreshers each year as well to remain intentional in recognizing students' trauma and supporting them through it. Another item our SEL grant monies bought us was a set of 25 outdoor learning chairs, so students get more fresh air and sunshine, which we know aids positive mental health. To support student self-regulation, we also employ a full-time, certified Behavior Room Specialist who not only monitors students and their goals but also meets with them for daily lunch groups to work on missing life skills and takes children on brain breaks as needed.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

For the past decade, our building has excelled most in our Data Team meetings and interventions geared towards Tier II and Tier III students. Without fail, our Data Team, composed of the building principal, Title I interventionist, instructional coach, and special education teacher, has met with every homeroom teacher five times per year for the past ten years. These meetings serve us threefold -- first, they track our struggling students who might need special services referrals; second, they hold teachers accountable for reaching students' alternative needs; third, they provide homeroom teachers with strategies and support for difficult situations. We also use AIMSweb scores, reviewed at Data Teams, to build our intervention block. This 30-minute instruction occurs building-wide every morning. During this time, students are divided into well-below-average, below-average, average, above-average, and well-above-average ELA groups. We ensure that our four well-below-average groups never have more than a five-to-one student-to-teacher ratio so that very purposeful, direct instruction occurs in needed areas such as fluency and comprehension. Our two below-average groups never have more than a 15:1 ratio, and these groups focus on vocabulary, comprehension, book choice, and book club discussions. Our on-level or above-level groups meet in larger sections to complete ELA enrichment projects. While last year's COVID restrictions did not allow us to intermix groups throughout the building, we had carried out these intervention groups for so long that our staff understood how to do the best interventions possible within their homerooms as a one-year fix. As additional support for our Tier II and Tier III students, we also use our Title I interventionist and special education teachers in both push-in and pull-out models of instruction depending on student needs, building schedules, and teacher preferences. We find that a mix of services best reaches our varied students' abilities.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Our building has three core services for students performing above grade level each year. For the past thirty years, our district has sustained a gifted program within Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education guidelines. All students performing at (or above) the 95th percentile in an academic area as well as IQ and at (or above) the 90th percentile in reasoning are pulled out for 180 minutes of weekly gifted classroom services. In that setting, students work on convergent and divergent thinking, research skills, independent studies, and more. Even during our district's tightest financial years, our school board never cut gifted funding, thereby emphasizing our belief in differentiated instruction. For our high achieving students who do not meet the state requirements for gifted services, we offer two additional services in our specific building. During our daily building-wide intervention block, students at or above grade level in ELA attend enrichment groups. These classes rotate through projects such as in-depth research papers, published author pieces, detailed social studies units, school newspaper/announcements, advanced book clubs, and more. In addition, the curriculum resources we adopted three years ago (Lucy Calkins's Units of Study for ELA and Engage NY for math) specifically address how to advance high-achieving students while still serving the struggling learners simultaneously. We appreciate that these materials give us tangible ideas on how to reach all learners instead of one-size-fits-all teaching. For example, during the Units of Study

lessons, students are researching under a class-wide umbrella topic but within their specific subtopic interest and with resources at their reading level, or at other times, the kids are placed into ability- and interest-oriented book clubs during fictional units. With EngageNY, the lessons come with advanced question options, but we also use Zearn in conjunction with EngageNY, which allows students to progress through standards at their own pace.

3c. Special education:

At Dewey Elementary, we believe in an inclusive model for Special Education services and recognize the need for students to be in the regular education classroom as much as possible. It is our goal to keep all ability levels together, as we feel they are best served in the least restrictive environment. We also find that students grow best with higher-achieving peer models motivating them and processing grade-level content in their kid-based discussions. Children will live up to what you believe of them. Since students function well in the regular classroom with added support, we use the co-teaching model at each grade level. The special education teachers each work with a grade-level teacher to implement students' IEP goals and co-teaching methods in the regular classroom on a daily basis. While this model serves about half of our students on IEPs, we do find that some of our students still need more individualized pull-out instruction, so about half the day, our special education teachers serve students in their own classrooms. Our speech and language pathologist serves all of her minutes in a pull-out model, using a five-to-one ratio or smaller for the most differentiated instruction possible, and our physical and occupational therapists see kids one-on-one for the same reason. We also utilize three amazing paraprofessionals who support students in the regular homeroom environment in order to keep all students with their peers as much as possible. One resource our district invested in specifically for special education teachers to utilize as an intervention is iReady, and teachers across the board recognize the impact of this program. Lastly, we have recently qualified for grant funding to purchase more below-grade-level texts to supplement the Lucy Calkins's curriculum with developmentally ready texts.

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

The ELL program at Dewey Elementary had one student actively enrolled in the program, and three students who were at a monitoring status after earning a high enough score on the ACCESS test to exit the program. Due to the low numbers of ELL speakers in our district in the last few years, the district has reformatted the ELL model to reflect a full language immersion program. These students receive education in English for the entire school day. English is the target language that we are hoping to help them understand and improve to the point of being as fluent as their native English-speaking peers. ELL students are provided accommodations in the classroom for classwork and testing through the individualized Limited English Plan or LEP. These students are given extra time to complete assignments, the option to have their test read out loud to them, and the ability to use a translator when applicable. Students who are actively enrolled in the ELL program are given the option of having one hour of individualized tutoring per week to provide assistance with classwork as needed. If there is no work with which they need assistance, then we work on improving fluency through practicing grade-level vocabulary and grammar they may encounter in their everyday conversations. In the 2020-2021 school year, the student received one hour of tutoring per week. This student did exit the program after this school year due to the progress she made this year and improved her score on the 2021 ACCESS test. She is currently only on a monitoring status.

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

The homeless coordinator made home/hotel visits to students who have been deemed homeless. The visits were multipurpose in making sure students were connected to school, answering questions for the families, and providing instructional resources such as computer devices and hotspots. The visit was also conducted to make sure the families had access to nutritional food items and then provided locations for our local food pantries as deemed necessary. Students who are homeless at any point during the year are offered academic help through before and after-school tutoring, an adult mentor to communicate with, and tiered instructional support based on academic needs.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Last year, teaching during COVID restrictions presented many new roadblocks in our instructional practices as educators, but after all was said and done, we realized that many of the shifts we made actually aided us in better engaging students. For several years, we were attempting different models of instruction throughout our building, trying to find what fit us best -- co-teaching models, project-based learning units, integrated ELA and social studies units, workshop model, small group learning, etc. However, we were trying too many ideas without fidelity, which was leaving our instruction too haphazard. Our students and teachers both needed strong, clear, consistent instructional units for the best student engagement and achievement. COVID forced us to slow down, return to some basics of traditional teaching, and remove most distractions. By removing extra events and visitors, we found so many additional hours for instructional time that we were left with an additional week for teaching before MAP testing. Because of this, grade levels built new MAP reviews where the kids either attended MAP “boot camp” or “traveled” to all seven continents to review their learning for the year. Our students loved these wrap-up units, and teachers no longer felt stressed fitting it all in. In addition, our teachers were not spread too thin by teaching both in-person and online with our virtual learners because our principal did not allow that. Instead, we had one homeroom teacher who went virtual for the entire school year. This meant slightly larger class sizes for our in-person teachers, but everyone agreed that the stress of larger classes was worth it in order to not double up with two completely different models of delivery. Our principal chose one of our strongest instructional leaders to be the virtual teacher since that model was so new to all of us, and she ensured that the same level of instructional rigor and deeply personal relationships still happened in her virtual classroom. She kept students engaged through the use of digital choice boards and daily agendas in addition to daily live Zoom meetings and published interactive videos. She also held live Zoom interventions with her struggling virtual students, and she oversaw our quarantined students as well, which meant our homeroom teachers never had to overlap in-person instruction with virtual instruction. This led to much higher student engagement and teacher satisfaction across the board because everyone was getting their teacher’s full attention.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

While COVID did not allow us to interact with our community in person during the 2020-2021 school year, our partnerships continued through outside services, and now that we can welcome visitors into our building this year, we have fully reconnected. Our district’s elementary buildings have participated in Partners in Education for 30+ years, which allows our children to learn about different businesses, understand job options, have additional role models, and provide businesses with fun art to display. For 12+ years, our district has also partnered with local churches that provide Backpack Buddies for our low socio-economic families on weekends and throughout summer to ensure no child goes hungry. In addition, when COVID shut down our school for two months in 2020, our community rallied to provide daily meals to all families through a massive bus-delivery method. Our county library also works with us to ensure all kids have online logins for free audiobooks and ebooks, and recently, our library opened an additional second location to focus on children and teen services. While our community is fantastic at providing us with support, Dewey Elementary also strives to serve our community as well. We hold annual fundraisers for Foster Adopt Connect and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. We also have student groups who give up some of their recess time in order to spread kindness throughout Chillicothe by writing cards for veterans, visiting nursing homes, committing random acts of kindness, sending thank you cards to first responders, and more. One change we made due to COVID that actually improved community relationships was a shift to one-on-one Open House visits with homeroom teachers. For decades, our district used two hours one evening in mid-August for families to come to meet their new teachers and buildings. However, because of contact tracing, we could not use that model in August of 2020, so while our middle and high school students attended their first day of school that month, our elementary teachers stayed in their rooms during their contracted time, allowing families to visit at individually scheduled times. Parents raved about this shift because they felt the personal 15 minutes was such an improvement. They were given the teacher’s undivided attention instead of being herded through the room with a mass of people. Our teachers agreed with how powerful this Elementary Open House Day was, and we have now built it into our current and upcoming calendars.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

We work in a building with a leader who emphasizes professional culture and always has in her tenure with us. The beliefs, shared values, and school operations are consistent and run smoothly. There are many interactions between all the school personnel including hard conversations at times that make our building better. Every decision made within the system is based on the pillars and ribbons that have been an active part of the system process for years. Professional learning is expected as our standards are set to be the best. The grade level teams have been required to meet weekly for collaborative teaming for over the past ten years. At this time, the collaboration does not need to be required as all of our staff understand the value of these team meetings and want to attend them. Each week teachers receive a professional learning committee agenda in advance outlining the goals for that hour. The agenda also contains norms (determined at the beginning of the year by the team), team member roles, essential questions, detailed descriptions of the upcoming lessons in each subject area for the next two weeks. These team meetings not only include all grade level homeroom teachers but also the Title I interventionist, the instructional coach, the special education teacher, the behavior specialist, and the principal. We find it so much easier to make decisions and plan for the upcoming weeks once all of us are in a room together. It is also important to add that these meetings are built into our contracted work time so teachers are more willing to dig into the objectives for that meeting instead of simply watching the clock to leave. Another element that has helped our professional culture for the past three years is our addition of an instructional coach. Just as we were adopting new curriculum resources in reading, writing, and math, it was imperative to our launching success to have a coach who could dig through these materials a few months ahead of us. She was able to explain where we were headed, cut out the non-essentials, and find us additional resources. Having an instructional coach serves as a great direct contact to teachers with curriculum and implementation questions of the new resources, and keeps the principal aware of teacher needs. An involved instructional coach can be both a liaison from teachers to principal and vice versa.

4. School Leadership:

In today's ever-changing educational landscape, we are blessed to have maintained the same building principal for the past twelve years. While the average tenure for building principals is currently much shorter, this consistency in leadership has been crucial to our success. Her clear high expectations of staff push us all to be our best. We find that the best principals, ours included, must have a clear vision and a willingness to assert that staff follows the expectations that lead to that end goal. She encourages and provides a platform for every staff member to be a leader. We can be a grade-level leader, a content area leader, or a community-centered program leader. We find that our principal reaches her vision in three tangible ways: communication, drive, and community-building. To start the year on the right foot, our principal hosts an all-staff retreat in early August where we get to know each other more deeply, learn our personality and work styles, and simply relax and laugh a lot. As the year progresses, our principal continues this welcoming communication style through an office door that is always open for each of us to come to talk and ask her questions. She also ensures that communication amongst ourselves remains fluid by requiring commonly shared digital documents such as pacing guides, team meeting agendas, weekly principal update emails, and a strong building Facebook presence. For years, she has preached that we each have the chance to build our own positive online narrative, and if we do not, someone else might build one for us that we do not like. As for her deep internal drive, the main phrase you will ever hear come out of our principal's mouth during difficult discussions is: What is best for the child? This guiding principle makes us all take pause and really examine our decisions and intentions. Lastly, our principal gains deep enjoyment from community building. She plans frequent teacher reward games like scavenger hunts, spin the wheel for prizes, teacher drawings, instructional games, and more, sometimes occurring in the middle of the hallway or office and always at staff meetings and professional development days. She also works hard with community volunteers to get more adult helpers and mentors in our building and to get our students volunteering for our larger community of Chillicothe. Ultimately, she trusts her staff as much as her staff trusts her.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

In our small, rural town, our student and parent population is not teeming with nearly as much diversity as one would encounter in suburban and urban Missouri school districts. The main category where we see the most variance in our students is socio-economic status. As mentioned in our Families and Communities section, we utilize many strong community partnerships to help bring equity to our students from lower-income homes. These services include Backpack Buddies, Partners in Education, numerous fundraisers, a free after-school club, a thriving county library, a dozen public parks, and more. Our town leadership has also worked hard over the past decade to bring more affordable housing options to our citizens. In addition, our local police department recently transitioned to new leadership with a mission of being more present in the day-to-day lives of our residents, so they are seen as a resource and support. While these services help bring equity to children throughout our district, we also understand we have a duty to teach our children about all types of diversity they will encounter throughout our world even if it is not seen in their current daily lives. In order to best accomplish this, our librarian and instructional coach have been committing as many library and grant funds as possible toward diverse literature. We understand that books serve as mirrors to and windows into other cultures and experiences. We are teaching our staff how to utilize quality diverse literature to educate our students on the shared human experience, a respect for varied cultures, a glimpse at other belief systems, and exposure to all appearances and lifestyle types. In addition, during our ELA and history crossover lessons with Lucy Calkins's Units of Study, the discussions also challenge students to connect the lessons of the American Revolution, Westward Expansion, Civil War, the world wars, etc. with modern-day issues and current events. We also utilize Scholastic News for these modern-day discussions. We pose questions asking kids to connect the past to the present in order to help them be better humans moving forward. Lastly, after teachers implemented Lucy Calkins's lessons in ELA, they began realizing we were skipping historical memorial lessons throughout the year because we were overly focused on using the Units of Study curriculum, so last year, teachers made sure that all MLK, Pearl Harbor, 9-11, Presidents' Day, etc. lessons were built into our pacing guides permanently.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

While we know many layers of decisions and strategies contribute to our current success levels, we feel confident in saying the one practice that has been most instrumental in our recent success is our concerted effort toward relationship building. Last year, we refocused our main attention to building stronger relationships with students, between colleagues, and with leadership. As the pandemic struck and left us all feeling quite isolated and without a proper goodbye to our 2020 classes, we saw how sadly our students came to us in August 2020. The world was so unclear for all of us, no matter our age. We began strategic efforts to address these feelings of loneliness while we were all stuck behind masks and dividers. First, our principal, counselor, and instructional coach started by forming an anonymous building “Morale Gals” group where we spread cheer through little teacher surprises at team plan, teacher gifts, holiday gift exchanges, and more. While this did not impact instruction directly, it did improve teacher morale and happiness in the workplace, which then improves overall instruction. Furthermore, we wrote grants to purchase Social and Emotional Learning cards for every classroom, so teachers could use them during class meetings and small transition times to allow students and teachers to all better know each other. We also added Festive Fridays into our weekly schedule, where students were given a fun craft or game to complete with each other that had nothing to do with academics. We knew our students needed purposefully planned fun and interaction because of how COVID restrictions were affecting their day-to-day interactions. We addressed that same need by also adding a short morning recess to our schedules because the kids’ regular recess had to be shortened due to contact tracing. Finally, we saw kids struggling with behavioral choices throughout the fall of 2020 because of the lack of consistency throughout our world, so we purposefully refocused on our BIST program through weekly class teaching points, digital example videos, and common expectation posters hung throughout all public spaces. We focused on relationship building and Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) during our professional development so all adults were on the same page with expectations. While this may not be our “one most impactful practice” any other year, purposeful relationship building was absolutely the answer for us last school year.