

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

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

School Mailing Address 2556 Maple Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Lake City State PA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 16423-1515

County Erie County

Telephone (814) 774-5602 Fax (814) 774-8885

Web site/URL
https://www.girardsd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uRE_C_ID=372160&type=d E-mail mike.trudnowski@girardsd.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* Mrs. Donna Miller E-mail donna.miller@girardsd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Girard School District Tel. (814) 774-5602

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Richard Brown
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	62	60	122
1	59	52	111
2	68	50	118
3	60	54	114
4	61	47	108
5	0	0	0
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	310	263	573

*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):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.3 % Asian
 - 1.8 % Black or African American
 - 0.3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 91.1 % White
 - 6.3 % 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: 8%

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	31
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	47
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	562
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.08
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

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

Russian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %

1 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 59 %

Total number students who qualify: 336

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 22 %
124 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>17</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>26</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>24</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>11</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>49</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>4</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>10</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 14
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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	25
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	17
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 12:1

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%	96%	95%	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.

The mission of Girard School District is to inspire young minds to reach their fullest potential through innovative curriculum, individualized learning opportunities, and inclusive community practices for college, career, and life readiness.

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

<http://go.boarddocs.com/pa/gira/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=B84SW366146C>

<http://go.boarddocs.com/pa/gira/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=B84SWA661471>

<http://go.boarddocs.com/pa/gira/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=B84SWP661474>

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

The Girard School District community is one that pulls from two neighboring localities, Girard and Lake City, with an approximate combined population of 5,600 people. It is comprised of one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school with an approximate student enrollment of 1,500 between the three schools. Rice Avenue Middle School and Girard High School are located on the same parcel of land in Girard Borough while Elk Valley Elementary is located a short distance down the road in Lake City. This proximity allows for seamless integration of resources, learning, and expanded student experiences. Despite the many challenges our families face due to poverty, lack of resources, and employment demands, most of our families are actively engaged in student learning and extracurricular activities. It is evident that the school district is the hub of the community.

Our Elk Valley Elementary School community consistently pulls together to provide enriching academics and social emotional experiences for our students. We are a School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports and Intervention School (PBIS) defined by three expectations: be safe, be responsible, and be caring. PBIS is a proactive, preventative, whole-school approach to achieving sustained improvement in the academic and social climates. Elk Valley Elementary is state recognized for meeting all three PBIS tiers of intervention with consistency and fidelity. In addition, a universal social emotional curriculum is taught K-4 through Second Step SEL™ and Bullying Prevention. These are supplemented with the Toolbox Project™. These programs provide common language and tools that build resiliency and are transferable from year to year.

Academically all students are assessed three times per year in English Language Arts and Mathematics utilizing the nationally normed NWEA MAP Growth assessments. These assessments provide teachers with accurate and actionable evidence to target instructional needs for students. Additionally, at the primary grades Acadience and Heggerty assessments are utilized to determine areas of need and to continually progress monitor.

The teachers, parents, and staff work collaboratively and tirelessly to provide top notch opportunities for our students. Our Parent Teacher Organization takes an active and lead role in assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating different learning and social engagement opportunities. Additionally, local community pillars such as the Elk Creek Recreation Board, the Girard School District Foundation, Girard-Lake City Chamber of Commerce, and district sports boosters plan and sponsor many community events and programs. With input from these ongoing partnerships, and through multiple needs assessments as conducted through our Title I status, it is clear that our students and families need more resources, particularly in the realm of physical and mental health.

In conjunction with the local perceptual data, Girard School District has seen an exponential increase over the past several years in mental/behavioral and social/emotional issues among students. The number of students who qualify for special education services for behavior disorders continues to rise and there has been a marked increase in students requiring out-of-district placements for problems beyond the scope of district services. The Student Assistance Programs (SAP) across all three schools have likewise increased their caseloads every year and the number of students seeing the third-party SAP counselors have increased in proportion. The SAP counselors' referrals to outpatient, intensive outpatient, and inpatient care programs have again steadily increased, and all schools have seen more internal referrals to behavioral health programs, counselors, and hospitals than ever before. Understanding that emotional and behavioral health is paramount to student academic and overall success, Girard School District administration pursued community school status for Elk Valley Elementary.

In 2018, Elk Valley Elementary became a Community School through the United Way. With the increasing amount of mental health diagnoses, behavior referrals, and placements to outside entities for our students, we chose to partner with the Achievement Center to provide extended mental health services that could be embedded during the school day as well as to utilize the school as a center to extend services to students and families after school, on weekends, and throughout the summer months.

While working on our action plan, we continuously gathered data, conducted focus groups, utilized surveys,

and met as a leadership team. The data collected verified our perceptual data and the needs assessment leaned heavily towards the physical and mental health needs for both students and families. Increasing physical and mental health supports became our priority goal. Even though our priority focus was on physical and mental health supports, this initiative was and continues to be multi-faceted and multi-layered, focused on integrating student supports, expanding learning time and opportunities, incorporating family and community engagement, and improving collaborative leadership and practice.

Currently, we have numerous professionals providing counseling services within our building. Through our partnerships and the help of generous grants, our students have access to a refocus room mental health therapist daily. Our Community School Director has played a pivotal role in establishing and coordinating many efforts for our students and families. Her role has been integral in establishing a giving pantry, coordinating academic and enrichment summer and afterschool programming, maintaining community outreach through safety events and National Night Out, and seeking ongoing communication and feedback from all stakeholders. The community school initiative has had a significant impact on eliminating barriers for our students and families and has contributed to student success.

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:

The mission of Girard School District is to inspire young minds to reach their fullest potential through innovative curriculum, individualized learning opportunities, and inclusive community practices for college, career, and life readiness. We believe that student success comes first and that all students have unique skills and talents that enable them to learn, thrive, and engage in their community. Our students deserve a safe and engaging learning environment. To make this happen, we believe in partnerships with parents and community members. We believe education is a shared responsibility amongst students, parents, educators, and the community. For this reason, we seek parent engagement when developing, revising, and implementing new curriculum and educational initiatives. Parents at Elk Valley Elementary are invited to review curriculum, give suggestions, help plan events, and serve on various committees. Some of these committees include the PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), EVES advisory council, EVES PBIS (Positive School-Wide Behavior Intervention) Team, Title I planning, and the CSLT team (Community School Leadership Team).

Our district curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Standards and cross-referenced to the Pennsylvania Standards. Early Learning Standards, in conjunction with the learning progressions, are utilized to prepare our primary grades as the transition is made to eligible content in grades 3 and 4. Curriculum and assessment undergo constant revision and realignment as data is reviewed and disaggregated during gap analysis. Teachers utilize their professional learning community meetings (PLCs) to discuss the data and collaborate on changes that need to be brought forth to the administration.

All students K-4 are assessed three times a year utilizing the NWEA Map Growth assessment in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Additionally, at the primary level K-2, students are assessed using Acadience to screen foundational reading skills. Based on the outcome of these assessments coupled with classroom level data, students are provided small group explicit instruction to either reinforce, develop, or extend learning on content standards topics.

We have a framework and process in place for providing tiered intervention for students who are not meeting grade level standards in math and reading. Students are continually progress monitored while receiving services. This is another data point to help plan individualized instruction, reteach standards not yet mastered, as well as determine focus areas for school growth. Once proficiency is met, students seamlessly transition back to the whole group core instruction within the classroom.

A variety of instructional and assessment practices are in place to ensure student success. We believe in a multimodal approach to learning. This includes hands-on, collaborative, creative, problem-solving processes that include critical thinking and classroom discourse. Students are encouraged to think about their thinking and explain the process they went through to find a solution. Our instructional practices embody many multisensory experiences, including kinesthetic practices such as finger spelling, hand and body motions, and the use of manipulatives. Additionally, speaking and listening are encouraged through turn and talk, jigsaw activities, and small group instruction.

Teachers use many different forms of assessments including exit tickets, unit projects, anecdotal observations, technology integration, thumbs up/thumbs down, running records, visual representations, traditional unit tests, quizzes, and authentic performance assessments. To provide continuity across grade levels, there are common assessments that must be administered to all students to determine mastery of grade level content standards.

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

At Elk Valley Elementary, a 120-minute literacy block is dedicated to Reading and English Language Arts curriculum K-4. The curriculum is addressed by following the grade level scope and sequence, pacing guide, and curriculum map which is aligned to the Common Core and Pennsylvania Common Core standards. The curriculum focuses on the five essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Additionally, speaking, listening, and writing are focal points during instruction and independent practice. These three areas are embedded across content areas as students are encouraged to collaborate and explain their thinking, either through discourse or reflective, planned written pieces.

At the core of our primary grades is our Accessing the Code phonics/spelling curriculum as developed by one of our own reading specialists. This curricular resource focuses on teaching patterns and rules of language that can be applied to decode and spell words. Accessing the Code is taught through the core and extended to intervention for those who need reinforcement of the phonics rules and patterns. Additionally, we utilize a combination of Heggerty and Neuhaus programs to enhance our delivery of phonemic awareness and foundational reading skills. Our teachers and reading specialists are skilled at adjusting and delivering differentiated reading intervention as supported through ongoing progress monitoring and formative assessment as collected through observation and informal means (thumbs up/thumbs down, running records, quick writes, quick skill inventories, etc.).

Explicit direct instruction in the five core areas of reading occur daily in our classrooms through whole group, small group, and reciprocal teaching. Our teachers utilize a core anthology reading series known as Journeys. This reading series serves as the primary curricular resource, but teachers are able to supplement with trade books as we immerse students in literature and informational text.

While students work independently or with partners to reinforce, develop, and extend reading and writing skills through designated classroom assignments or projects, teachers respond to the varying learning needs of students in small groups to provide corrective feedback. It is during this time that teachers record anecdotal notes, complete informal assessments, and determine next steps instructionally for students.

During the 2020-2021 school year, small group instruction was inhibited by COVID mitigation strategies. This made it more difficult to determine and address specific student needs. Due to this change, it became necessary for teachers to walk the room, actively engage, stop and scaffold on a more 1:1 level in order to determine areas of student need and calibrate where instructional shifts needed to occur. Due to the lack of supplemental and intensive intervention we were able to provide in the 2020-2021 school year, we increased the number of interventionists servicing each grade level by one. We currently have two interventionists per grade level servicing K-2 for reading intervention. In grades 3 and 4, we have one interventionist per grade level, as opposed to previous years in which one reading specialist serviced both 3rd and 4th grade. This change in the model has allowed us to service a larger number of students and work more intensively with students who are struggling. Additionally, we have used assessment data to plan grade level targeted mini-lessons and gap filling intervention groups through Google Meet and interactive technologies.

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

Our mathematics block typically runs between 60-90 minutes depending on the grade level. The curriculum is addressed by following the grade level scope and sequence, pacing guide, and curriculum map which is aligned to the Common Core and Pennsylvania Common Core standards. The curriculum focuses on the four essential components of mathematics: numbers and operations; algebraic concepts; geometry; and measurement, data, and probability. The base curricular resource is the enVisions math series. However, this has been heavily supplemented with other resources as teachers familiarize themselves with the standards and eligible content. Many have used PDE SAS (Pennsylvania Department of Education Standards Aligned System) to obtain resources to modify or create their own instructional materials and assessments. Additionally, the standards for mathematical practices are integrated throughout the instructional practices and assessments. These include: 1.) Make sense out of problems and persevere in solving them; 2.) Reason abstractly and quantitatively; 3.) Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others; 4.) Model with mathematics; 5.) Use appropriate tools strategically; 6.) Attend to precision; 7.) Look for and make use of structure; and 8.) Look for and express regularity in repeated

reasoning. Students are encouraged to collaborate and explain their thinking through mathematical discourse. Manipulatives and visual representations are utilized as a best practice for instructing and assessing student knowledge. Mathematics lessons often begin as a mini whole group lesson (I do), followed by partner/small group exploration and scaffolding by the teacher (we do), and ending with independent practice and application (you do). Students are expected to reinforce, develop, and extend their learning through differentiated classroom activities and extensions prepared by the teacher. Additionally, students work to establish fluency and proficiency with math concepts through online programs such as Reflex Math (1st -2nd) and iXL Math (3rd and 4th). To ensure continuity of learning, grade levels share common unit assessments for all math modules taught. Performance tasks and problem-solving journals are other types of assessment utilized to engage students and challenge their critical thinking skills and mathematical discourse.

Tiered intervention is available for students who demonstrate a need through the NWEA Map Math Growth assessment and classroom data and performance. The interventionists collaborate with classroom teachers to determine specific needs of students based on unit pre-assessments and post assessments. Typically, intervention occurs 2-3 days per week for a period of 30 minutes. Depending on data analysis and observed deficits, some students receive intervention 5 days per week for 30 minutes per day. Intervention groups are flexible, so as soon as a student demonstrates understanding and proficiency on a concept or topic, they are integrated back to the classroom.

To recover from instructional loss due to the pandemic, teachers were instructed and given time to adjust their pacing guides to backfill and reinforce concepts that were missed or interrupted during school closures and remote learning. This required teachers to create some new materials and resources to meet the needs of their students. Additionally, it provided an opportunity for technological growth and resulted in the creation of resources that could be used to reinforce skills digitally.

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

Our scope & sequence and curriculum maps for science align with the Next Generation Science Standards and Pennsylvania Science, Technology, and Engineering standards. Our science curriculum is written and modeled after the Science It's Elementary kits. This inquiry based scientific style of learning engages students in questioning, predicting, investigating, experimenting, and analyzing which naturally connects to reading, writing, and mathematics standards. Additionally, our STEM and art curriculums are written and integrated to enhance and extend these science standards. Science is naturally integrated throughout our English Language Arts curriculum via the reading of nonfictional text, discussion, and extension activities. Through questions, readings, and exploration, students develop their scientific explanations and record their results, just like scientists. When assessing the students, teachers use performance tasks, student journals, and open-ended questions, which are embedded throughout each unit of study.

Due to mitigation strategies related to COVID restrictions over the past two years, students have not been able to participate in as many hands-on activities and experiments. To supplement, teachers have had to teach more whole group lessons while demonstrating experiments and/or use pre-recorded videos found digitally such as found on BrainPop.

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

Our social studies/history/civic learning curriculum begins with our EVES PBIS school-wide expectations and SEL curriculum (Toolbox™ and Second Step™). These programs establish the baseline for safety, rules, rights, responsibilities, roles, and relationships. Through ongoing character education, students learn to be safe, responsible, and caring while learning tools that help them develop the skills of resiliency. Our Second Step™ SEL curriculum further extends executive functioning and social skills development.

Prior to the pandemic, we were amid investigating and rewriting our social studies curriculum to align with the four components: civics and government, economics, geography, and history as defined by Pennsylvania standards. Social studies curriculum is embedded within the English Language Arts curriculum. Lessons provide extensions and opportunities to explore historical and local figures and concepts such as, careers,

community members, presidents, holidays, landmarks, Black History Month, American flag, symbols, geographical places, maps, states, continents, oceans, etc. It is our goal to further align and establish continuity and a natural progression of lessons in regards to these four components while integrating more lessons on diversity, tolerance, equity, and acceptance.

Students are assessed on their ability to participate in community meetings and discussions. Students are also assessed through their behaviors and actions as related to character education and development. Additionally, assessments are embedded through the units in the form of discussions, performance tasks, journaling, and project-based outcomes.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at Elk Valley Elementary rotate through a specials schedule which includes: STEM, Art, Music, Gym, and SRC (library). Our kindergarten students also receive a 6th special class called Toolbox (character education). The Toolbox™ rotation ensures a universal foundation of the resiliency tools taught to students during character education. The rotation schedule allows teachers to work with students during a 40-minute time block for approximately 30 class periods.

Our STEM curriculum is based around the Next Generation Science Standards. Students in K-4 learn about technology, engineering, and coding utilizing many different resources. Some of the resources include, Google Slides, YouTube, Magnatiles, Legos, Zoob, Code Hopper Mats, Code-a-pillar robots, CodeSpark, Code and Go Mouse robots, 3D pens, Dash robots, PLA filament, Tinkercad, 3D printers, Green screen set up, Screencast-o-matic, Microbits, Scratch coding, and various recyclable and reusable materials. These resources allow for hands on, creative, collaborative problem solving that encourages communication and critical thinking in a team-oriented format while utilizing the engineering design process.

Our STEM and art teachers work collaboratively to integrate and coordinate lessons to enhance the science standards and curriculum. For example, they have worked together with 3rd graders on “Water Displacement & Buoyancy.” They team teach 3rd grade classes in the art room having students experiment with different materials to learn about buoyancy. This activity leads to preparation for their boat building lesson/competition the following week. During the first cycle, the students begin designing their boats based off of their findings from a "Float or sink" experiment. Then, they take two class periods to design boats that will hold weight. The last week focuses on individual and class reflection, as well as, review of the concepts learned throughout the buoyancy unit. To finish the unit, the students will make a simplified version of their boat design, using shapes/forms that translate to a program called Tinkercad. Students will use the 3-D printers to make small scale versions of their original boat design. This technology-based step will challenge them not only to learn the program better, but to learn how to conceptually minimize objects to their basic simple shapes so that they can be recreated with the 3D printer. It's a perfect blend of science, engineering, technology, imagination, and the design process in the visual arts.

In our music department, students were introduced to musical concepts and theory through a program called Quaver. This program used a variety of digital media to allow students to experience music in a multimodal way. Upon return in the 2021-2022, Quaver was cut from the budget, but we hired a new music teacher who has reimagined and revised the curriculum to provide a lot of hands on opportunities for students. Some of which include the integration of piano and keyboarding, ukuleles, drumming, and choir bells. Students are visibly excited to enter the music room each day and are eager to find out what comes next.

Physical education provides many different opportunities to learn about and experience both organized

sports like soccer, basketball, and football, and personal wellness and coordination activities like rollerblading and bike riding. Lessons include a variety of competencies in locomotor skills, manipulative skills, spatial awareness skills, game strategies, personal wellness, and peer cooperation.

Prior to the pandemic, our students received two physical education courses, one of which was called Learning Lab. The Learning Lab class focused on brain-based strategies, body movement, and integration of academics. Due to declining enrollment and the changes made to meet the pandemic demands, this class was eliminated in 2020. Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, we were able to maintain gym and art as the primary rotation specials. To keep our school open during the 2020-2021 school year, we had to put mitigation practices in place that caused the shifting of teachers and responsibilities. Any teachers certified to do so became classroom teachers allowing us to decrease our class sizes from 20 to 14. This provided smaller class sizes and allowed for the physical distancing necessary to keep students and teachers safe.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

The Tier 2 team is led by the assistant principal and includes the principal, school counselor, school psychologist, special education staff, community school director and a referring interventionist. This team meets weekly. In short, all teachers are asked to report any concerns, being respectful of student confidentiality, to the interventionists attending their PLCs. Staff can also fill out a Tier 2 form (behavior/social emotional) or Building Level Team (BLT) form (academic) and give it directly to the school counselor. Steps taken from the Tier 2 team include, but are not limited to, parent meetings, BLT recommendations, caring adult mentoring, small group intervention, Circle of Friends social groups, before and/or after school tutoring, team meetings, Achievement Center referrals, and classroom observations. If the need is something that cannot be addressed at this level – whether it is appropriately beyond that groups need to know, or they have tried to implement a minor strategy to help that student with unsatisfactory success – then the team moves the student on to BLT/SAP (Tier 3).

Tier 2 interventions typically take place for 8-12-week intervals, depending on the specific needs of the student. The interventionists have been trained to conduct and maintain progress monitoring data with all students. If a student qualifies for academic English Language Arts intervention in grades K-2, he/she will meet with a small group of 2-5 other students daily with a reading interventionist for approximately 30-40 minutes of direct explicit instruction. Since we focus heavily on our primary grades and allocate for two reading interventionists per grade level K-2, resources are somewhat limited in grades 3 and 4 with only one reading specialist assigned to each grade level. Depending on the level of deficit, 3rd and 4th graders who qualify for ELA intervention generally meet with the reading interventionist 2-3 days per week.

Our math intervention framework is somewhat different as we only have 2 math interventionists for K-4. One interventionist services K-2 and one services 2-4. Students do receive assistance from our AmeriCorps members who are able to review math concepts with students in small groups. Initially, math intervention groups are determined based on the local and benchmark data as collected three times per year, however, the groupings are flexible and fluid as students gain mastery of certain concepts. The math interventionists collaborate with classroom teachers based on classroom assessment data to determine if students will attend intervention during particular math units. This allows for more students to receive services with limited resources.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Elk Valley Elementary has been assisting students through a multi-tiered support system for years. Our Tier 1 academic support system begins with the teachers administering and then reviewing all building level assessments three times a year to determine intervention and who needs more rigorous instruction.

The Tier 1 support system is known as our Professional Learning Community (PLC). PLC meetings serve to support teachers in managing academic and behavior concerns of students, but do not include direct support for students outside the regular education classroom. These grade-level and/or department team

meetings also include reading specialists, special education teachers, and specials teachers. The meetings are held frequently and are the initial support a teacher has to begin collaboratively assisting students. During these meetings teachers discuss core curriculum, instruction, and assessment related to student achievement and behavioral outcomes. During this time, teachers review common assessments and student outcomes and establish a need for intervention and/or enrichment.

Teachers utilize this construct to address those below, at and above grade level. For students above grade level, we task teachers to use available data to have students dig deeper on known concepts or aim for more strategic or extended thinking as found on Webb's Depth of Knowledge. For example, a 3rd grade class may have students organized into math groups where one group of students is converting decimals to fractions while the other groups of students are just identifying fractions or decimals.

Additionally, our STEM and after school programs offer enrichment activities extending learning beyond the core. In our STEM class, students are challenged to code, create by using 3D printers and even have the opportunity to identify a problem and work with their family to solve it by constructing a prototype. Our focus in STEM class is on critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity through the Engineering Design Process and coding/robotics. Students are challenged to work with others to complete hands-on projects that open their eyes to the things they are capable of when the process is the focus, not the product.

Our after school program initiative partners community members and organizations with teachers to offer creative and enriching experiences after school. To date students have hiked, cooked, crafted, taken karate, read, written, explored, played instruments and more.

For our highest achieving students, a teacher, parent or administrator may recommend an assessment be conducted to determine if that student qualifies for gifted education. Students qualifying for gifted education get a GIEP which is a plan to meet their enrichment needs.

3c. Special education:

Tier 3 is known as the Building Level Team (BLT)/Student Assistance Program (SAP). This consists of the director of special education, the school psychologist, the school principal, the assistant principal, the speech and language pathologist, the nurse at times, and the referring teachers. Interventions and concerns are addressed, and next steps are determined. This is the entity that determines if the student is a good candidate for the special education process and/or in need of further mental health services through the Student Assistance Program (SAP).

Referrals are made to Tier 2 and Tier 3 (BLT/SAP) based on the student need. Meetings are scheduled with the team, and a plan is created so the referred child is monitored. The school counselor keeps track of Tier 3 (BLT/SAP) data in both an Excel spreadsheet and a printable sheet with BLT/SAP data. Tier 2 information is tracked in an Excel spreadsheet by the Tier 2 team.

If psychoeducational testing is recommended, conducted, and a student is determined to have a specific disability, services are determined during a meeting in which an Individualized Education Plan is created in conjunction with all team members, including the student's parents or guardians. The specific services are determined on an individual student need basis. Some students receive supplemental services and some receive itinerant services. We have numerous support systems in place at Elk Valley Elementary, including self-contained emotional support, life skills, autistic support, and learning support classrooms.

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

In our rural community, we have very few English language learners. However, we do have at least two teachers at each building certified in English as a Second Language (ESL). Currently, our STEM teacher who is dual certified provides 1:1 intervention services three days per week for the one child we have who receives instruction in English as a Second Language. This child speaks fluent English.

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

At Elk Valley Elementary, we do not currently have any migrant children. However, homelessness has become more prevalent over the past few years. We do have an approximate transient population of 20%, many of which cross over to the homelessness population as families are forced into double occupancy in single family homes. Over the past 3 years, Girard School District has had an approximate 4% population of homelessness. When made aware of homeless circumstances, our families are connected to our district homeless liaison. This person can provide information and available resources to assist the families as they work through this transition. Additionally, our school counselor reaches out to the families to establish a rapport and foster the connection with our community school director. This enables the community school director to seek out any additional assistance the family may need. Students identified as homeless are always referred to our Tier 2 team to determine if any specific academic and behavioral/social emotional supports need to be implemented.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Elk Valley Elementary is a safe, responsible, and caring place for all students. Our team of students, staff, and stakeholders works collaboratively in an environment where all members feel connected, respected, and known. Maximizing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, to improve outcomes for students, is the goal of every school initiative. The physical design of the school, academic programs implemented, and behavioral supports provided all play a role in defining the positive culture of learning which thrives at Elk Valley.

From arrival, students are immersed in a visually appealing environment. Hallways decorated with framed student artwork, displays of notable student achievements like the AR Star Wall, student-designed ceiling tiles with behavior tips, and teacher name plates created as a fourth-grade project are some of the physical characteristics that help establish a welcoming, kid-friendly atmosphere. Classroom practices are research-based and teachers provide interactive multi-modal learning environments daily. Core teaching is supplemented with multiple opportunities for learning through intervention and enrichment activities including, but not limited to, small group Title I services, gifted lessons, teacher-led book clubs, 4th grade student council, Summer Reading Club, and extracurricular sports. Elk Valley Elementary's culture is defined beyond these individual areas of exceptionality, however. Two major initiatives have created an all-encompassing feeling of community within the school.

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support, also known as EVES PBIS, is a proactive, preventative, whole-school approach to achieving sustained improvement in the academic and social climates at Elk Valley. In place for 15+ years, PBIS emerged from years of educational and applied behavior research. Students are explicitly taught how to be safe, responsible, and caring in various settings and are recognized for demonstrating behaviors consistent with these expectations. Teachers and staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and aides take an active role acknowledging positive behaviors across all school locations through verbal praise and tangible incentives (paper bee bucks). Students save these earned bee bucks to exchange for class acknowledgments (i.e., extra gym, extra recess, digital/electronic parties, books, and more).

In addition, our school takes a proactive approach to teaching resiliency. During a scheduled universal character education/classroom community time from 8:55-9:20 daily for ALL classrooms, teachers can conduct classroom community meetings which focus on teaching classroom expectations, bullying prevention lessons, and classroom discussions. We have adopted two programs to establish continuity and a common language within these character education lessons. These programs are Second Step SEL™ and Bullying Prevention and the Toolbox Project™. The Toolbox Project™ focuses on building resiliency, self-mastery (regulation), and empathy through learning and practicing 12 tools. This program helps children understand and manage their own emotional, social, and academic success. The foundation of Toolbox™ is possession of 12 human capacities (tools) that reside within us all. Using the tools and their corresponding metaphors, Toolbox™ introduces a set of skills and practices that helps students access their own inner resilience at any time, in any context. The Second Step SEL™ and Bullying Prevention programs provide an interactive and digitally formatted set of unit lessons focused on growth mindset; emotional management; empathy & kindness; problem solving; and reporting, recognizing, and refusing bullying. These units are sequential, building upon concepts through grade levels as deemed developmentally appropriate. Both programs highlight and expand on the 4Cs of the 21st century - communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity - all of which are crucial components when developing executive functioning skills necessary to promote success, both academically and socially.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Elk Valley Elementary values the importance of parent and community partnerships. It is because of these partnerships that students flourish both academically and socially. With the establishment of Elk Valley Elementary as a community school in 2018, many more resources have been made available to the students and families within our community. Prior to the community school initiative, school and community

engagement events were left solely up to our Parent Teacher Organization, Elk Creek Recreation and Leisure Board, local sports boosters, and building level staff. We were often left with many great ideas, but limited funding and human capital. To the extent possible, our Elk Valley PTO has sponsored and helped plan family engagement events such as Family Bingo nights, movie nights, and art celebration symposiums (Candyland, Hopping Down the Bunny Trail, etc.) in which student artwork was displayed and celebrated. They have also fully funded educationally geared grade level field trips.

Now with established partnerships with the United Way, the Achievement Center, Bonnell's Collision Center, Matrix Tool, Reed Manufacturing, and donations from local entities and personnel, Elk Valley Elementary has been able to expand the number of resources and programming available to our students, families, and community members.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we regularly scheduled Family Literacy, Math, and Science Nights by grade level. Students attended these teacher-led evening events with their families to engage in authentic hands-on learning. In partnership with Edinboro University, pre-service education majors visited our school to facilitate literacy, math, and science days during school hours. Students rotated through stations engaging in innovative collaborative learning. Due to the safety mitigations imposed by the pandemic, we found new ways to engage students and families outside of the traditional in-person format. The Zoom platform was utilized to invite families to theme-oriented Kahoot trivia nights and evening story hours. Additionally, some previously building housed events were transitioned to outdoor functions to allow for safe ventilation and spacing. We held our traditional Kindergarten orientation, a community safety event, and a National Night Out event all outdoors on the Elk Valley grounds.

To support parents and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, our school counselor, PTO president, and the Achievement Center mental health staff, ran a virtual 6-week mental health program called "Coffee and Conversations." This program went over topics such as: Finding Balance, Not Burnout.

Our community school director has brought forth many opportunities for our students, including a career-oriented presentation and demonstration of the engineering process provided via our partnership with Matrix Tool, Inc. The community outreach and networking has also provided after school programming, including piano lessons, pottery lessons, strategic board games, Lego league, 3-D Printing, book clubs, outdoor adventures, and healthy cooking classes as presented through the Common Threads Small Bites program. Through our partnerships with the United Way and YMCA, we have also been able to offer after school tutoring and summer programming for our students and families.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Our EVES PBIS team approach is multi-layered in that it serves both students and staff, but has a priority and universal goal of establishing and maintaining a safe and caring environment for all. The EVES PBIS team is comprised of school administration, teachers, staff, and parents who meet monthly to review student behavioral data and staff perceptual data related to school climate and culture. Based on this information, the team discusses, plans, and implements opportunities for students and staff. Our students and staff are regularly surveyed to obtain feedback in regards to academic programming, behavioral interventions, and needs assessment. The information obtained during these discussions and surveys is utilized to plan for ongoing education and incentive programming for both staff and students.

From these discussions, behavioral interventions and re-teaching often occur. For example, if a problem area presented in the behavioral data, then school-wide expectations would be retaught in that area and connected to an incentive for meeting the desired outcomes. This year, students were struggling with behaviors during lunch, the EVES PBIS team created a video of the expectations in which students were modeling the appropriate behavior. This was shared with students during their character education time and when they met the goal an incentive was delivered to their classrooms. Due to the pandemic, many of the resources are created and uploaded to our EVES PBIS LiveBinder which houses numerous options for teachers and staff to work with their students. It also gives them an opportunity to revisit it if necessary.

Through these surveys and meetings, areas for professional development are identified and shared with the

Act 48 committee. After reviewing surveys and reflecting on discussions, it was evident that teachers needed ongoing professional development in mental health and trauma. This is when we called on our partner, the Achievement Center, to provide professional development around trauma, resiliency, and self-care.

With the ongoing pandemic demands on educators, our district has honored professional opinions and requests to increase professional development in technology and provide more time to prepare digital lessons and resources. The school board has allowed for 2-hour early dismissal days twice a month to meet this request and provide time for the additional professional development.

At Elk Valley Elementary, our teachers are provided with an additional 35 minutes of common plan at the beginning of the day to collaborate with their colleagues. This common plan provides time to meet with grade level teams in professional learning communities to discuss and plan for student needs. We also provide ways for teachers and staff to advocate for themselves through the EVES PBIS team, and/or by submitting suggestions and comments to a Bee Box in the office which administrators can address in a timely manner.

In addition to the professional supports offered, several emotional supports are in place for the faculty and staff. Shared experience days (i.e., Souper Bowl gathering, dessert day, appetizer day, hot cocoa bars, incentive cart, staff paint night, etc.) are planned to boost mood and spread positivity. Through suggestions from the EVES PBIS team, we have established a process for allowing staff a needed 5-minute break, called the White Flag Code. If a 5-minute break is needed to use the restroom or just go for a walk to destress, staff person can hang the white cutout hand on his/her door. If a faculty member walks by, and can, he/she will step in to cover for 5 minutes. In the case that the hand is not recognized in a timely manner, staff are told to call the office for help. On occasion, quick treats or positive quotes are shared with all staff just to spread kindness. Additionally, hand-written, positive notes recognizing specific qualities or efforts of staff members are placed in mailboxes by administration and the school counselor. The weekly staff communication thread includes tips for personal wellness and a free day of yoga is also offered once a week. In the past, we have provided a small gathering time called Calming Connections to award staff a safe place to share work-related stress and self-care strategies. As with the children, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement leads to a positive professional culture.

4. School Leadership:

Elk Valley Elementary has a principal and an assistant principal who share the responsibility of overseeing approximately 562 students and 100 staff members, 51 of which are teachers. Collaboration and shared leadership are a key element in establishing positive relationships and establishing a successful, supportive, and caring school culture. All teachers are encouraged to grow as leaders, and transformational leadership is promoted through ongoing collaboration and professional learning opportunities.

Through our grade level and department Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), our interventionists take a lead role in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They attend the meetings as the liaison between grade levels and the Tier 2 team. During PLCs, teachers discuss student assessment data and outcomes. Based on these discussions, students may be brought to the Tier 2 team for further recommendations. On occasion, curricular decisions and revisions are recommended based on student outcomes and teachers make instructional shifts based on the classroom data. Instructional shifts are an autonomous action based on student outcomes and collaborative team discussion. Any recommended curricular changes are discussed through collaborative Teacher Leader Council meetings which consider vertical and horizontal alignment.

Data assessment and analysis play a key role at Elk Valley Elementary. All teachers are encouraged to utilize their benchmark assessments to determine student strengths/weaknesses and plan instruction based on their findings. The NWEA Map Growth assessment provides a personalized learning continuum that provides guidance on remediating, developing, or extending content standards for each student. Our interventionists and special education teachers take a lead role in progress monitoring students and adjusting instruction based on student needs and outcomes.

As identified previously, our EVES PBIS team takes the lead role in collecting and analyzing behavioral and school climate/culture data. Student behaviors are tracked through Infinite Campus Behavior Referrals. This information is collected by time of day, location, etc. The assistant principal leads this initiative and shares information with the team to determine next steps and plan for remediation or intervention. Collection of surveys throughout the year provides ongoing feedback from staff and students in relation to school climate and culture. The behavioral data, in conjunction with the perceptual data, is analyzed by the EVES PBIS team to improve student and staff well-being and the overall school climate.

Unique to our status as a community school, we have a community school director who plays a vital role in establishing community partnerships. She orchestrates most of the community surveys and events, gathers perceptual data and feedback, and shares that with the Community School Leadership Team. In addition, she works collaboratively with administration to plan community events, before and after school programming, and establishes the integration of services (giving pantry, Diaper Depot, Second Harvest Food bags, counseling services, etc.) within the school.

In addition to our K-4 students and staff, our building houses two independent pre-kindergarten programs, one which is run by the Child Development Centers (CDC) and one which is run by the YMCA. This adds an additional 5 classrooms of pre-kindergarten to our school. Though these programs are run independent of Elk Valley Elementary, we collaborate with both entities in regards to early learning standards and programs, as most of the students will become our students in kindergarten.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At Elk Valley Elementary, we pride ourselves in establishing a safe, responsible, and caring environment for all. On any given day, you will find staff strategically placed throughout the building to supervise, greet, and engage with students as they arrive and dismiss for the day.

Students start their morning with breakfast in the classroom, followed by announcements, the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, acknowledgement of student/staff birthdays, the principal's daily joke, and any positive acknowledgement of safe, responsible, or caring behaviors exhibited by students. Daily announcements are followed by a universal time to develop character education through community meetings. Students receive instruction on classroom expectations, how to use the Toolbox™ tools, Second Step SEL™, and Second Step™ bullying prevention on how to recognize, report, and refuse bullying. It is during this time that students who need a little more SEL intervention are pulled for social group instruction.

Inclusive practices are common at Elk Valley Elementary. Students with special needs are integrated seamlessly within the regular education classrooms. Students are eager to interact with their peers and are often found actively assisting and engaging during lessons. Students are regularly acknowledged for safe, responsible, and caring behaviors across all environments and locations. Staff pass out bee bucks and give specific praise for the behavior they have observed. These bee bucks are saved in a classroom toolbox and later turned in for a classroom incentive. This promotes teamwork and collegiality amongst classrooms.

To create culturally rich classrooms, some grade levels participate in units that explore different cultures. For example, first grade participates in a unit called "Christmas around the World." During this unit, they explore different traditions and celebrations, such as Kwanza, Yule, and Hanukkah. Additionally, this past year, to celebrate the Olympics, each classroom chose a country to explore and created a display outside of their classroom sharing specific information and traditions common in their chosen country. Students competed in mini Olympic games, representing different countries. In addition, our reading series integrates many cultures and traditions through the anthology stories. When a story presents in a unit, the teachers expand on the cultural traditions, highlighting similarities and differences to our culture.

During black history month, diversity is celebrated by highlighting the accomplishments of various people. This gives students background and a foundation of information about these key people in history. It provides role models for students to look up to and aspire to become.

An exciting and eagerly anticipated culminating activity for our fourth-grade students every year is our NBRS 2022

“Wax Museum.” Students choose a historical figure to research in order to gain insight into the accomplishments and requirements for the person’s given career path. After researching the historical figure’s personal history and accomplishments, students write and submit a detailed report to their teacher. Additionally, each student prepares a short speech introducing the subject of his/her research and prepares a costume to represent the person. On presentation day, students and family members visit the mock wax museum. Guests find a red button on each student presenter/wax figure which can be pushed to hear the live rendition of the informational speech. This interactive project provides a variety of cultural context as students explore people from various backgrounds and time periods. Past museums have included Pocahontas, Martin Luther King Jr., Walt Disney, Nikola Tesla, and Jane Goodall.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

High quality academic instruction is necessary for academic success. This instruction must be data-driven and, therefore, appropriate to students' educational levels; create opportunities for critical thinking; and guide students' thinking with effective feedback. We also know that improving students' relationships with teachers has important, positive and long-lasting implications for students' academic and social development. Students who have close, positive, and supportive relationships with their teachers will attain higher levels of achievement than those students with more conflict in their relationships. Additionally, positive school climates contribute to academic achievement and can improve outcomes for students, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Given our population, it is essential to our success that we deliver expert instruction within a tight-knit community.

The Positive Schoolwide Behavior Initiative (PBIS) at Elk Valley Elementary sets us apart from other schools. Initially implemented by our current principal, this program has been in place for 15+ years. Over these years, PBIS has improved the climate and culture of our building by establishing a universal language, a common set of expectations, consistent character education, and a focus on data-driven decision making. This initiative has helped establish and maintain a safe and caring environment for all, which sets the stage for an effective instructional arena. Our teachers and students participate in daily caring circles or community meetings which establish rapport and build relationships. A universal character education curriculum is established for all K-4 classrooms and a shared instructional block is scheduled daily for every classroom.

All Elk Valley staff are highly committed to the success of our students. Many staff members serve as mentors, caring adults, social group leaders, and volunteers for before or after school programming. These duties are in addition to the responsibilities required by their professional roles. These interactions with students further develop the relationships proven to be the foundation of successful learning environments.

Recent world events have further highlighted the professionalism inherent to our success. When schools closed in March 2019 and we embarked on an unfamiliar online learning journey, our staff quickly adjusted their sails and learned new digital platforms to deliver instruction while connecting with students through Zoom and Google Meet. Nobody deserted the ship, rather, teachers worked tirelessly to learn Pear Deck, Kami, Google Suite, EdPuzzle, and Schoology. The goal was to give our students some sense of normalcy as quickly as possible after the uncertainty caused by the abrupt halt to the traditional school year. Teachers adapted all their lessons and curriculum into digital formats, met with students online for full school days, volunteered to pack meals, and delivered school supplies and food to families throughout the closure. Our staff represented commitment and dedication every day.

During the 2020-2021 school year, our teachers trusted the lead of administration and reworked curriculum and instruction yet again to meet student needs during the prolonged pandemic. They adjusted content delivery, instructional strategies, classroom procedures, and communication protocols to ensure that students could come to school every single day. In addition, lessons and content were also converted to digital format in preparation for any necessitated school closures. Teachers planned for a dual system of content delivery - brick & mortar and online – every day. Fortunately, we were able to instruct our students in person five days a week with minimal closures throughout the year. The resiliency of our staff, students, and families, established through our PBIS culture, set the groundwork for a successful 2020-2021 school year.

The success of our students, despite socioeconomic challenges, can be attributed to high quality instruction delivered in a safe and caring environment. The positive relationships developed within our school community are the result of years of school improvement plans highlighting our positive behavior program. In fact, our Elk Valley PBIS culture was the gateway for designing our community school action plan that has served to establish additional partnerships; expand resources; and extend opportunities for our students, staff, and families. With the continual evolution of our PBIS initiative, Elk Valley Elementary students will be afforded the opportunity to grow and succeed for years to come.