

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 277 S. Oswayo Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Shinglehouse State PA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 16748-2103

County Potter

Telephone (814) 260-1702 Fax (814) 697-7799

Web site/URL https://oswayovalley.com/ E-mail eemerick@oswayo.com

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

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Jed Hamberger E-mail jhamberger@oswayo.com  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Oswayo Valley School District Tel. (814) 260-1700

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. Kayle Perkins  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 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	10	10	20
K	21	9	30
1	17	14	31
2	18	12	30
3	12	16	28
4	21	9	30
5	18	9	27
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	117	79	196

\*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
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 100 % White
  - 0 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2020 - 2021 school year: 10%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	20
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	202
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 66 %

Total number students who qualify: 129

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 26 %  
51 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>5</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>14</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>18</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 16:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	95%	94%	94%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

Oswayo Valley Elementary School adheres to the Mission of the Oswayo Valley School District, which is as follows: Inspiring, developing, and empowering lifelong learners to enrich the world.

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

Policy 103.1 Nondiscrimination – Qualified Students with Disabilities

The Board declares it to be the policy of this district to ensure that all district programs and practices are free from discrimination against all qualified students with disabilities. The Board recognizes its responsibility to provide academic and nonacademic services and programs equally to students with and without disabilities.[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9][10]

The district shall provide to each qualified student with a disability enrolled in the district, without cost to the student or parent/guardian, a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). This includes provision of education and related aids, services, or accommodations which are needed to afford each qualified student with a disability equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits from educational programs and extracurricular activities without discrimination, to the same extent as each student without a disability, consistent with federal and state laws and regulations.

The Board encourages students and parents/guardians who believe they have been subjected to discrimination or harassment to promptly report such incidents to designated employees.

The Board directs that complaints of discrimination or harassment shall be investigated promptly, and corrective or preventative action be taken for substantiated allegations.

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



## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Oswayo Valley Elementary School is part of a small, rural school district located in Shinglehouse, Pennsylvania, nestled in the northwestern corner of Potter County. It serves families from the Shinglehouse and Oswayo Boroughs and Clara, Sharon, Oswayo, and Ceres Townships, covering both Potter and McKean Counties. With a district wide student population of 406, and a school population of 210, the students and families know each other well and consider each other as part of an extended family. Many of the students have deep family roots in the Shinglehouse community with generations of proud Oswayo Valley alumni who remain vested in the success of the students, staff, and schools.

Family connections extend well beyond the building's walls. Oswayo Valley embodies the philosophy of "It takes a village to raise a child." The school focuses on the development of the whole child and not just their academic achievements. As a small school with limited resources, there's a heavy reliance on family engagement and community partnerships to offer additional learning opportunities and life experiences to the students. These collaborations help not only build better students but also better citizens. The school's partnership with organizations such as the Oswayo Valley Senior Center help bridge the generational gap between the youngest residents and the oldest.

Before the pandemic forced schools and businesses to close their doors and then to reopen with strict parameters designed to slow the spread of the virus, Oswayo Valley Elementary maintained a proud open-door policy for families and community members. Slowly, parents and community volunteers are once again becoming a common, daily sight within the hallways. Local community organizations and businesses also open their doors to students, during and after school hours. Students explore the Hoffman Family Farm, take trips to the fire hall, post office, and Senior Center. The Senior Center hosted the school's Christmas Door Decorating Contest, an Easter Coloring Contest, and holds an annual Sock Hop Dance open to students and families, as well as the members of the center. The closest YMCA also provides swimming lessons to the entire third-grade class.

The Parent-Teacher Organization takes pride in hosting events and celebrations that bring students, families, and community members together within the school and around the school grounds. They host and organize fundraising events such as Race for Education and the Christmas Shop. They organized an annual Trunk or Treat in the school parking lot and brought Santa Claus to the elementary school this year. They have also done things to celebrate the school and staff in the past such as donating the funds to build an outdoor classroom, surprising staff with a remodeled and newly decorated staff lounge, and providing various treats and refreshments during National Teacher Week, as well as other school related celebrations.

To be a good student and citizen, individuals must possess solid core values including trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, and care. These are all values that are instilled in students on a daily basis and with the help and involvement of the wonderful Oswayo Valley community. The mission at Oswayo Valley is "Inspiring, developing, and empowering life-long learners to enrich the world." To inspire and empower, the school must foster an environment that provides for continuous opportunities to nurture the desired traits and consistently model the expected behavior. By acting, behaving, and living by the values being instilled in students, the staff and community are setting the stage to empower them to become the best versions of themselves.

Shared values are essential to the educational processes of the school and necessary to become a good student and citizen. It is believed that each student will achieve high academic standards with a strong foundation in core knowledge and skills; demonstrate unique interests and abilities; and uphold high ethical standards. Oswayo Valley Elementary School strives to promote a nurturing and stimulating environment in which each student can engage in an interactive process.

One way that has been achieved is with the enhanced utilization of technology in the school. The school successfully launched a 1:1 initiative that provided a personal learning device to every student in the district, and through a partnership with Tri County Rural Electric, helped deliver fast and reliable internet service to areas that either had no service or were underserved. It is hard to fathom in the year 2022 and in an

advanced digital age, that there are still some areas that do not have cell service or reliable internet access. The pandemic that started in 2020 proved just how high needs were in rural Pennsylvania.

There have been multiple unique programs and innovative techniques used and in use in the elementary school: the 1:1 Chromebook initiative, its active role in expanding community Broadband Infrastructure and access and placing a cell tower on school property, the current development of an onsite day care program, future distance learning labs, and the school wide positive behavior support plan designed around 6 key character traits. However, it is believed by all that it is the active role and frequent presence of families and community members within the school that has most led to the success of Oswayo Valley Elementary School and students.

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

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

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

Oswayo Valley Elementary School utilizes a comprehensive curriculum aligned with the Pennsylvania Core Academic Standards. Students in the district have the opportunity to begin school exposure at the preschool level, with 3.5-hour programs offered in the AM and PM daily. Students then enter kindergarten full-time, utilizing curriculum-based assessments and materials, including aligned and comprehensive math and reading/language arts programs that begin with introducing and building basic skills and concepts at the kindergarten level and then expanding with each grade level to increasingly more rigorous, higher-level thinking, application, and analysis skills. All of the programs used within the school have an equal mix of face-to-face and online instructional components.

Overall, at all grade levels, class sizes are small and instruction occurs in a variety of ways. Whole group, small group, and individual instruction occurs on a daily basis across grade levels, with different instructional deliveries also being used. Daily instruction includes “traditional” student-teacher interactions, as well as a heavy usage of technology and internet-based resources designed to expand upon classroom-based instruction. Teachers also integrate cooperation and team work goals into their daily teaching. Content area lessons are often started with a discussion around actively listening, helping and encouraging, explaining ideas and telling why, and the importance of full participation and the completion of the tasks they are given.

Since the onset of COVID-19, all students in the school have their own Chromebooks that can be taken home as needed for Virtual Instruction. During both the 2020-2021 and the 2021-2022 school year, the district offered parents the option for in-person or virtual learning. Recognizing the importance of face-to-face instruction, very few parents in the elementary school took advantage of the virtual option, especially during the 2021-2022 school year.

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

The school's reading curriculum, and supporting program, Wonders, which spans kindergarten through 5th grade, provides a well-balanced approach to the 5 Big Ideas of Literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) and includes a range of Depth of Knowledge activities. At the primary level, where the main focus is letter names and sounds, sight words, and fluency, instruction is supplemented with further focus on phonics and phonemic awareness through programs such as Heggerty Phonics and Phonemic Awareness.

Daily instruction, according to grade level standards, incorporates vocabulary lessons that allow students to expand and apply their skills with aligned spelling and grammar activities. To foster and build comprehension, the curriculum emphasizes weekly focus skills. It starts with connecting students to the essential question of the week; this focus question is thoroughly explored and covered through all five days of instruction. It builds the background knowledge that is needed by including a photo or other visual aide that the students can discuss and analyze in collaborative groups, along with a teacher read-aloud, and includes digital content directly related to the week's essential question and is designed to further enhance comprehension of the topic being studied.

Overall, depending on the grade level, the main comprehension skill of the week is spaced over three reads (a close reading vocabulary selection that focuses on the main skills and strategies of the week, the main selection, and the third read which bridges the first two selections together). At the upper grades, 3rd-5th, there is a heavy emphasis on analyzing smaller sections of the text that is being read. There is also a strong focus on the application of the week's skills and strategies, as well as the use of graphic organizers. This piece helps with state assessments, the PSSA's (Pennsylvania System of State Assessment), since 3rd-5th

graders are required to write a text-dependent analysis essay.

With regard to writing, the curriculum focuses on writing that relates to the weekly reading, but also writing as a craft. There are unit writing projects and workshop lessons that help students to explore and create all writing using the different genres. Guided exposure to word and sentence writing starts at the preschool level and gradually increases in rigor and expectation with every grade level.

Students are assessed at the end of the five or six day cycle. There is a selection test that assesses the students' application and use of the week's vocabulary words and comprehension of the main reading selection. As the students get older, there is also a weekly assessment which includes two cold read stories and a written response that assesses the focus skills and strategies the students learned during the week.

Additionally, all the content, textbooks, and consumables are available online to the students. There are also vocabulary, phonics, spelling, and grammar games that can be assigned as extra practice. The online component has made it easier to transition to virtual learning as needed.

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

An average of 80 minutes per day is devoted to mathematics instruction at all grade levels, chunked as is appropriate per grade. The mathematics curriculum is supported with the series GO Math!, that emphasizes the core instruction and practice needed to develop well-rounded problem solvers. From the kindergarten to the 5th grade level, daily lessons incorporate the 5E Instructional Model - Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate. This model relies on practical, real-life application, instead of just a memorization of facts, theories, and formulas. Teachers also use supplemental programs and materials such as Rocket Math to assist with automaticity of basic math fact knowledge and application of concepts outside of the structure of the actual math lesson.

The curriculum covers the application of strategies for grade specific computation and problem solving in numbers and operations, real world fractional operations, conversions of measurements, decimal computations, and geometry, all of which are considered to be the foundation for higher level math concepts. Individual lessons focus on an essential question that has direct correlation to one of the standards that are so crucial to outlining each skill and strategy needed to be successful. Discussion often centers around how the concept being taught can assist students in everyday life and in which careers the concept is most likely to be found and utilized. The curriculum and supporting program are designed in such a way that the teacher can become an observer and assist teams in keeping focused on "math talk" while teams navigate assigned practice. Through these discussions, students naturally monitor their own understanding as well as the understanding of their peers. It is very common to hear comments such as "Wait, how did you get that answer?" or "Show me what you did."

Each lesson is prepared and executed to teach the methodology, allow for student practice with guidance, practice without guidance, and finishing with independent practice to build confidence in execution of the skill or strategy. Lessons also include adaptive worksheets for struggling mathematicians, as well as enrichment activities for the advanced students. Mathematics instruction is also integrated with a STEM component - utilizing STEM activities included with the GO Math! series, as well as integrating and expanding upon lesson concepts during the students' actual twice weekly STEM class.

Formal and summative assessments are used to measure the students' strengths and needs on a regular basis. Exit tickets are used daily, semi-chapter checkpoints weekly, and post chapter assessments semimonthly. Other supplemental assessments are used for monitoring and alternative instruction supplementation.

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

The Oswayo Valley Elementary School uses the Full Option Science System (FOSS) curriculum. The school has a science teacher who teaches third, fourth, and fifth grade students for 50 minutes each day. Each grade level has topics that build from year to year in physical science, earth science and life science. Students learn through the same 5E Instructional Model used in math - Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate,

and Evaluate. Each module also covers connections to Math, English Language Arts (ELA), and daily living.

The steps within the 5E Instructional Model used takes students through a continuum of scientific stages, which includes exploring prior knowledge of the topic, a free exploration of materials, and discussions of their discoveries. New questions regularly arise while students seek answers, leading to additional student motivated inquiries with materials to reinforce and extend the concepts. Students also carry out hands-on investigations, which lead to the development of student led scientific hypothesis and explanations. Finally, there is an application phase in which students apply what they have learned to every day life, and a review and reflect period during which students study the data and evidence they have gathered, and use that information to conclude the active investigation by writing a summary of their learning in their science notebooks, as well as any questions that were raised during the activity.

Throughout the whole investigation formative and summative assessments are completed. The formative assessment strategies include teacher observation, response sheets, and performance tasks. The summative assessments are end-of-module testing and science notebooks.

Science based stories are also integrated into each investigation. They integrate reading and language arts skills in the context of learning a science concept. The reading selections include narrative stories such as folktales, descriptive writings, and journal notes, expository readings like encyclopedia articles, and historical accounts which are in the form of newspaper articles or letters. Each investigation includes a math problem of the week and a home to school connection, both of which are extensions of the investigation done in class.

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

Oswayo Valley Elementary School takes two instructional approaches to delivering social studies Instruction. At the primary level instruction is delivered through the reading program, utilizing the historical and nonfiction texts embedded in the anthology. At the intermediate level instruction is delivered through the exploration and analysis of a weekly current events newspaper.

Kindergarten through second grade studies historical figures, geography and citizenship. Students go on field trips to The Seneca Iroquois National Museum in Salamanca, NY and learn about the postal service with letter writing and a visit to the local post office to observe the mailing process in action.

Community involvement and activism is highlighted throughout the year in these grade levels through activities within classrooms such as our Grandparents Reader's Theater, Gingerbread House making day, a Mother's Day program, and trips to the local Senior Center. The Parent Teacher Organization also helps to deliver programs that allow the students to participate in community and social activities that would otherwise not be readily available to them.

At the intermediate level, 3rd -5th grade, Pennsylvania and United States Studies Weekly is the resource used to support the social studies curriculum. The content includes Pennsylvania and United States history, waterways, geographical formations, weather and climate, Native Americans, historical wars, and more. It is cross curricular through its emphasis on the usage of grammar skills, mapping and charting skills, finding text evidence, cause and effect, and thesaurus and dictionary skills.

Utilizing a small group structure, students use close reading as they interact with the text. This allows for in-depth discussions about the topics and easily provides support for the needs of all students. Assessment occurs throughout the use of the newspaper, with various activities and skills associated with the content being learned used to gauge students' understanding and engagement with the text.

The school also works closely with the local American Legion to celebrate Veteran's Day, Constitution Day, and to establish ongoing relationships with the local veterans. The school provides a Veteran's Day program each year with a flag raising ceremony and a formal, live streamed recognition of those who serve or have served in the armed forces within the community. It is a group effort to develop good citizens by

using the 6 Pillars of Character Traits, which encourages positivity and individual and community awareness and success.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Oswayo Valley Elementary School's preschool level services aim to orient the child to the school setting, develop a love of school and learning, and aid kindergarten readiness skills while developing important social skills. The program is funded through the pre-K Counts grant and the school district, as needed. The students attend five days a week for either the morning or afternoon session, which is 3.5 hours in length, for the required 180 days.

The curriculum used, Teaching Strategies GOLD, is play based and focuses on studies/topics that change throughout the year. Each study encompasses all areas of the classroom and serves as an interest point for learning and exploring. The study is extended into the play areas of the classroom, which include art, writing, blocks, pretend play/housekeeping, science, math, playdoh, Legos, tabletop activities, manipulatives and reading. The studies include such topics as recycling, trees, clothes, tubes and tunnels, simple machines, and balls. All areas of kindergarten readiness such as letter recognition, letter sounds, numbers, shapes, and colors are incorporated. Students then actively explore the study through the play areas. Items of interest are added to each area that have a direct connection with the unit of study. This allows for hands on exploration, imaginative play, and group discussion.

Students are guided and helped to develop social skills through the naturally occurring activities of the classroom and the PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) Curriculum. Turn taking, sharing, and helping others is encouraged and modeled. The students participate in being classroom helpers by having a job to do each week to help build the sense of community and togetherness. Conflict resolution is modeled and guided to help students develop coping skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Our pre-K program includes numerous school to home connections and collaborations, as family involvement is important to each child's success. These include a monthly newsletter, a Google Classroom that allows for the easy sharing of notes, pictures, and important information, as well as Virtual Instruction as needed due to school closures and pandemic related interruptions. Other activities include a Meet The Teacher Night to start the year off right and to help with the transition to pre-K for both the parents and students, several all-inclusive fun days through the year, parent-teacher conferences, an end of the year graduation ceremony, and a yearlong portfolio collection of student successes and milestones that is given to families on the last day of pre-K.

Collaboration and discussion amongst teachers pre-K through 2nd grade has shown that those students who entered the school setting in the pre-K Counts environment were socially and academically more ready for the full day setting than those students who entered kindergarten without that exposure. These students already have an understanding of school rules and routines, demonstrate less struggle with the transition to the kindergarten setting, and they generally have basic academic reading and math skills such as letter names and sounds, and number recognition, in place. By second grade, though, it is much harder to identify those who attended pre-K versus those who did not based upon their academic and social skills.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Oswayo Valley Elementary School offers four different "specials" classes held on a six-day rotation. Art, Music, Physical Education, and STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) classes are held for all grade levels. Though not staffed by a librarian, the library is open daily for the duration of the school day for book checkout, research, and large group instruction. Each class at the K-5 level lasts for 50 minutes, with Art and Music occurring one time per rotation, while P.E. and STEM occur twice. In addition to this, instrumental lessons are offered to interested students in grades 4 and 5. Pre-K Counts students

receive the same specials on the same six-day rotation, but for a total of 30 minutes per class.

Art classes focus on a continuum of skills based upon art elements and principles, along with basic instruction in drawing, painting, ceramics, weaving and examples and studies of art from other cultures. Music classes focus on the elements of melody, rhythm, expression, movement, instrumentals, and harmony. Students are also exposed to the sounds and history of non-traditional instruments such as ukuleles and bongo drums.

The P.E. program incorporates a variety of physical activities and the basics of health education to assist in the development of basic concepts of total body and mental fitness and the importance of an overall healthy lifestyle. The P.E. teacher takes physical fitness outside of the traditional school hours and confines of the gymnasium, as well. Twice a year Early Morning Fitness Activities are held in which interested students come to school up to a half an hour early and participate in a variety of activities and exercises until the beginning of homeroom. The teacher also hosts the Kid's Heart Challenge in which students practice their jump roping skills, gather pledges and then participate in timed jump roping activities. Outside of the confines of the gymnasium students participate in trail walks, running laps on the High School track, and compete in Mini-Olympics and Field Day events.

This year was the first year for a full time STEM program at the elementary level. Students learned the basic concepts of computer coding, robotics, design and engineering. Students also designed and created an array of basic objects using the classroom 3D printer. Next year, an additional entrepreneurial based STEM class will be offered to 4th and 5th graders and in collaboration with middle and high school students that focuses on the design, production, and sale of basic products that will be available for mass production and customization to local businesses.

### **3. Academic Supports**

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

Oswayo Valley Elementary School teachers and staff are fully committed to maximizing the academic success of all students. Thanks to a small school population that results in small class sizes, meeting those needs individually and as a group is possible with creative planning and the use of individual teacher and paraprofessional skills sets. The school is privileged to have several certified reading specialists on staff, one of which provides Title I reading and intervention services at the primary level. There are also two full-time special education teachers, and a part time physical therapist, occupational therapist, and speech and language therapist through the Seneca Highlands IU 9 on staff to provide special education services.

Through MTSS processes, all grade levels are assessed three times a year using research-based benchmark and curriculum-based assessments. That data is analyzed by grade and used to create initial flexible intervention groups based upon grade level, below grade level, and above grade level skills. Weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly progress monitoring is then done to assess student progression and change groups and instructional interventions as needed and as determined during regularly held grade level data team meetings.

The Title I reading specialist focuses primarily on the needs of kindergarten through second grade students performing below level in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. Specific needs are then identified using interest inventories, phonics and phonemic awareness screenings such as Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Assessment and the Phonemic Awareness Screening Test, and spelling inventories. She then pulls individual or small groups of students during designated intervention times and administers specific and targeted research-based interventions. Classroom teachers also utilize paraprofessional support throughout the day to provide one-to-one or small group assessment and instructional support. Classroom interventions focus not only on reading and language arts, but also on specific math needs.

In 3rd-5th grade, the school utilizes an area of support that most schools in the area do not have. There are two teachers per grade level, with each teacher having approximately 13-20 students. There is also a science teacher specifically for 3rd-5th grade. Having a full time science teacher allows for the opportunity to

divide the alternate class into three small groups, utilizing the two grade level teachers and the physical education teacher and/or STEM teacher as the third instructor. The teachers use this time to group the students based upon their individual needs in English Language Arts/Reading and Mathematics. Based upon the results of benchmark and curriculum-based assessments such as the CDTs, and classroom formative assessments, teachers focus on either remediating or enriching specific, identified skill sets in small groups. Teachers begin intervention sessions by setting and reviewing goals, reviewing and discussing assessment results, and charting progress with the students, thus giving them ownership of their own data and progress.

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

At Oswayo Valley Elementary School teachers and staff believe firmly in meeting the needs of all students, whether those needs be remediation or enrichment. Through the MTSS process students' skill levels are assessed three times a year and fluid and targeted groups are developed. Small class sizes, as well as the use of well-trained paraprofessionals and the STEM and P.E. teachers, allow the teachers to focus on those small groups of students and their specific needs. The Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics programs both incorporate tiered instructional lessons targeted towards at, below and above level performing students. For those students who are performing above grade level, enrichment activities, projects and instruction are provided in small group settings on a daily basis and supplemented through the use of various online resources that adjust instruction according to skill sets.

When the differentiated instruction and enrichment within the classroom still fail to meet student needs, through a process that requires parent permission and participation, the student is then referred for a Multidisciplinary Evaluation to determine whether or not the student qualifies as a Gifted Student in need of Specially Designed Instruction. The district has one gifted education teacher who works at both the elementary school and the middle/high school. She designs a Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) and assists classroom teachers with the implementation of the plan. She also provides the identified students with the opportunity to participate in various mathematics, language arts, science, humanities, and career exploration events with other area school districts and elementary schools.

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

Oswayo Valley Elementary School currently partners with the Seneca Highlands IU9 for all of its special education services. Currently, there are two full time special education teachers and a part time occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech and language therapist, and school psychologist. The special education program places an emphasis on flexibility and adaptability.

Being a small school, the role of a special education teacher is far from a straightforward or simple designation. Special education teachers are a combination of learning support, emotional support, and even autistic and life skills support, supports which are sometimes delivered simultaneously. The teachers acclimate themselves to the role best suited for their students at any given time, providing structure when necessary and encouraging individuals to grow, to gain independence through the freedom of making their own choices and creating their own consequences, which results in an emphasis being placed on increasing the students' abilities to generalize mastered skills, increase independence, and problem solve. This emphasis is placed on skills needed for both academic and general success as a contributing member of society.

The special education teachers within the building provide a combination of inclusion support and pull-out services. The setting is determined by individual student needs and skills. When providing inclusion support, special education teachers are establishing a strong presence both within the special education and general education settings, fostering a feeling of community and togetherness amongst all of the students and staff. Services within the general education service look like, but are not limited to, co-teaching, breakout small group in-class instruction, or simple whole or individual academic support and prompting. Teachers help both special education and general education students while providing inclusion support.

When needed due to more severe disabilities, support also entails pull-out services. Special education

teachers provide the more traditional support of modified, direct instruction at a child's instructional level in order to build the foundational literacy and mathematical skills needed to better access grade level content. They also provide instruction in daily living skills for the students who require those additional supports, as well as an increasing amount of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills.

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

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

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

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

Oswayo Valley Elementary School’s student, family and community-oriented mindset has helped to maintain and support the academic, social, emotional, physical, and mental health of the students, especially during the recent years of inconsistency, uncertainty and change. Within the halls themselves all teachers and staff, including paraprofessionals, cafeteria workers, and custodians, consciously interact in positive and encouraging ways with all students in the building, not just their own classes.

The school is very lucky to have a small staff, many of whom live in the community, and very little staff turnover most years. Due to this, teachers, staff, and students are familiar with each other from year to year. Daily conversations can be heard between teachers and previous students focusing on such things as a student’s excitement over knowing something in their current grade they were taught in a previous grade, to a teacher congratulating a past student on an accomplishment they heard of, and on occasion, a reminder of behavioral expectations and the fact that because the teacher had them previously, that teacher knows the student understands the expectations and can meet them.

Along with an overall positive and encouraging school wide environment, a program called Character Counts! which is based on six core “pillars” of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship, is also utilized. These traits are taught in a methodical, step by step manner and include visual aides posted throughout the school building. Mental health-based services, in the form of one nearly full-time counselor from Dickinson Mental Health, Inc., are in place and based out of the elementary school. The counselor has the capacity to provide individual, group, and family counseling services as needed. Finally, there is a well trained and organized SAP (Student Assistance Program) team, which can provide identified students and families with further counseling services and assistance from state and county organizations.

Tiered academic programs also assist in maintaining student engagement and motivation, with daily whole, small, and individual instruction occurring in all core academic areas and during scheduled RtII times. RtII groups address the needs of students performing at all levels; remediating, reviewing, reinforcing, and enriching as identified.

Student engagement and motivation is also enhanced through schoolwide traditions and events, the majority of which have now been phased back into the school year full scale or with modifications. There are school wide trivia competitions every Friday held over the announcements, curriculum aligned classroom activities, projects, and occasional fieldtrips. Schoolwide traditions include multiple physical activity-based events, community-based walking field trips, holiday-based events and celebrations, during and after school events, concerts, and gatherings. At the beginning of the school year these activities were limited to staff and students for face-to-face presentation only, with live streaming being provided for family and community participation. By the end of the year though, once national, state, and local guidelines were decreased or lifted, all traditional events were open to families and community members with full face-to-face participation. Our greatest hope is to be able to continue to offer these traditions with full family and community involvement next year.

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

Oswayo Valley Elementary School is in the unique position of being a community centric school in an isolated and rural area. Historically, family engagement has always been a huge component of the elementary school’s success. Recently, in large part because of COVID-19, engagement has broadened to partnerships with local businesses and industries to meet the broader community needs, directly and indirectly related to the pandemic and the issues arising because of it.

Pre-pandemic, Oswayo Valley Elementary School celebrated students and families in multiple ways. Once the pandemic hit, these events were temporality cancelled, then slowly and cautiously phased back in

dependent on the amount of community transmission occurring. These events include three family fun nights, centered around health and wellness. Due to having its own apple orchard on site, students pick apples at all grade levels, then in the evening, during the final Apple Crunch Day event, pass out homemade cider and applesauce. Other events include a Family Trivia Night and an Outdoor Trail Walk. All events are a joint effort between elementary staff, the Wellness Committee, the Parent Teacher Organization, and community and family volunteers.

Other family and community-oriented celebrations include the Kid's Heart Challenge from the American Heart Association. Through pledges, the elementary school has raised and donated over \$72,000 in the last 18 years. Finally, there is a Mini-Olympics Competition for the 5th grade and their parents/guardians, and the school year is wrapped up with a field day. Parents and community members volunteer to man various event and water stations, and donations are collected and donated to Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation for Childhood Cancer.

Once COVID-19 forced school and community closures, engagement was broadened to include local business and industry organizations. These efforts have resulted in increasing the availability, speed, and reliability of both cell and internet service to the community through a strengthened broadband infrastructure. Pre-pandemic, two thirds of the district was without cell service and internet service was provided through satellite access, making it slow and cumbersome. This upgrade and increased reach was made possible through grants and partnerships with local media, energy, and county-based services. The last step in this process is the construction of an Airband Tower, which will be placed on elementary school property, and will expand and strengthen wireless coverage up to 5G quality for a broader range of the community.

A birth to three childcare service is also currently being developed, with an opening date of August 2022. This program will be based out of the elementary school and will provide school employees, community members, and local business employees with onsite, extremely affordable childcare services. There are currently no licensed childcare services within the Oswayo Valley School District. This partnership included the Twin Tiers YMCA, local businesses, and resources from county offices, as well as anonymous donations. The program will also include student internship opportunities for local students enrolled in the Early Childhood Program through the local Career and Technical Center.

Partnerships were also established with different community service agencies to supply much needed mental health and community-based services. These services include an onsite counselor within the building, a trained and well-organized SAP (Student Assistance Program) team, and a partnership with CHOP (Child Hunger Outreach Program) which currently provides food, distributed weekly at the school by the principal, to over 80 of the elementary school families.

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

Oswayo Valley Elementary School is blessed to have a dedicated and very close teaching and support staff. It truly is a second family amongst faculty and staff. However, just like for almost all families around the world, things became very difficult for everyone due to COVID-19 school and business closures, hybrid teaching models, and strict social distancing and masking requirements. During the 2020-2021 school year, when school closures and quarantines were most frequent, and when the highest percentage of students were enrolled in Virtual Instruction, additional steps were taken to help alleviate the stress felt by faculty and staff.

These steps included rolling out as soon as possible a schoolwide Pre-K-5th grade 1:1 Chromebook initiative and as much virtual training on Google Classroom and other internet-based platforms as possible before requiring virtual instruction to occur, and an active and rapid campaign to increase Broadband access to the local community for better and more effective virtual instruction delivery. At the time of the shutdowns and with the use of mixed instructional delivery, administration relaxed teacher and staff dress codes, as well as daily lesson plan requirements. Breakfast items and snacks were also provided.

Historically, and now that things have returned to normal as much as possible, there is a large emphasis on

transparency and collaboration between administration and teachers, especially when deciding upon issues that will directly impact time, scheduling, materials and instruction. This school year, with the implementation of a new, online platform for curriculum development and lesson planning, administration has rolled out usage requirements and professional development so that full implementation of the platform does not need to occur right away, instead giving the staff time, including during scheduled staff meetings and planning periods, to familiarize themselves with the platform and make the transition at their own pace. Lunches and/or breakfasts are often provided during scheduled professional development or Act 80 days, as well.

When district administration decides to hold a Virtual Schooling day due to anticipated bad weather, that call is only made if teachers can be provided with enough advance notice to make sure students have all of the materials they need with them before going home and that teachers have the time they need to make any adjustments to lesson planning and Google Classroom uploads that they might need to do. Teachers are also given the option to either teach from home or, if safe enough, from their classrooms on those days.

Planning times throughout the year are held as sacred as possible. Teachers are only asked to cover another teacher's classroom in the direst of situations. Administration and front office staff work hard to provide any coverage needed, even providing that coverage themselves. District administration holds an end of summer picnic in the neighboring park for those support employees who worked throughout the summer to get the building ready for the beginning of the new school year, and school administration holds a teacher and staff barbeque at the very end of the year.

As supportive as these steps can be, it is the family atmosphere and personal support systems amongst the teachers, administration and staff that have truly had the most impact towards creating and maintaining an environment that allows teachers to feel valued and supported.

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

The principal of Oswayo Valley Elementary School is new to the school as of the start of the 2021-2022 school year. The faculty and staff is fortunate to have an administrator who acknowledges the staffs' competence in providing instruction, intervention, and enriching activities, while identifying and celebrating successes, and actively suggesting and encouraging areas for growth, all of which greatly benefits the whole school community.

Over the past years of COVID-19 related restrictions, many of the organized committees disassembled and fell apart. As the sole administrator in a small school, the principal observed those processes still in place and asked questions regarding past practices and committees and is actively seeking to assist members in resuming past procedures and practices as health and safety allows, as well putting the beginning ideas or steps in place for new committees. The principal also identifies areas of strength in individual teachers or grade levels and leverages those strengths to assist in training and support needs. Even after less than a year, it is clear that the principal believes in delegating responsibilities to staff to enhance their ownership and support in the educational process.

There is also an emphasis on increasing communication and collaboration between the front office, district office, and faculty and staff. This communication encompasses issues from long-and short-term staffing possibilities, to curriculum-based decisions, to the simple flow of information regarding student and family issues. There is also a strong focus on building relationships through listening to staff concerns and working with them to problem solve, which is creating comfortable, open lines of communication.

The elementary school is in the unique position of having both the superintendent's office and the business office located within the building, giving elementary teachers and staff access to district level administration that is often not present at the elementary level, even in smaller districts. This especially worked to the school's advantaged when health and safety measures related to COVID-19 were being discussed. The implementation of measures such as social distancing and masking look far different at the elementary level than they do at the middle or high school level. Being located in the building allowed those in the district office who often had the final say in these measures to see that rules and guidelines could not successfully

and effectively be put in place without considering and accounting for the differences between the three building levels.

COVID-19 and its various consequences also strengthened the need for stronger communication and collaboration between administration, teachers, cafeteria, and custodial staff. Open lines of communication had to be established in order to refine, as much as possible, procedures such as student drop off and pick-up, daily sanitization, prompt and unobtrusive refilling of empty hand sanitizers in the classrooms, to establishing plans and schedules for delivery of breakfast and lunch items to classrooms instead of only in the cafeteria. All of these accomplishments would not have happened as well as they did without the emphasis on relationships and communication that past and present administration has sought to maintain and strengthen in the last several years.

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

Despite being a community with very little diversity amongst students and staff, Oswayo Valley Elementary School is dedicated to creating an awareness and understanding of the cultural diversity that exists in the world outside of the community. Within the school itself, the biggest diversity amongst student body and staff is socio-economic status. The school has students and families that have traveled the United States and witnessed firsthand the diversity that occurs within larger settings, as well as students and families that have never left the area and who have at times had to live without electricity, water, or heat.

All students are treated with the same level of fairness and compassion, no matter their living situations. Currently all students are provided with a free lunch and breakfast, a situation that is expected to continue once food service returns to normal, and a weekly food distribution program is in place and serves more than 80 of our elementary families, regardless of income level. Staff participate in weekly “dress-down days” in which they pay a dollar on Friday to wear jeans to work. This money is then used throughout the year to support families or staff that are in need.

To bring awareness and understanding of cultural diversity to our students, teachers focus on establishing close teacher-student relationships and student-student relationships within the classroom first. This allows for more open and honest communication and debate to occur, as well as the discovery that though the classroom and school does not look like a diverse setting, each student brings to the educational environment different and unique life experiences and perspectives. This realization is then utilized by the teachers to begin discussions regarding current world events, different cultures and religions found around the world, as well as different perspectives and beliefs. Connections are made regarding the importance of awareness and understanding of these differences and issues, and how that awareness and understanding can and will assist students as they reach adulthood and enter careers and services that might take them beyond the town and community they are currently living in.

In all subject areas, including art and music, world events, customs, cultures, important historical events and people are explored. The Pre-K-2nd grade level begins the introduction of diversity through read aloud, exploration and discussion. Using items such as pictures, toys, models and the internet, as well as field trips to a local Native American Museum, students are exposed to items of daily living in diverse cultures that include past and present items and concepts such as family units, housing designs, cooking utensils, childhood toys, food customs, etc. At the 3rd – 5th grade level, students read and analyze weekly current events magazines and newspapers, read stories and articles from their ELA anthology, conduct historical research and design and develop presentations on different topics related to current events and issues of cultural diversity. At the fifth-grade level students are introduced to structured debate and argument of age-appropriate controversial and opposing issues and concepts. The importance of awareness and tolerance is stressed throughout all of the students’ elementary careers.

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

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It was extremely difficult to identify one primary strategy responsible for Oswayo Valley Elementary School's academic success. However, after multiple discussions with a range of teachers and staff, it was agreed that it is the shared expectation between staff and the vast majority of families and community members of a rigorous and responsive education that has most led to the students' and school's success.

Across the board, teachers, family and community members value education and express and model that value to the students, which creates an active and rigorous learning culture. There are open and frequent lines of communication between teachers and parents focusing on student successes and needs. When students are sick and going to be out of the building, parents regularly call and request assignments, Chromebook, and materials be left in the main vestibule for pickup so that their child can access Google Classroom and keep up with their studies as much as the illness allows them to. Community members, particularly those belonging to the Senior Center, openly and actively support the school and decisions made within the school. Teachers are constantly collaborating and seeking solutions to classroom and student struggles.

At the very beginning of the year, and two times throughout the year, students are assessed using a variety of curriculum-based assessments, benchmarking assessments, and screening tools. Data is analyzed in grade level teams and used to not only develop small and flexible groupings, but also used to drive daily classroom instruction. For students identified as working below grade level in one or more areas, parents take an active part in discussions and instructional planning sessions. Teachers provide parents with supports they can incorporate at home and parents attempt to openly share any issues occurring at home that might be affecting their child's school performance.

Academic and behavioral strategies are shared amongst teammates and grade levels. Collaboration and cross curricular instruction and support occurs between core academic teachers and specials teachers, particularly at the 3rd-5th grade level with STEM and Science. Topics are reinforced and expanded upon or enriched in Art and STEM. In P.E. the teacher focuses on the theory and science behind physical fitness, as well as incorporating teamwork, strategy, and analysis into daily classes. All of the teachers are adept at utilizing metacognitive techniques within the core academics to model real life thought processes and problem-solving strategies.

For those students who have been identified as having a disability and needing specially designed instruction, the emphasis remains on high achievement and generalization and independence of skills. Special education teachers teach resilience and determination as much as they do basic academic skills. No matter a student's individual skill levels, higher achievement is always the goal, whether that be academic, social, behavioral, communication or basic life skills designed to lead to as much independence as possible.

It is the firm belief of the Oswayo Valley Elementary School and the community surrounding it that education is of utmost importance. When all the adults in a child's life hold and model such a belief, that child will also internalize that belief, take ownership of their own learning, and strive alongside the adults to be the best that they can be. This is what leads to the success of Oswayo Valley Elementary School students.