

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Choices In Learning Elementary Charter School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1100 East State Road 434
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Winter Springs FL 32708-2715
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Seminole

Telephone (407) 302-1005 Fax (407) 542-5553

Web site/URL <https://www.choicesinlearning.org/> E-mail Janet.Kearney@choicesinlearning.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*Dr. Walt Griffin
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail walt_griffin@scps.k12.fl.us

District Name Seminole School District Tel. (407) 320-0000

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 Sarah Geltz ESQ.
(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, write N/A in the space.*

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 2019 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 includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 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: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
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. 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.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 37 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 12 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 9 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 58 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	65	75	140
1	61	59	120
2	59	63	122
3	54	54	108
4	62	45	107
5	42	56	98
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	343	352	695

*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
 - 10 % Asian
 - 6 % Black or African American
 - 24 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 54 % White
 - 6 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: <1%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	6
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	694
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2%
13 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Filipino, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Rumanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Turkish, Urdu, Visayan, Yoruba

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 22%
Total number students who qualify: 151

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
85 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. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Autism | <u>26</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>25</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>84</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 11
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	35
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	3
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.	1

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 20:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

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.

It is the mission of Choices In Learning to inspire and educate lifelong learners through a cooperative learning community.

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

Parents who wish to have their child(ren) attend our school submit a one (1) page Enrollment Form during our enrollment window. Student names and grades are entered into an Excel Spreadsheet and the sheet is sent to our accountant. The accounting firm randomly sorts the student names and then we invite them in the randomly sorted order as we have spots available at each grade level (based on class size and number of teachers at the grade level).

PART III – SUMMARY

Choices In Learning Elementary Charter School encourages excellence in academics. We are open to all elementary-aged children in Grades K-5. Our school currently serves a population comprised of approximately forty-six percent minority students and about thirty-two percent economically disadvantaged students who travel to us from all parts of Seminole County. We continually strive to improve student learning, to increase choices in learning opportunities for students and to provide students with a rich and full academic experience. Our staff believes that all students can learn if provided with programs designed to meet their abilities and needs.

Choices In Learning Elementary Charter School implements Success for All, a curriculum researched and developed by Johns Hopkins University. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University have worked during the past 30+ years developing curriculum that is research-based and proven to help students achieve at greater rates in comparison to their peers who used another curriculum. This curriculum encourages outstanding reading and cooperative skills and excellence in all areas of academics and behavior. Additionally, Success For All has designated Choices In Learning as an Ambassador School and principals and teachers come to CIL often to learn how to implement SFA in their schools! We are so honored to have been chosen for such a distinguished and flattering role in helping others to educate children in such a fantastic way.

We also focus on incorporating Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) skills and strategies into all of our classrooms. CIL provides an amazing amount of technology for our students. Every 4th and 5th grade child is assigned a Kindle Fire and a keyboard case to use at home and every child in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade has a Dell laptop for use in the classroom. We feel that giving students these opportunities to use and interact with the technology will prepare them for their continuing education and for life and work in general. As evidenced in our results on the state assessments, CIL does an outstanding job with math and science instruction as well. Please click on the Academic Performance link on our home page to review our results in comparison with the other Seminole County Public Elementary Schools. We are very proud of our students, parents, and staff and are thrilled with our results.

In addition to our excellent academic program, Choices In Learning Elementary Charter School offers: Fencing, Chorus, Safety Patrol, Cross Country, Robotics, Soccer, Science, Yoga, Dance, Debate, Chess, and Drama Clubs.

Choices In Learning Elementary Charter School partners with parents to achieve excellence in academics. As we work together, our children receive the best education possible.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Our school uses the Success For All curriculum for reading instruction at all grades K - 5. The basis of this program is the Cycle of Effective Instruction with an emphasis on cooperative learning. This program is aligned to the Florida Standards and was originally chosen by our founding CIL Board of Directors. Students are placed in the appropriate level class in order to best meet their needs whether for remediation or enrichment. By leveling students for reading, we are able to move them more quickly in order to either "catch them up" with their peers or to advance them to an even higher level of achievement. Students who struggle are placed in our Multi-Tiered System of Support and receive tutoring at least 2 times per week. If they show improvement, they may remain Tiered indefinitely. However, if the Tier 2 interventions are not successful, we move the child to Tier 3. Tier 3 interventions are conducted at least 4 times per week for 30 minutes each time.

Progress of each child is monitored by the interventionist through our quarterly assessment data (Mastery Connect). The emphasis we place on cooperative learning within the classroom also enables us to help students reach the highest level of mastery possible. Students are expected to turn and speak with partners and teammates in order to explain their thinking, expand on their answers, and to prove that what they are asserting has a basis in what has been stated by the author in a text. The Cycle of Effective Instruction also ensures that teachers follow the concept of I do... we do... you do. The Treasure Hunt for each text follows a framework that has teachers introduce a concept/skill through direct instruction. Then, students are asked to practice using that skill/strategy with their partners/teams before being asked to show individual mastery of the skill.

1b. Mathematics:

Choices In Learning uses Think Central - Go Math and the power teaching model to educate our students in mathematics. Each grade level K-5 has specific lessons in every chapter to meet the needs of every Florida standard. Standards and goals are addressed at the beginning of each lesson with the students. The classwork, homework, review, quizzes, and tests all have several questions on each standard being covered. If students do not show mastery on the quizzes of each chapter they are given reteach pages to complete at home with their parents that are due the day of the test. This gives the students additional guidance on how to complete each type of skill and practice problems to reinforce the lesson.

Throughout the year the students take Progress Monitoring Assessments. These assessments address all of the specific subject area standards. If a student does not master a specific standard the teacher can then assign them intervention modules through Think Central on that specific skill. Classroom teachers create a student checklist after each of these major assessments. If a student continues to show sign of struggle they are placed on our Multi-Tiered System of Support and receive tutoring anywhere from 2-5 times per week. When the students are pulled for tutoring they can then work on these individually assigned assessments to meet the needs of any areas in which they are showing signs of struggle. The students are also able to work on these assignments if they have extra time in the classroom and have finished team work, partner work, and on your own work. In addition to the specifically assigned modules all students have access to several Think Central resources.

Math on the Spot videos are available to every student in every grade level in their My Library section. These videos go through step by step how to unlock word problems and accurately solve it. There is a video for every single lesson in every chapter. The students also have access to Animated Math Models which allow them to use computer-based tools to understand the skill they are learning. To assist and challenge those who are on level each grade level has an AMC group once a week. Students are selected to be in this Accelerated Math Class due to their PMA scores, test scores, and work ethic. In this class the students work together to solve real life issues using math.

Choices in Learning also uses a Cooperative Based Learning approach. Each lesson starts off with a get the goof and mental math PowerPoint slide to warm up the students' brains with previous math content. During this time the students are thinking to themselves how to solve the problem. After appropriate think time the students then share their thoughts with their peers at their team. A random student is then selected to share their thoughts with the class. The students then go over the specific learning goal for that day by putting it into their own words, rating where they currently are on the scale, and discussing how they will show improvement. After the goal, the teacher unlocks the math problem in the day's lesson and will teach the students the appropriate skill using any tips and tricks they may have. The teacher and students then solve a similarly structured problem again together. After this the students break off and work with their partner, their team, and then individually. During partner and team problems the students use role cards to ensure that each student plays a part in breaking down and answering the problem. The teacher is circulating and checking in with all of the teams to monitor understanding.

1c. Science:

Our school uses the Power Teaching Model for teaching science in grades 1-5. Each classroom teacher teaches units built with the State Standards that incorporate several hands-on learning labs. Annually, teachers are provided with a science budget to ensure the availability of consumable science materials. To begin each unit, students participate in an inquiry lab to peak their interest. This lab is followed by teachers chunking content and allowing students to engage with the material in a cooperative learning setting with groups of four. The material is presented through song, art, and visual presentations. The students practice using this information in a lab situation with the support of their peers utilizing the scientific method and are graded using a rubric. Examples of classroom labs have included building roller coasters to explore force and motion, making chemical and physical reactions during our matter unit to dissecting flowers in our life science units. Labs such as these make it easier for students to relate to and internalize the concepts we are attempting to teach. Following the direct instruction portion of the cycle, student practice, and the labs, students are given teacher-made assessments in order to determine mastery of the skills and concepts that were taught during the cycle.

Teachers also have students find real world connections during science by incorporating art, mathematics, engineering and technology into the lessons. Students are encouraged to illustrate and diagram during their science units. We have three 3D printers available to teachers and students of all grade levels. Keva Planks are used in classroom to reinforce several concepts with kinesthetic learning. Dash and Dot are programmable robots that are used to reinforce concepts as well. Choices In Learning uses a computer-based program to teach coding to our students.

Each year, our whole school participates in a Science Fair. Our older students participate in the Science Fair by choosing a topic and conducting an experiment using the scientific method. This is an opportunity to practice the scientific method that we have used all year. Students are challenged to find real world applications for their experiment. The younger students come to the older grades where projects are presented. The students are encouraged to think and act like scientists. Community scientists, NASA Engineers and Girl Scout STEM leaders have judged our science fair in the past creating that "real world" connection for the students. This is also an opportunity for Choices In Learning to foster relationships with business and partners in our community.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Our school uses the Studies Weekly Curriculum for Social Studies in grades 1-5. This program provides standards-based curriculum that meets the state requirements for each grade level. Studies Weekly engages the students by providing a printed newspaper to go along with each unit, as well as providing an online website full of resources. The students are challenged to read each newspaper and apply reading comprehension skills and strategies to make further connections with the Social Studies Standards. This program was chosen for how well it easily engages students and how strongly it connects all of the subject areas.

Students begin each unit by sharing background knowledge, and then begin to build on it by reading the aligned Studies Weekly Newspaper. Differentiated by grade level, students may read the newspapers whole group, in teams, partners or individually. Teachers also have access to the online Studies Weekly resources which reads the newspaper to the students while following along on the screen. While reading the newspaper, the students are asked to stop and discuss the important information through Think-Pair-Share opportunities. The teacher models finding the important information such as dates and vocabulary by highlighting right in the articles. The students each have their own copy of the newspaper, and the teacher also has a large copy of the newspaper where instruction can be led and modeled at.

Once the newspaper articles have been read and discussed, the teachers utilize the provided extension activities to further extend the learning. Students are presented with reading comprehension questions where they are challenged to use the newspaper as reference for evidence. They are also provided with a writing prompt which is directly aligned to the standards and unit being taught. Students are also provided project - based learning opportunities that challenge them to work together to research, create and present their findings on the units being taught.

At the end of each unit, students take a final assessment where they are required to use their newspaper as a resource and piece of evidence. This challenges the students to not only show mastery of the Social Studies standards that were taught, but also to use reading comprehension and writing skills share their knowledge.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Choices In Learning also provides instruction in the areas of art, music, media, Spanish and physical education. These subjects are provided to all students kindergarten through fifth grade. Each homeroom class meets for art, music, media and Spanish once every two weeks for fifty minutes. In a calendar school year each homeroom class will be provided approximately eighteen total class sessions in art, music, media and Spanish instruction. Physical education is provided to students three days per week throughout the school year.

The art curriculum at Choices In Learning was designed to meet all National Art Standards, support our goals as a cooperative learning school and encourage students to make connections between other core subject areas while expressing themselves as creative individuals. The art curriculum at CIL includes a variety of projects both 2D and 3D, some of which include printmaking, clay, painting, paper sculptures, Gyotaku, and Suminagashi. Art instruction always begins with students viewing artwork or particular art techniques. Students are then prompted with questions to turn and discuss with their partners. Often, students will be asked to compare and contrast two different pieces of artwork or to discuss the techniques and concepts employed by an artist or within a culture or art movement. Students apply techniques and knowledge learned in class to create a unique artwork that demonstrates an understanding of the artist, time period, culture or material they are learning about. Artwork is celebrated by their peers through teacher guided critiques and discussions. Third and fourth grade students' artwork is displayed in an annual art show and kindergarten through fifth grade student artwork is displayed throughout the school.

The music curriculum at Choices In Learning provides lessons based on the National Music Standards which include:

singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music; performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music; improvising melodies, variations and accompaniments; composing and arranging music within specific guidelines; reading and notating music; listening to, analyzing and describing music; evaluating music and music performances; and more.

In addition to the general music education classes, students also have the opportunity to join the school chorus in grades 3-5. Approximately ten percent of the student body chooses to sing in chorus. These groups meet before the school day begins 1-2 times per week. They prepare a special concert to be performed for their peers and also an evening performance for families to attend. The combined fourth & fifth grade chorus also performs in the community. CIL choruses have been invited to sing for the NBA Magic game for the past several years.

Spanish is offered at Choices In Learning. Spanish instruction is offered through the use of a computer-based program. The lessons consist of several learning activities for vocabulary, pronunciation and other language skills. There are several activities to help students better learn and understand words. These activities involve reading, speaking, writing and listening. Additional activities such as matching and unscrambling sentences help to aid in the learning process.

The Physical Education program at Choices In Learning is a unique mix of traditional style P.E. games with a modern flair. Our goal in the P.E. department is to provide a foundation of essential skills in a variety of sports through unique games and activities that are developmentally appropriate. We also have a strong focus on cooperative learning-based exercises and continuously promote healthy competition with an emphasis on excellent sportsmanship. Being active and finding an activity to be passionate about isn't something that is just taught in our program, but is something that is validated by our P.E. staff through their own extracurricular activities. By the end of fifth grade, the students at Choices in Learning should be equipped with tools necessary to live a healthy and productive lifestyle full of activities they enjoy inspired by their experiences in our program.

The Media program at our school runs on the same rotation listed above. Our students learn basic library skills like the Dewey Decimal System as well as advanced technology lessons. We have our kindergarten students learn the basics of coding and build on this process throughout their time here. Our fourth and fifth graders learn how to build computers utilizing the Raspberry Pi and Kano computing kits. The fifth graders also incorporate our 3D printers into their curriculum. They discuss real world life hacks and then create what they have come up with on our iPads and then ultimately print them on one of our three 3D printers. Our students also learn about the different genres of books. They check out library books at the end of each media session and keep them for two weeks. Our students are given technology rich lessons that they can take with them for years to come.

3. Special Populations:

When a child is achieving on grade level academically, s/he is considered a Tier 1 student. The teacher continues to monitor the Tier 1 student's progress, but there is no need for additional interventions from the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) team. Tier 1 students sometimes experience enrichment activities while struggling peers receive needed academic or behavioral support. A child that is achieving above grade level may be referred either by the teacher or parent to be screened for gifted services. When a child passes the gifted screener, the parent is asked to sign permission for a full evaluation by the school psychologist to determine eligibility for gifted services.

When a child is struggling and needs extra help or additional interventions, they are considered a Tier 2 student. The MTSS team designs an individual plan of interventions, and the child's progress is monitored by the MTSS team. Recommendations for home support are also provided for parents and an MTSS form is completed. A child who shows a positive response to Tier 2 interventions may remain on Tier 2 indefinitely because the interventions are helping the child have more success.

When a child does not demonstrate expected gains/improvements while receiving Tier 2 interventions, the MTSS team reconvenes and may recommend more intense interventions. In this case, the child would be moved to Tier 3 and more intensive interventions will commence. Parents are informed of the child's change in Tier placement and teachers will continue to monitor the child's progress.

A Student Study Team Meeting may be held while a student is receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions. This
NBRS 2019

meeting will typically include the principal, counselor, teachers, MTSS specialist/ESE teacher, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), School Psychologist, and Student Staffing Resource Specialist. The SCPS School Nurse and/or Social Worker may also be invited. At this meeting, the team (including the child's parent(s)) will discuss the possibility of assessments that can be administered to your child as a part of a Psycho-Educational Evaluation. When ability or academic tests are administered by the SLP or psychologist, the information gathered is used to help guide interventions and instruction based on the child's strengths and weaknesses. Results of the testing alone are not the determining factor for a child to meet criteria for Special Education Services with an IEP or accommodations. A child's response to the MTSS interventions is also considered when determining eligibility for ESE services.

This comprehensive approach to monitoring student progress begins in Kindergarten and continues through 5th grade. This process supports our belief that all children can and will learn.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At our school, both students and staff feel engaged, valued and motivated due to all of the outstanding programs that create a positive environment. Students are engaged and motivated with a positive cooperative learning setting to support their academic, social and emotional growth through a variety of programs. Each week the students have their weekly class council where students discuss not only classroom goals but individual achievements. Students discuss their own personal needs for social and emotional growth. They seek peer advice under the guidance of the classroom teacher. We have a Cheetah Pride Program where all students are able to earn rewards through demonstrating school wide expectations. This program helps foster a sense of personal responsibility throughout the school campus. Students earn Cheetah Pride coupons for positive behaviors, and they can exchange the coupons for prizes. Students that have redeemed their Cheetah Prides are recognized and celebrated on the daily morning news. In the classrooms we use cooperative learning and give team points which keeps each individual student engaged and motivated to focus on the academic objective of each lesson. This practice helps each student achieve high academic success which is recognized quarterly. Our school recognizes students that earn A Honor Roll, A/B Honor Roll, Perfect Attendance, Subject Area Mastery and students with Great Gains in each subject area. At this ceremony, staff, students, parents and families come together to celebrate these academic successes.

Our teachers are grouped into small professional learning communities where they can discuss their teaching needs. Each person is valued, and each contribution is regarded as important. At our school the staff is supported by a PTO that does an outstanding job of helping our teachers feel valued by offering staff appreciation days and weeks. The Principal and the CIL Board of Directors supports our teachers through annual holiday celebrations and end of the year gatherings to help teachers and staff feel valued and wanted in our school community. Peer recognition helps to create a positive culture. CIL has established a Teacher and Employee of the Year honor which peers nominate and vote on the recipient. A mentoring program encourages veteran teacher and new teacher interaction in a positive setting so that all persons can grow professionally. Teachers are encouraged to observe each other and learn from those experiences.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Choices In Learning is very fortunate to have an extensive relationship with the community and families which supports all of our students success and school improvements. At the beginning of each school year, our community relationships start with several opportunities for parents to be involved and engaged with other families and staff from our school. Our Parent Teacher Organization organizes a school carnival, skate nights, multiple dinner nights in the local community. This creates a partnership between the families and the school directly impacting student success.

Annually we hold a Parent Information Night where classroom teachers host mini workshops. These workshops provide information that the students will be introduced to throughout the year. Parents also learn strategies for helping their child achieve success in math and reading. Tools are provided that parents can utilize at home to assist their students. This event is very beneficial in engaging families because it creates open communication between parents and staff. At the end of the evening, parents, students and staff come together to enjoy a pizza dinner which helps foster the relationship between school and home.

Parent involvement continues throughout the school year via parent teacher conferences. Parents are invited twice a year to discuss their child's academic achievements as well as strategies to overcome any challenges they may have. The parents are provided with quarterly progress monitoring data, which is utilized to help assist their child in meeting their academic goal.

Field trips are another way that our school is involved community interaction. Each grade level chooses a local destination where the students can engage with community experts in a field of expertise that aligns

with our state standards. Some of the experiences include Kindergarten visiting a local farm, fourth grade visiting local state parks, and fifth grade visiting our county Environmental Science Center. In addition to visiting the community, we also invite community outreach volunteers to come to our school. Local community helpers such as nurses, firefighters, police officers and veterinarians visit our first grade classes. Our second-grade students participate in an economic project where students design, plan and implement a product to sell to their school wide peers. They then vote on a local charity where they will donate their proceeds.

Our school has an annual school improvement plan that is created, approved and supported by our staff and SAC (School Advisory Committee). SAC is comprised of parents, administration, staff and local community members.

3. Professional Development:

At Choices In Learning the teachers obtain professional development experience in a variety of ways. One of the best opportunities offered to all instructional staff is a resource from Florida Principal and Teacher Academy through the FL Department of Education. This is an online course structure that provides a variety of developmental courses, including courses in school leadership, special needs, instructional strategies, and classroom management. The multitude of classes offered provides the teachers with flexibility to meet their individual goals for professional and personal development. For example, one of the courses offered is Managing the Defiant Child. This course provides many beneficial strategies that can be implemented in the classroom as well as shared with fellow staff members. Upon completion of the course, educators reflect on its impact, measurable learning goals, and how it could be implemented in the classroom.

In addition to the online courses, Choices In Learning offers instructional professional development for all classroom teachers throughout the summer. At these workshops, teachers divide into professional learning communities to share different instructional strategies and discuss which techniques have been most successful for student and teacher growth. These professional development days range from STEM-based workshops to subject area improvement. Teachers discuss best practices for student achievement and learning gains. Sharing and learning new practices creates a reflective environment for school and teacher improvement.

Besides courses offered through Choices In Learning, administration and staff have the opportunity to attend professional development courses through the University of Central Florida. One of the previous workshops that staff attended was a STEM-based learning workshop. At this workshop, teachers were introduced to different manipulatives that could be used in all grade levels across the curriculum. One tool that has been implemented in the classrooms from that workshop is Keva Planks. These manipulatives have been used to create maps in social studies, represent geometric shapes in math, as well as learning basic engineering principals.

Having an opportunity for a variety of developmental courses provides the staff with the support to align activities with academic standards. These professional development opportunities provide teachers and administrators with innovative ideas and activities to assist with student engagement. This helps educators to reach the overall mission at Choices In Learning, which is to develop lifelong learners through cooperative learning.

4. School Leadership:

Our school's leadership philosophy is based on our mission statement. It is the mission of Choices in Learning Elementary Charter School to inspire and educate lifelong learners through a cooperative learning community. The overall leadership structure of our school starts with our Board of Directors and our principal. These two leadership bodies at our school work very closely together through meetings where the public and their input are invited. Additionally, our school has a School Advisory Council comprised of staff, parents, and community members. Each of our grade level teams works in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

The principal and the Board work collaboratively to establish and develop policies and procedures that ensure student achievement and foster a cooperative learning community. The principal is the bridge between the Board and the staff to create a well-functioning unified school. Each grade level has a team leader designated by the principal. Our principal analyzes and interprets student data quarterly and then meets with these leaders to discuss how to best meet the needs of our students and to ensure that they continue to make appropriate academic growth. Team leaders then take the data and continue the conversation at the team level. Weekly PLC meetings are held where data drives the discussions to meet all students' needs. Our principal requires that every team track the data to ensure that every student makes an appropriate annual learning gain. Students who show a need for additional support are provided with assistance through MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support). Our principal also monitors the progress of students who receive tiered interventions. Students who need enrichment are provided such opportunities. All of these leadership components are critical for our school's success and our students' individual learning.

Additionally, our principal selects a focus for our school each year based on the disaggregated student assessment data and on her observations of teachers' instructional practice. She leads professional development (PD) activities that help teachers know how to improve and implement the strategies necessary to positively impact the targeted area of need. She coaches our Instructional Coach and our Dean so that all three can successfully observe the teachers to monitor implementation of the strategies covered in the PD activities and to provide appropriate feedback to the teachers. These areas of focus have enabled our school to improve students' scores on the Florida Statewide Assessments every year.

Choices In Learning's School Advisory Committee works in conjunction with the staff to develop a School Improvement Plan that focuses on all academic areas. From this partnership, our school has implemented a Math and Reading Curriculum Night, Science Fair, and Cross Grade Level Writing Mentor Program. Math and Reading Curriculum Night bring parents in to the school to learn strategies to help support their children at home. Science Fair is a celebration of science skills. Our mentor writing program fosters a relationship between teachers and students in different grade levels, creating a collaborative environment focused on students' growth and achievement within their writing.

Due to our mission of developing collaborative lifelong learners, we all work together to ensure that our policies, programs, instruction, and relationships are focused on student achievement.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most influential piece in our school's success is cooperative learning. Within our classrooms, our students are grouped together in teams of four where each student is assigned a specific role. The roles are rotated to ensure that each student has the opportunity to participate in each specific part.

Throughout the day, students are required to work together by sharing and discussing their ideas with partners and teammates. They are given many opportunities to debate their ideas both in small group and whole group situations. When having small group conversation, students are required to use role cards that give each student a specific part in sharing their ideas. These role cards also allow students to discuss their differences of opinions respectfully. When students are done having small group discussions, the teacher uses random selection to allow equal opportunity for all students to share their knowledge whole group. When students are struggling, they are able to turn and talk to their team and partners for extra support. This challenges those students who have mastered the skill to be able to explain and teach to those who are struggling.

Within our cooperative learning environment, we focus on furthering explanations of the students' thinking to make additional connections to their learning. Students begin each lesson by reading, dissecting and understanding the learning goal. They are challenged to work together with their partners and teammate to put the goal in their own words to show their prior knowledge and understanding. We then ask the students to rate themselves on the learning scale according to how they are feeling with the presented learning goal. Students are asked to discuss their strengths, weaknesses and goals for the day based on the learning goal to make further connections with their learning. This allows students who have mastered the skill to be challenged to teach and explain to those who may be struggling, while it also allows the students who are struggling to reflect on the specific areas they may not understand. Students are then able to work together with their partners and teammates to help one another make growth on the learning goal and scale for the day.

Throughout the quarter students are presented with many informal and formal assessments to track data of their learning. Quarterly, students take Progress Monitoring Assessments which assess all of the skills they have been working on in the classroom. With this data, teachers are able to target the students who are mastering the skills and those who still may be struggling. This allows the teachers to better meet each student's learning needs by grouping the students according to their strengths and weaknesses in teams and also helps the principal place students in the appropriate levels for reading instruction.