

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 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 Mrs. Stephanie Johnson

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

Official School Name Oak Ridge Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 8791 West 103rd Street

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Palos Hills State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60465-1633

County Cook County

Telephone (708) 233-5303

Fax (708) 430-8648

Web site/URL <https://oakridge.npd117.net/>

E-mail [sjohnson@npd117.net](mailto:sjohnson@npd117.net)

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. Jeannie Stachowiak

E-

mail [jstachowiak@npd117.net](mailto:jstachowiak@npd117.net)

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

District Name North Palos School District 117

Tel. (708) 598-5500

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Dr. Tom Kostas

(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 2023 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 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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 (2022-2023) 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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
1 Middle/Junior high schools  
0 High schools  
0 K-12 schools
- 5 TOTAL

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

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

☐ Urban (city or town)  
☒ Suburban  
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 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 Students
PreK	0
K	0
1	0
2	198
3	186
4	181
5	145
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	710

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 % Asian
  - 6 % Black or African American
  - 16 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 67 % White
  - 5 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 9%

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	33
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	30
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	63
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	680
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Arabic, Serbian, Polish, Spanish, Macedonian, Russian, Ukrainian, Thai, Filipino, Lithuanian, Ibo/Igbo, Urbu, Vietnamese, Hindi, Slovak, Croatian, Pashto, Assyrian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 39 %

280 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 57 %

Total number students who qualify: 406

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 12 %  
Total number of students served 85

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 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>19</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>13</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>7</u> Developmental Delay	<u>25</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>14</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. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 3 %  
Total number of students served: 23

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 1

11. 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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	33
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	22
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	21
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

12. 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 22:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	94%	95%	96%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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.

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Create a positive, caring, learning environment, which fosters excellence and active student participation and ensure that every student will realize his/her full potential as a socially responsible lifelong learner.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

Policy for students: [https://boardpolicyonline.com/?b=north\\_palos\\_117&s=95023](https://boardpolicyonline.com/?b=north_palos_117&s=95023)

Policy for staff: [https://boardpolicyonline.com/?b=north\\_palos\\_117&s=94951](https://boardpolicyonline.com/?b=north_palos_117&s=94951)

18. **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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Home of the Mustangs, Oak Ridge Elementary School, is one of five schools in the North Palos School District 117. Located in Palos Hills, a suburb of Chicago, Oak Ridge has serviced NPD117 students since 1959. With numerous additions and renovations throughout its history, it currently serves approximately 700 students in grades 2 through 5. Since the 2018 implementation of the summative designation rating system in Illinois, Oak Ridge has consistently earned an Exemplary rating from the Illinois State Board of Education.

As reflected on the 2021-2022 Illinois Report Card, the diverse Oak Ridge School family includes a wide range of economic environments (59% were classified as Low Income) and cultural backgrounds (35% of students have a primary language other than English). The systematic approach to classroom instruction and intervention allows for each student to receive a learner-centered education that facilitates individual growth. The collaborative instructional structure allows many opportunities for students to thrive, thanks to the support of the highly qualified classroom teachers and specialists, which include four reading specialists, twelve special education specialists, three Arabic bilingual teachers, two Spanish bilingual teachers, two Polish bilingual teachers, one dedicated ESL teacher, numerous ESL certified teachers general education teachers, and a full time teacher dedicated to math enrichment and intervention for grades 2-3. The students' well-rounded education also benefits greatly from the consistent leadership and support of the three curriculum team leaders (math, reading, English Learners), art teacher, music teacher, physical education teachers, speech/language pathologists, social workers, school psychologist, OT/PT specialists, and well qualified support staff members.

The Oak Ridge team works in tandem with families, children, and community members to foster a learning environment in which students' intellectual, social, and emotional development are interconnected and integrated into activities across the rigorous curriculum. The team takes great pride in fostering a strong sense of community and teamwork through the relationships that have been developed with stakeholders and all of the programs that are offered to address students' individual academic and social emotional needs. Our largest program, ASSETS (After School Student Enrichment Teams), is an extended day literacy and math intervention program provided by certified teachers which currently services over 100 students. Oak Ridge also provides Plan Time Tutoring, where targeted interventions take place during the school day in literacy and math. Oak Ridge provides additional interventions for bilingual students in addition to Tier 1 core instruction. Language and Literacy Intervention supports newcomers students and students at the earlier stages of language acquisition. Students receive instruction on literacy foundational skills. EL Intervention provides support for students based on their language development needs. Our four reading specialists support our students through Reading Intervention which provides targeted, specific interventions for students in literacy, both as a standalone program and as an in-class intervention. Oak Ridge is also proud to make numerous Extracurricular Activities available to our students. Some of those activities include open gym, running club, student council, Learning Links, and a Drama club. Oak Ridge incorporates Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) into our school culture by having our own "Mustang Must Do's". Our Mustang Must Do's involves the design and implementation of best practices with the goal of improving behavior outcomes for all students. The emphasis is on teaching and encouraging prosocial behaviors. In addition, our school social workers and classroom teachers collaborate to provide additional direct instruction to students to develop their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills during classroom Second Step lessons. Bolstered by a dynamic Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), whose members provide support for enrichment activities such as interactive family nights, school-wide assemblies, and cultural arts programs; community-based, in-school educational programs provided by the local police, fire, and library districts; and a strong school-home partnership, we hold forth high expectations for the growth and achievement of all students. To support and celebrate our school's diversity, our EL Intake Plan and Newcomer's Lunch Groups create a welcoming environment for our students who are new to the country and our American school system while our Culture Days help to celebrate all of our students and their families. Our Oak Ridge team takes great pride in fostering a strong sense of community and teamwork through all of our programs and the relationships we have developed with our stakeholders.

Guided by the district-wide core values and in collaboration with the School Board, Administration, and

stakeholders, every single staff member at Oak Ridge strives to provide the individualized support needed for each child to attain intellectual, social, and emotional growth and high levels of academic achievement. Our team endeavors to help each child develop to meet his or her full potential in a safe and secure environment that fosters acceptance, respect, and trust. The Oak Ridge staff truly embodies the North Palos School District 117 motto of “Investing in our Future, One Child at a Time.”

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

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

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

The English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum units of study are aligned with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Model Content Framework. These units of study were created using the Understanding by Design framework and are centered around enduring understandings and essential questions. Units include informational, literature, writing, and language standards and reflect the three main shifts of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS): practice regularly with complex text and its academic language, ground reading, writing, and speaking in evidence from text, and build knowledge through content-rich nonfiction. In each unit, students read rigorous texts that showcase the CCSS and promote critical thinking. This type of curricular approach ensures that students have access to a challenging, grade-level curriculum to prepare them for success in college and careers.

Approximately 120 minutes are dedicated to ELA instruction daily. During this block, teachers address the critical areas of reading and writing instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. Explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics are key features of foundational skills' lessons. Students practice these foundational skills in context using decodable readers. Fluency instruction includes instructional strategies such as choral reading, buddy reading, and repeated readings. Vocabulary instruction focuses on two main types of words: academic and forever. Academic vocabulary words are content-specific terms found in the Common Core State Standards, such as summarize or theme. Forever words are words frequently used across various subject areas, such as essential or reflect. Comprehension instruction focuses on using strategies to help students increase their understanding of literary and informational texts. In the area of writing, students engage with one process piece per unit to refine their writing craft. During writing instruction, teachers and students utilize digital commenting to provide feedback based on common rubrics.

All grade levels have teacher-created, common standards-based formative and summative assessments that are administered after each unit. Each quarter, students engage in one on-demand writing task to measure growth in their writing ability. Additional reading assessments, such as the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, are administered to monitor student growth in reading grade level text. Teachers also use digital formative assessments tools to identify areas of growth and mastery to aid in the individualization of instruction. The i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment, administered three times per year, monitors student growth and proficiency on grade level standards. i-Ready results are used to determine which students are not making adequate growth and to pinpoint specific areas that students need to continue to practice. Finally, the state's summative assessment, the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR), is administered once per year in third through fifth grade. The IAR results are analyzed by grade level to determine if there are gaps in the curriculum and on a student-by-student basis to create action plans for the upcoming school year. The i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment and the IAR data are disaggregated for each subgroup to ensure that all students are performing at high levels.

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

The math curriculum at Oak Ridge Elementary School has been structured based on the Common Core State Standards. The curriculum reflects a rigorous scope and sequence that includes a balance of conceptual understanding, procedural knowledge, and application to real world problems. Each grade level has eight units of study that require students to demonstrate their understanding of the Standards for Mathematical Practice. In addition, each grade level's curriculum focuses on the major work of the grade level standards. This type of curricular approach was selected to maintain alignment with the principles of the Common Core State Standards and best practices as outlined by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM).

All students in second through fifth grade have approximately 80 minutes of daily mathematics instruction.

Each classroom designs instruction around a common framework which includes number talks, teacher-guided instruction, modeling and reasoning tasks, and small group instruction. Teachers utilize concrete, representational, and abstract models to help students understand the mathematics that they are learning. Moreover, lessons are created to engage students in productive struggle as they apply their mathematical knowledge in real world situations.

Oak Ridge Elementary School uses a variety of formative and summative data points to analyze and improve student performance. All grade levels have teacher-created common unit assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the state assessment. These unit assessments allow teachers to determine which students have mastered the objectives of the current unit of study and which students need additional practice with the concepts. In addition, math teachers at Oak Ridge discuss common formative assessment data at their weekly professional learning community meetings. During these meetings, each grade level team has an opportunity to discuss how their students are performing on formative assessments so targeted interventions can be planned before the unit assessment is administered. Next, the i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment is administered three times per year to monitor student growth and proficiency on grade level standards. The results of this assessment are used to determine which students are not making adequate growth and to pinpoint specific areas that students need to continue to practice. Finally, the state's summative assessment, the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR), is administered once per year in third through fifth grade. The results of this assessment are analyzed by grade level to determine if there are gaps in the curriculum. These results are also analyzed on a student-by-student basis to create action plans for the upcoming school year. The i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment and the Illinois Assessment of Readiness data are disaggregated for each subgroup to ensure that all students are performing at high levels.

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

Oak Ridge utilizes the Amplify Science curriculum, which is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Second grade students participate in three units of study while students in third through fifth grade participate in four units of study. Each grade level includes at least one unit for each domain of science: Life Science, Earth and Space Science, and Physical Science. The Amplify Science curriculum follows a three-dimensional approach by asking students to apply their knowledge of the Disciplinary Core Ideas, Science and Engineering Practices, and Crosscutting Concepts in every unit of study. Students diligently build their science knowledge by exploring phenomena or problems that drive learning. Science instruction allows students to engage in the practice of sense-making. Each unit includes scientific investigations that are intentionally planned to help students understand the intended learning targets. During these investigations, students are expected to collaboratively work with peers to design models, make observations, and draw conclusions. To engage in high-quality scientific discussions about these investigations, students utilize the claim, evidence, and reasoning structure.

Science assessment in second through fifth grade includes a combination of performance tasks, multiple choice and multiple select questions, and constructed response items. Each unit has formative assessments that help teachers quickly assess student understanding. In addition, each unit includes Critical Juncture Assessments that are used to assess if students have mastered essential content that is required to move to the next portion of the unit. At the end of each unit, students must demonstrate their understanding of all concepts learned through the end-of-unit assessment. Students in third, fourth, and fifth grade also take two benchmark assessments each year to assess if students are able to transfer their scientific learning to a new phenomena. Finally, fifth grade students are additionally assessed using the Illinois Science Assessment.

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

The Social Studies curriculum at Oak Ridge Elementary school is currently being enhanced with the newly released Illinois Social Science Standards. The Illinois Social Science Standards promote the use of inquiry as students study four disciplinary topics (civics, geography, economics, and history). Teachers at Oak Ridge Elementary School continue to work in grade-level teams to develop common, rigorous units of study that align with these updated standards. Teachers are developing inquiry lessons to increase student engagement and provide opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning. The new units of study have a specific focus on giving students the opportunity to take informed action on a problem. In

addition, the new units of study are closely aligned with current English Language Arts units of study, providing students with integrated learning experiences in Social Studies and Language Arts. All grade levels have common unit assessments and rubrics. Third, fourth, and fifth grade students are additionally assessed using the Illinois Assessment of Readiness.

**1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:**

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

**2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

Students attend one art class and one music class per week in second through fifth grade. The art and music curriculums are aligned to the Illinois Arts Learning Standards. The National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) serve as the foundation of these standards. The central goal of the standards is to develop artistic literacy by focusing on the four artistic processes (Creating, Performing/Presenting, Responding, and Connecting). These courses foster the development of creativity, listening, observing, synthesizing, analyzing, teamwork, discipline, and application with constant feedback. Oak Ridge also offers fifth grade students an opportunity to participate in band. Students participate in small group lessons once per week and as an entire ensemble once per week either before or after school. In addition, the Learning Links, after school enrichment program, offers students the opportunity to experiment with digital arts. Prior to the pandemic, students had the opportunity to showcase their talents in digital art at a statewide technology conference held at the State Capitol building. While drama is not embedded within the school day curriculum, the school invests resources, personnel, and teaching the art form via an extracurricular club that performs an annual play.

**2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

Students attend physical education/health three times per week in second through fifth grade. The curriculum includes units of study that are aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards for Physical Development and Health. These standards include six goals, three for physical education and three for health, that encourage students to be physically active and to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Physical education units of study are aligned to the philosophy of Enhanced Physical Education (P.E.), which involves having students be more active during physical education class in order to increase the amount of time students spend doing moderate to vigorous physical activity. Research shows that Enhanced P.E. improves the health and well-being of students, helps them become more receptive to learning, and increases their academic performance. Since physical education is a priority of the school board, the district recently invested in the construction of a new gym space for students at Oak Ridge. The new space allows students to actively participate in physical education class. In addition, health units of study incorporate essential questions and summative tasks to demonstrate student learning. Adaptive physical education is offered to students who require a modified physical education curriculum.

**2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)**

**2d. Technology/library/media**

The technology program is a collaborative team effort at Oak Ridge. Students are immersed in technology throughout the day. Classrooms are equipped with surround sound and projectors and all students have Chromebook devices. Oak Ridge has seven instructional technology goals: creatively communicate learning,

seize opportunities for real-world audiences, collaborate at local and global levels, empower learning in new ways, evaluate digital resources, practice digital citizenship, and monitor student learning. These goals are designed to ensure lessons are aligned with the Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition (SAMR) technology integration model. As educators move through the levels in the SAMR model, they help students see how technology allows them to do things that were previously not possible. This essential skill helps students become college and career ready. Moreover, the Media Program focuses on two main goals: Inspire and Support Reading Lives and Curate Resources to Support Knowledge Construction. To achieve these goals, the media specialist collaborates with staff to plan community reading incentive programs. Examples include One Book, One School, Family Reading Night, and various contests held throughout the year. The media specialist also supports students as they conduct research. These programs support the development of students' 21st century skills.

## **2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share**

District 117 implements a tiered social work model. In this model, Oak Ridge has a tier 1 social worker and two additional social workers servicing students at tier 2 and 3. The main role of a tier 1 social worker is to proactively teach and intervene with student behavior at the tier 1 level. Students receive instruction on the social emotional learning standards through the teaching of cool tools, Second Step lessons, and integration in academic classes. The district-wide tier 1 social work team, led by the district Behavior Specialist, meets regularly as a PLC to review SWIS data. Students who receive referrals for behavior are scheduled for weekly reteaching lessons aligned with the SEL standards. The student is then monitored by the tier 1 social worker to determine the success of the reteaching. If needed, the student may engage in additional reteaching sessions or begin to receive support through a Multi Tiered System of Support. Tier 1 social workers communicate with the parents and teachers of students who attend reteaching. Additionally, parents have access to a digital referral form on the district website to submit a request for their child to receive support from the school social work team.

## **3. Academic Supports**

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

Academic supports are offered to students who are performing below grade level in a variety of formats, depending on the needs of the student. All students at Oak Ridge Elementary School receive approximately 80 minutes of mathematics instruction daily and approximately 120 minutes of English Language Arts instruction daily. During each block of time, the leadership team has dedicated a portion of time two days per week as intervention time. The purpose of intervention time is for teachers to work with small groups of students who have not mastered recent learning objectives in order to provide targeted reteaching in those areas. In addition, Oak Ridge Elementary School employs four reading specialists and one math specialist. These interventionists serve students by pushing into classrooms during core English Language Arts or mathematics instruction to co-teach with classroom teachers and pulling students into small group sessions during other portions of the school day. The reading specialists use data from classroom assessments, district assessments, the i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment, the Illinois Assessment of Readiness, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Primary and Elementary Spelling Inventories, and AIMSweb to pinpoint the exact needs of each student and monitor progress in the targeted area(s). The math specialists use data from classroom assessments, district assessments, the i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment, and the Illinois Assessment of Readiness to pinpoint the exact needs of each student and monitor progress in the targeted area(s). Finally, students who are not performing on grade level in reading or mathematics are scheduled to attend the ASSETs program, which is an extended day program taught by certified teachers. The ASSETs program runs four days per week from October through March. During ASSETs, each teacher provides targeted instruction to small groups of students who are performing below grade level.

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

Students who are performing above grade level are provided with enrichment opportunities. Oak Ridge Elementary School has an Honors English Language Art (ELA) course in fourth and fifth grade for students who are performing above grade level. The Honors ELA curriculum extends the core ELA curriculum by

asking students to read more complex texts, learn above grade level standards, and write at a more advanced level. Students in third, fourth, and fifth grade who are performing above grade level have the opportunity to participate in an Honors mathematics course. The Honors mathematics course includes above grade level standards and activities that require students to utilize high-level reasoning and problem solving skills. In grade levels that do not have an Honors program, teachers provide enrichment activities in the classroom during small group instruction. In addition, students who are performing above grade level are invited to an extended day program called Learning Links. Students who are invited to participate in Learning Links can choose to attend various enrichment sessions, such as Introduction to Coding, Digital Art, Math Club, and Challenger E-Mission. Students in Digital Arts have opportunities to showcase their leadership statewide during a Tech Conference in the Capitol Building. Each program meets one day per week for eight weeks. Students who are performing above grade level are also monitored for acceleration. If a student demonstrates superior academic abilities in mathematics and reading, the IOWA Acceleration Scale is used to determine if that student would benefit from acceleration to the next grade level. A transition plan is created for all students who qualify for acceleration to ensure that the student receives the appropriate academic, social, and emotional support.

### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Oak Ridge is a school that fosters an inclusive learning environment for learners with disabilities. Oak Ridge provides specialized instruction through a co-teaching model of service delivery in which a general education and special education teacher work collaboratively. These professionals integrate their own expertise to plan, instruct, and develop interventions for learners with diverse needs to ensure success in the general education curriculum. For students who require more intensive support, Oak Ridge also provides targeted instruction in small groups in the instructional model of service delivery. The instructional model of service delivery maintains high expectations for all students by providing a balanced approach to instruction, which marries grade level expectations, content, and essential standards with individualized instruction. Oak Ridge also houses a learning centered classroom for students with complex disabilities. Students participate in curriculum aligned to the Essential Elements and are included in general education to the greatest extent possible. Students with disabilities participate in the same assessments as their general education peers, which include formative assessments, IReady, and the state assessment. Accommodations are available on an individual basis, as outlined in each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan. In addition, individual progress and achievement of IEP goals are measured regularly using additional classroom based assessments, running records, and progress monitoring tools. Assessment data and individual student goals are discussed weekly in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) with colleagues to improve instructional outcomes. Oak Ridge and North Palos School District 117 continually review programming, instruction, and resources to improve the educational outcomes for students with disabilities and close the achievement gap. Through professional development, team collaboration, and data analysis, the programming for students with disabilities continues to respond to the needs of students.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

Oak Ridge has a large population of English Learners (ELs) with 39% of students identified as EL, representing over 17 different languages. ELs are serviced through a Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) and a Transitional Bilingual Education program (TBE) within a co-teaching service delivery model. The goal of this model is intentional collaboration leveraging the expertise of each educator to provide students with specialized, high-quality, standards-based instruction to help students meet or exceed the district's established growth and achievement goals. Our co-teaching philosophy is meeting the needs of all learners in an inclusive and equitable environment. Throughout the week, English Learners receive Tier 2 and Tier 3 Interventions based on literacy and language needs. Program goals aim to provide the necessary support to ensure English language development, while maintaining high, grade-level expectations in all content areas. Students are identified through English language screening tools and have the opportunity to show proficiency in their native language through native language assessments. ELs participate in the same common, formative and summative assessments as their general education peers, including I-Ready and the state assessment. ELs receive appropriate accommodations and monitoring through the EL Accommodation Plan. ELs take the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) assessment and a mid-year language development benchmark assessment.

The data guide differentiated instruction in English language development domains. Student data are discussed in Professional Learning Communities with grade-level colleagues to analyze and improve student learning. Bilingual teachers attend an additional school-wide Bilingual Professional Learning Community. EL teachers are represented throughout curriculum initiatives advocating for best practices of English Learners. To build ongoing relationships with families, bilingual teachers communicate frequently with families in their home languages. Oak Ridge and the district consistently review program models and curriculum to increase student success and close the achievement gap.

**3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

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

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

Our district motto is “Investing in our Future, One Child at a Time”. In order to do so, the staff at Oak Ridge employ a systematic approach to classroom instruction and intervention that allows for each student to receive a learner-centered education that facilitates individual growth. This collaborative instructional structure allows opportunities for all students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Oak Ridge educators are able to do this through our Professional Learning Communities.

At the very start of the school year, students participate in “It starts with Hello week” where students receive the message that all are welcome, included, and connected. Throughout the school year, Oak Ridge students participate in various incentive programs to increase engagement including various reading and math challenges. Students who partake in these challenges receive incentives such as prizes, lunches with staff members, and even the opportunity to pie their teachers in the face during lunch time on a teacher volunteer basis. We have many students who participate in student council where they can develop their leadership skills and have input on school spirit days, fundraisers, and how to spend the money earned from the fundraisers. 5th grade students have had the opportunity to pair up with students in our self-contained special education program through LEAP buddies where students get to engage in social activities together during their lunch/recess period.

Another approach Oak Ridge takes to support student engagement is through the work of our PBIS team. Our PBIS team consists of Tier 1 and Tier 2/3 social workers, teacher representatives for each grade level, paraprofessionals, PTA parents, and school and district administrators who meet twice monthly to review student behavioral data and plan for incentives for students to address the areas of need. The programs we have implemented incentivise our Mustang Must-Dos of Be Here and Ready, Be Respectful, and Be Safe. By enforcing these expectations, it helps to create an environment where our students feel welcomed, safe, and able to take intellectual risks at school. Throughout the school year, all students receive social emotional lessons taught by our social workers and teachers through our Second Step curriculum, and students who need extra behavioral support, participate in reteaching lessons with our Tier 1 social worker on a weekly basis.

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

Engaging families and the community is essential to the success of Oak Ridge School. Oak Ridge educators use various modes of communication with our families to ensure they are aware of their child’s progress throughout the school year. The administration team and classroom teachers provide parents with weekly newsletters that are sent out via email and text message through the application Parent Square to inform parents about upcoming school events, which also allows for two way communication between home and school. All staff members also communicate regularly with families through telephone, email, and in person conferences when support for students and families is needed. We have many multilingual staff members who assist families throughout these modes of communication. Our teachers also utilize Google Classroom as a system for our students’ school work. This enables parents to see what their children are working on in class on a daily basis and grades are uploaded into Powerschool regularly, which can be checked by parents at any time throughout the semester.

Our district also has a staff of Parent Liaisons who are integral in the connection between home and school for our community. Our multilingual Parent Liaisons support our school community by attending and translating IEP meetings, EL Intake meetings, hosting engagement events, and connecting families with the schools by supporting the registration for programs such as summer school and after school interventions.

The Oak Ridge PTA provides various opportunities to enhance students’ school experiences by supporting them socially, emotionally, and intellectually throughout the school year. Oak Ridge students benefit from activities such as assemblies promoting anti-bullying and the cultural arts, monthly family night events, and celebrations in each classroom. We also have a member of our PTA serve on our PBIS team for a

collaborative partnership between parents and the school.

Our local library, police and fire department offer a variety of community-based programs to our families. Their presence in our school events helps build a connection between them and our students. The police and fire departments have attended PTA events where students were able to tour a fire truck and a police car. They also participated in an incentive program for our students who were able to have lunch with officers while at school. In addition, Green Hills library offers an incentive-based summer reading program for all district students.

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

District 117 believes in a systematic approach to providing focused, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the District's Strategic Plan. Using the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) improvement cycle, the district leadership team analyzes aggregate and disaggregated student achievement data each year. Using the data, the team identifies a content area or grade level for improvement. Additional resources including professional development are allocated. An in-house or out-of- district professional development provider is identified, who provides overview training to all of the content area specialists who work with the identified target grade level to ensure everyone receives the same message. Next, schedules are created to allow for the professional development expert to observe staff implementing the new knowledge at various stages of the process. Debriefing sessions are planned to allow staff to receive feedback, ask questions, and get clarification. These sessions are repeated throughout the year as necessary and may even continue into the next school year. The ultimate goal is to identify in-house experts creating job-embedded professional development.

In addition, Oak Ridge has three team leaders. Team Leaders collaborate with teachers in creating differentiated lesson plans reflecting the rigor and expectations of the Illinois Learning Standards. Team Leaders support teachers by utilizing peer coaching techniques or modeling to implement best practices in teaching. Team Leaders actively seek out resources to enrich teachers' skills in implementing the curriculum and the integration of technology. Teachers are supported by Team Leaders through collaborative meetings such as committee work days, grade-level and content area collaborative days, and grade-level common plan times.

Teachers receive targeted support in their first two years through a mentoring program. Upon being hired, new staff participate in a full week of professional learning centered around curriculum, best practices in instruction, differentiation for targeted student groups, technology support, among many other topics. New teachers have their own individual mentor who provides feedback from peer observations and ongoing support throughout the school year. New teachers also get the opportunity to observe other colleagues at Oak Ridge or other teachers in the district. In addition, new teachers meet monthly as a team with the Recruitment and Retainment Coordinator to receive professional learning based on feedback from new teachers, mentors, and administrators.

Oak Ridge fosters an environment where teachers feel valued by providing their input and engaging in curriculum development, school and districtwide recognition, staff appreciation luncheons, and schoolwide social events.

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

At Oak Ridge, the school leadership plays a vital role in ensuring a focus on student outcomes. Leadership includes several types of teams. Teams work interdependently to support student learning and ensure achievement across all grade levels.

The administration includes a principal and assistant principal who meet regularly to discuss building structures and strategies that increase collaboration and learning among staff and students. Together, they support the district and school mission of a dedicated commitment from all stakeholders to ensure that every student will realize his/her full potential. Examples include creating a schedule in which all teachers can collaborate on a regular basis, replacing "staff meeting" time with teacher team meetings to look at student

work and learning targets, and developing an intervention process with reading specialists.

The instructional leadership team consists of a principal, assistant principal, and three team leaders who each have an expertise in three main areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, and English Learners. They meet regularly to review student learning on classroom and district assessments. They disaggregate the data by demographics and classrooms, which help to pinpoint what is going well and which areas need to be addressed. The team also meets to discuss the weekly data team meeting in which team leaders meet with teachers to review student results. They reflect on last week's meeting and review the upcoming meeting to ensure progress toward the unit and annual SMART goals.

A third team, the building leadership team, is comprised of the aforementioned members and additional staff members from various parts of the school. Members include a teacher from each grade level/program, a reading specialist, psychologist/social worker, paraprofessional, and an office staff member. This team collaboratively discusses school practices to ensure students are continually learning at high levels. Projects teams have developed include testing practices, strategies for ELs, developing student incentives through Khan Academy and reading challenges, and social and emotional learning (SEL) lessons. Together, members work to improve structures and practices that allow for high levels of student growth and achievement.

Our PTA also plays a role in student learning and achievement. Through regular association meetings as well as meetings between building administration and PTA executive officers, activities and incentives for students are planned with the mission of increasing student achievement and engagement. Examples include hosting book fairs, back to school bashes, and meaningful assemblies for our student body.

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

The English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum is created by committees of teachers in each grade level. These teachers curate the curriculum to ensure text selections reflect students' classroom, community, and family culture. As team members are building the curriculum units of study, they prioritize representation in the curriculum. Because of this, students are given a chance to identify with the curriculum while being exposed to other cultures within their school and community. Recently, third grade students piloted a unit of study during social studies called Migration and Movement. During this unit, students explored multiple facets of immigration. Through these learning experiences, students explored how multiculturalism can enrich their communities as they considered how they could honor and respect the many cultures around them. Oak Ridge spotlights its commitment to diversity through a week-long multicultural children's book week, representing multiple perspectives and cultural diversity in the lives of all children. The goal centers around creating positive self-identity and interactions across student differences. Through our PBIS program, we identify monthly areas of focus related to cultural awareness, equity and respect. Monthly Cool Tools are created and shared with classrooms which include various school-wide activities to reinforce ideas such as respecting differences, the It Starts with Hello initiative, a month dedicated to acts of kindness, and acknowledging cultural diversity and different holidays and celebrations throughout the year. EL Paraprofessionals receive professional development on culturally-responsive teaching including topics on instructional engagement and student behavior. Oak Ridge supports students who are new to the country through the English Learning Intake Plan, which focuses on improving the learning capacity of newcomer students. The purpose of the Plan is to allow a student to build a foundation to allow a student to thrive both socially and academically. Together, multiple stakeholders meet to pinpoint a student's needs and develop strategies to meet these needs. Staff discuss a student's data and background through a Student Profile Meeting, proactively determining supports for the student, and monitor student progress through data collection, observations, family interviews, and student check-ins. The district's bilingual Parent Liaisons assist stakeholders in all aspects of the school experience. They represent the four major languages in the school district. The staff reflects the student and community demographics and are able to offer language and cultural support as needed. Together, we celebrate what makes us similar and unique as a school community.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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The most instrumental practice to our success has been, without question, creating, believing, and collaborating in a professional learning community (PLC). Oak Ridge implemented PLCs about 10 years ago and has continued to refine our practices and learn from one another. We continually review structures and strategies that are working to enhance them, as well as those that are not working to improve upon or remove them entirely. The administrative team always finds ways to increase collaborative practices that support higher levels of student learning.

Our teacher teams meet weekly to create an intervention plan for students. They look at formative assessment data to see which students understood the learning target and which ones did not. They discuss which strategies worked to use those for reteaching. Teachers discuss student misconceptions and the specific errors students are making to create targeted and individualized interventions. Students who understood the learning target also receive support but with challenging, more rigorous activities. The team then implements the intervention plan and collects more information from students on their understanding of the learning target. The team reviews how students performed on the reteaching formative assessment to celebrate growth for those that now understand and discuss next steps for students still not understanding.

While teachers teams meet formally in weekly meetings, teachers are constantly meeting in the hallway, copy room, or even in the parking lot to discuss what strategies worked and which students understood. They are a true professional learning community learning from each other through their daily practices.

Our teacher teams not only learn from each other but also through ongoing professional learning. Our teachers meet to learn best practices, review student expectations of learning targets, discuss strategies for instruction, decide on grading expectations of student work, and how to engage students, among other highly effective team practices. As an administrative and teaching staff, every minute of time is focused on the mission of ensuring high levels of learning of all students. As an example, “staff meetings” are not a means to disseminate information but used as another opportunity to help our staff learn together on how we can help more students grow. The driving force behind our success is the power of the team and the professional learning community that ensures continual learning and growth for our staff and students.