

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 605 South Gregg Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Nixa State MO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 65714-5302

County Christian County

Telephone (417) 724-6520 Fax (417) 724-6521

Web site/URL
https://www.nixapublicschools.net/mathews E-mail bridgettegolmen@nixaschools.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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Gearl Loden E-mail gearlloden@nixaschools.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Nixa Public Schools Tel. (417) 724-6200

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Linda Daugherty
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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

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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 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	92
1	86
2	94
3	94
4	88
5	0
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	454

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.5 % Asian
 - 1.1 % Black or African American
 - 6.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 86.3 % White
 - 5.7 % 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.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	29
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	41
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	454
(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):

Chinese, Korean, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7 %
30 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 29 %

Total number students who qualify: 130

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 15 %
Total number of students served 67

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>9</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>20</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>12</u> Developmental Delay	<u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>2</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: 14

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 6

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.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	27
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 17:1

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	95%	95%	95%	86%	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.

Lead with character, learn with confidence, and love with courage.

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

<https://www.nixapublicschools.net/Page/2491>

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

Mathews Elementary, a K-4 elementary school located in the Nixa Public School District, provides a high-quality education program. Nixa Public Schools is a sought-after school district with families intentionally relocating to enter the school district.

Mathews Elementary serves as a neighborhood school to a wide range of students providing rich opportunities for personal growth and learning. The school serves approximately 472 students. Our minority population is 14% with an ELL population of 6.61%. The current free and reduced lunch rate is 28%. Mathews has a 17:1 student-to-teacher ratio. Sixty-five percent of our staff hold advanced degrees and are dedicated to continuing their education and maintaining a growth mindset.

The success of Mathews Elementary begins with its dedicated staff. The cornerstone of sustainable practices for Mathews is the collective mindset of all who share the vision for transforming learning. This vision aligns with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which began in 2018. While the quality of educators prior to 2018 was second to none, there was a clear divide between classrooms, grade levels, Title Reading services, and special education. “My kids” and “your kids” were common phrases. While our school’s state test scores remained above the state average, there was marked room for improvement due to inconsistent progress in test scores from year to year. It was clear that change was needed to create a culture of collective teacher efficacy. This renewed systematic focus on learning, collaboration, and results gave us the tools to continue to build on the foundation of a culture and climate that would allow collaboration to become deeply embedded into everything we do as a school.

In order to develop our mission, vision, and collective commitments, the staff at Mathews Elementary boldly declared who we are and who we want to be as a team and community. Through a journey to discover the needs of our students, families, and community, combined with a deep dive into the “why” of our staff, Mathews’ mission “Lead with Character, Learn with Confidence, Love with Courage” was born. We then focused on a vision that described our focus on creating a culture where students discover their strengths and reach their maximum potential. The vision also created intentionality in setting high expectations for each student and celebrating the belief that all children can and will learn through meaningful, engaging learning experiences. Finally, we created the collective commitments that allow us to hold ourselves and each other accountable for focused, collective accountability led by intentional modeling of what we want our students to become. Collaborative monitoring and continuous improvement became not just what we do, but who we are.

Distributed leadership also became common practice with the Guiding Coalition leading the way. The development of teacher leaders allowed Mathews to grow exponentially. As a collaborative team, we began our journey into the understanding of backward design and deconstructing district-determined essential standards to ensure we had a solid understanding of what we wanted students to know. This was a journey that allowed team members to deeply understand the curriculum they were teaching. Administration and instructional coaches worked closely with the Guiding Coalition to learn how to determine learning targets that allow everyone to know the level of understanding and the vocabulary necessary for student mastery of each essential standard. Teacher leaders from Guiding Coalition then worked with their grade-level teams to develop a shared understanding of standards, learning targets, and levels of mastery, and they used that shared understanding to begin to establish common formative assessments aligned to learning targets. Throughout this process, it was clear that distributed leadership was essential to the progress.

One clear foundation of our school culture is the focus not only on academics, but also on the social, emotional, and behavioral development of all students. With our shared passion for ensuring all students discover their strengths and reach their maximum potential, we acknowledged the importance of developing the whole child. The SOAR Coalition, a team that meets bimonthly to discuss student concerns and ways to support teachers, led with a focus on the behavioral and social-emotional development of students through common expectations and restorative practices. In the work of the SOAR Coalition, we ensured the work is aligned to on-going reflection of the RTI (response to intervention) essential actions in both behaviors and academics.

Incorporation of RTI meant that intentional and focused remediation and extension became part of our culture. Tiered systems of intervention were developed and systems and processes were put in place that allowed us to monitor student learning building-wide. In order to successfully implement RTI, decisions were made as a building that allowed support to ensure an all-means-all mentality was at the center of every decision.

In all of the work that has been accomplished, we can't underestimate the importance of promoting this culture not only for our students but also for all staff. We know the importance and impact of the work, and we also recognize the importance of celebrating and having fun together. The Mathews social committee developed a monthly social calendar to allow staff to build relationships outside of school, and the office team developed a teacher appreciation calendar that allowed us to build relationships and celebrate each other inside of school. Fun and fellowship became key to maintaining strong relationships, positive attitudes, and encouragement for each other. That combined with a burning desire to be the best we can be for students continues to feed the fire of our journey.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

In reading and writing, unit planners have been created at the district level by collaborative teacher advisory teams. To complete this work, the advisory teams grouped ELA Missouri Learning Standards into units based on skills that complement one another. The team then created a scope and sequence with suggested time frames for teaching each unit. Mathews Elementary teachers deconstructed standards into learning targets and added those targets to the reading and writing unit planners. Learning targets have allowed teachers to gain a deep understanding of the specification and depth of knowledge required for each standard. With this knowledge, teacher teams utilized backward design to create assessments and to design intentionally paced units of instruction that implement resources such as district-created guided reading planners, the district curriculum framework, and research-based instructional strategies. These tools have then been used by teachers to develop lessons that are engaging and highly effective.

Mathews Elementary follows the reader's and writer's workshop framework for reading and writing. In this framework, teachers teach a mini-lesson, then pull guided reading or literature discussion groups based on the students' reading levels, and end with a wrap-up summary of what students learned that day. Teachers work collaboratively to create mini-lessons based on the standards they are teaching. During the small-group instruction portion of the lesson, teachers differentiate their small-group instruction based on student performance on district assessments or their grade level's common formative assessments. In grades K-2, teachers do guided reading groups during their small group time and they instruct students in word work, decoding, and comprehension skills based on individual student needs. Teachers use leveled readers and decodable text to ensure student instruction is intentional and focused. In grades 3-4, teachers engage students in literature discussion groups during their small group time. These small groups focus heavily on deepening student comprehension. Over the past few years, we have noticed that some of our second-grade students are achieving at higher levels, so our second-grade teachers have transitioned some of their students into literature discussion groups to extend the students' thinking. The framework of instruction is fluid enough to allow teachers the flexibility to meet the needs of their students aligned to the grade-level standards while also allowing for both remediation and extension.

Grade-level teacher teams create CFAs (Common Formative Assessments) for each of our essential standards. CFAs are short, rigorous assessments that help teachers assess mastery of essential standards. In addition, teachers utilize Evaluate assessments and district benchmark assessments throughout the year. Teacher teams collaboratively analyze CFA and Evaluate data to determine student misconceptions and levels of mastery. Teacher teams sort students based on level of mastery and create intervention groups for students who have not mastered specific learning targets and extension groups for students who have mastered the skills.

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

Our district utilizes Eureka Math as our main math resource. Before using Eureka, teacher teams worked together to create lessons based on Missouri Learning Standards, but as a district, we noticed that some math standards were not always taught using the same strategies, with the same vocabulary, and at the same level of rigor from classroom to classroom and building to building. Mathews began a pilot of Eureka Math to facilitate alignment of vocabulary and depth of conceptual understanding. During early implementation, the modules within Eureka were analyzed according to MAP (Missouri Assessment Program) blueprints and assessment results in addition to district benchmark assessments and CFAs. Grade-level teams consistently monitored the implementation of math instruction to minimize an implementation dip and to ensure lessons were supplemented to align with state standards and to allow for use of hands-on manipulatives to deepen concrete understanding. At Mathews, the instructional coach worked with teams to ensure that each grade level had a deep understanding of the curriculum and how to teach using the new strategies Eureka provided. Our building noticed a positive change in math scores and student understanding as grade levels

started using similar language and strategies. Students' understanding of math became deeper and each grade level was able to expand on what the grade level before them had worked on. With the success of the Mathews pilot, the district purchased Eureka Math teacher manuals and Mathews staff assisted with implementation training for teachers across the district.

We are now at year six of using the Eureka math curriculum and many of our teachers are noticing that although there have been some great benefits to having a set curriculum for math, the use of hands-on manipulatives had started to diminish because Eureka tends to use strategies that can be easily reproduced on paper. Our teachers have worked together for the past few years to figure out when and where additional manipulatives can be brought back into our math block since students need hands-on experiences with math concepts before successfully moving into pictorial and abstract practice.

In order to provide a more comprehensive math experience for students that meets a wider variety of learning styles, our teachers have begun moving back toward the math workshop model using Eureka as their guide. In this model, students have time to practice their fluency skills, then their teacher teaches a mini-lesson on the new skill, and then students move to either centers/rotations or must-do/may-do lists. Both centers and must-do/may-do lists contain skill practice, math games, and the use of manipulatives to practice skills. Teachers also meet with math groups during this time in order to differentiate instruction. Implementation of CFAs and Evaluate assessments allow teachers to assess the standards to a high level of rigor and provide additional remediation or extension as needed.

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

At Mathews Elementary, we teach science by following the Missouri Learning Standards and incorporating the Next Generation Science Standards. Our teachers take a hands-on approach to teaching science and have access to a science closet that's organized by topic for labs and experiments with their classes. Alongside district-created unit plans and science training for our building experts, our teachers have access to resources such as Nature Unleashed science magazines, Generation Genius videos and lessons, and Study Island.

Mathews Elementary played a key role in developing the Science Leaders program, which started as a group of science educators from the district gathering to discuss best practices. Over the past seven years, this group has evolved into a district-wide action committee of leaders who use Model Science Classrooms to inform curriculum development and to foster strong scientific classroom environments. The representatives from Mathews Elementary assist in facilitating these district meetings, which now aid in the creation of district-wide curriculum.

Asking questions and making connections excites students and drives the scientific process. We integrate students' learnings throughout the day by having them read, observe media, discuss their thinking on a critical level, and perform science tasks related to the topic. We reference research-based methods for teachers to integrate science standards into all subjects. Throughout each unit, students use science notebooks to collect ideas, answer questions, and draw models of their scientific thinking as it happens. The students' progression of learning is shown throughout each unit as they add information from reading, discussions, and experiments into their notebooks. Common formative assessments are developed for students to showcase their learning through reading, writing, and models using their knowledge gained during science instruction in addition to core curriculum standards. This natural integration of subjects helps students notice the connections in the world around them.

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

At Mathews, we strive to ensure that our social studies curriculum is relevant, accurate, and engaging for our students. When teaching social studies, our teachers use the Missouri Learning Standards and relate the content to our students' lives in order for students to really connect with the material. When students are able to connect to the material, they are more likely to engage with and understand the material. Students will be on their way to becoming active citizens due to the efforts of our Mathews teachers. Social studies is often taught through explicit discussion between students and teachers. When students are engaged in deep collaborative discussions, their understanding of the topic is deepened. To assess students over a social

studies topic, teachers often incorporate social studies into another subject, such as English Language Arts. This allows teachers to assess social studies while being able to refine skills within another subject such as reading and writing. Teachers in third and fourth grades also include Studies Weekly to provide students with the most up-to-date information and application of learning.

Our district has a social studies advisory team with representatives from each building and grade level. These social studies leaders collaboratively use DESE's MO LEAP Blocks as a guide to plan lessons and units for all grade-level teachers in the district. Mathews teachers continuously volunteer their time to join teams that will benefit their students, building-level teams, and teachers across the district.

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)

Fine Arts integration, collaboration, and community outreach is important at Mathews Elementary. The key to fine arts integration is to teach music, drama, and visual arts along with subject-area concepts across the disciplines. Music and Art classes meet once a week for 50 minutes each.

Fine arts teachers work collaboratively with grade-level teachers to extend and enrich the learning that takes place in the classroom. Lessons include such ideas as applying geometry knowledge by using known shapes to build a geometric house, utilizing their five senses to explore texture, and incorporating children's literature to learn about authors and illustrators and to create their own characters.

During music, all students are given the opportunity to perform throughout the year for parents and peers. In 3rd and 4th grade, students are able to join an extracurricular choral group that focuses on developing singing and performance skills through performances at events in the community throughout the year. Third and 4th-grade students also complete a pre-band unit using recorders. An assortment of classroom instruments is used to create lessons where students are able to create, perform, and respond to music. We believe in teaching the whole child and giving them opportunities to be successful and confident lifelong learners.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

The focus of physical education at Mathews Elementary is to instill a love for physical fitness that will go on well beyond our students' time in our school. Instruction focuses on gross motor skills that promote fitness, health, and nutrition. Students are exposed to a variety of games that allow them to enjoy being physically active. There is a strong presence of character education in every physical education class as students learn to work cooperatively with their classmates. Growth mindset is also a focus as students are challenged to do hard things and train their brains to take a positive self-talk approach. Throughout many units taught in our P.E. classes, students set goals for themselves and our P.E. teacher tracks those goals and celebrates students as they reach them. Students in Mathews Elementary physical education classes are also encouraged to be leaders as they get to have the responsibility of leading their class through ongoing physical exercises. These opportunities allow our students to grow their leadership skills starting in kindergarten and continuing to progress those skills through the fourth grade. Our teachers, K-4, collaborate with our P.E. teacher to ensure that academic standards that need extra time get covered in the gym as well as the classroom.

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

2d. Technology/library/media

The mission of Mathews library classes is to promote literacy and enjoyment of reading through the use of relevant materials that are both high-interest and supportive of curriculum. Students participate in library class once a week for 50 minutes. Lessons and activities are designed to prompt curiosity, develop students' strengths, reinforce strong leadership qualities, and practice critical thinking skills. Students are given the opportunity to work on academic, social, and emotional skills through hands-on, critical-thinking games and activities that coincide with our story of the week. They work as teams to develop solutions to real-life problems through research activities. The library is a shared, safe place for students to further their learning and come for enjoyment. Our library shelves are filled with student-created projects that showcase our collection and provoke curiosity. Our library also promotes the love of literacy through school-wide reading celebration days spread throughout the year.

During library class, students also learn and grow as researchers. Students are provided with lessons and activities that teach the necessary skills for research projects. The librarian and classroom teachers work closely together to create units that directly tie into grade-level standards. The librarian helps provide support through physical books as well as online resources and provides students with the necessary support to find and identify appropriate resources for their projects.

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

Students in third and fourth grades at Mathews Elementary have the opportunity to join our robotics club and learn about programming and coding robots using computer software. Students are able to work together collaboratively to get their robots to perform different tasks.

Several of our teachers have collaborated with community members, Ozarks Technical Community College, Nixa High School, and others to create innovative, engaging lessons for students.

Additionally, our second-grade team worked in collaboration with the Nixa High School theater teacher to incorporate more of the arts into their units. They learned how to use multiple forms of art to actively engage students in what they are learning. The second-grade team also collaborated with Ozark Technical Community College (OTC) when learning about "disgusting critters" and OTC brought in both living creatures and preserved creatures to pique student interests and aid in their learning.

Our art teacher collaborates with the high school art teacher annually to turn first graders' drawings into 3-D art that students are allowed to keep. Our fourth-grade team has worked on real-life projects to improve our school campus, and they have worked alongside Sodexo, our school's maintenance team, and other community partners to help solve real-world problems happening around the school.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Teachers at Mathews Elementary work collaboratively to support all students. Before students enter our classrooms at the beginning of the year, past teachers have already communicated with future teachers to share academic information and data based on the previous year. This provides the new teacher with information that allows them to implement successful interventions for students from the start of the school year.

Mathews' teachers use benchmark tests, formative assessments, CFAs and Evaluate data to assess which students are performing below grade level. Through our PLT (Professional Learning Team) meetings, our teachers and staff work collaboratively to discuss this data and determine how to best provide classroom and team support. Teachers hold deep and meaningful conversations and pinpoint students' needs based on the students' understanding of each skill assessed. Once the exact skill needs of students are identified, teachers

work collaboratively to create RTI groups. Mathews has a dedicated 25-minute RTI (Response to Intervention) time in their schedule for each grade level. This allows grade-level teams to provide interventions in ways that best fit their individual student needs. In addition to RTI, teachers meet the needs of students performing below grade level by implementing daily small group interventions through differentiated groups in reader's, writer's, and math workshops. During these instructional times, special education teachers push into our classrooms to meet not only with students who have IEPs but also to provide intervention to other students who may demonstrate a specific need.

To keep data on students that are performing below grade level, classroom teachers complete monthly multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) form aligned to RTI that students receive. This allows student data to be shared with our building-wide student support team (SST). Through this process, students in need of additional support beyond the classroom are identified and individualized plans are created. These plans incorporate additional support from staff throughout the building including special education supports, speech services, Burrell services, Title reading support, tiered support in both academics and behavior, and TEAMS tutoring. Mathews' SST works collaboratively with teachers to provide specific intervention ideas and strategies, track interventions and data to determine the need for special services referrals, and provide accountability to ensure interventions are being implemented.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

At Mathews Elementary, we strive to challenge our students to reach their highest potential which means extensions for students who are performing beyond their grade level expectations. We use benchmark assessment data, CFA data, formative assessment data, and teacher observations to determine students who need instruction beyond their current grade-level expectation. Students who need scaffolding to engage them in their learning will be provided the opportunities. The opportunities include project-based learning, student-led inquiry, cross-grade-level support during RTI, and opportunities for testing into our district gifted program.

In the classroom, teachers differentiate instruction to push student learning during reader's, writer's, and math workshops. Students are placed into flexible groups based on specific standards and learning targets and the classroom teachers use upper-level learning tools during small-group instruction. These tools include higher-level texts, deeper questioning in guided reading and literature discussion groups, and out-of-the-box problem-solving games and activities during math. In writing, teachers conference with their students one-on-one or in small groups to meet specific student needs including helping more advanced students enrich their writing through sensory details and use of dialogue. Students can also be challenged through district-provided web applications such as Zearn or Study Island. Students who show mastery of grade level standards are then able to be placed on higher grade level standards to push their learning. This allows students to progress at their own pace while still enriching their learning.

Students at Mathews Elementary also have the opportunity to work with higher grade-level teachers during our RTI times to challenge their learning. Teachers work together to plan and determine students who would benefit from going to another grade-level classroom. Students who are in 4th grade and need the opportunities to learn 5th-grade skills may work on individual skills through small groups. They also enrich their learning experiences by doing project-based learning or student-led inquiry.

3c. Students with disabilities:

At Mathews, we have implemented a unique push-in model with our special education department where many of our students with disabilities spend the majority of their days in the general education setting. In the general education classroom, students with disabilities work side-by-side with their peers. Students with disabilities are not being pulled from the classroom for hours of their day because their needs are being met in the general education classroom through implementation of accommodations and modifications by teachers and paraprofessionals. Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are still being pulled to the special education setting to work on their individual goals, but the majority of grade-level curriculum is addressed in the general education setting where special education teachers work side-by-side with classroom teachers to plan collaboratively to meet students' needs based on grade level skills.

Each special education teacher schedules times in their days to work with students in the general education classroom. This ensures that students with disabilities are still in their classroom environments and receiving the support they need while also engaging with and learning alongside their peers. The special education teacher pulls students into small groups and works on the same skills that are being taught in the classroom, but will scaffold and modify based on individual student needs. Oftentimes, the special education teacher will support students with disabilities with reading at their independent reading level, writing prompts, and math skills. By having our students with disabilities remain in the classroom for most of their days, students learn that they are truly a part of our classroom community and that they can and will meet the same expectations as their peers. We have seen a rise in academic scores as well as individual self-confidence of students since implementing this model

3d. English Language Learners:

The number of English Learners (ELs) has steadily increased over the last 5-10 years. In order to continue to best meet the needs of these students and their families, Mathews has continued to evaluate its EL program and has revised it when necessary. This year has marked a significant change with regard to planning for this subgroup. Each grade has a designated teacher where ELs are placed to help with collaboration with the classroom teacher and EL specialist. This has allowed for strong collaborative conversations about how both the general education and EL teachers can work together to support English learners in the general education setting as well as how to best facilitate collaborative conversations with multilingual families. In addition to clustering students in certain classrooms, Mathews sent one teacher from each grade along with a reading specialist to the Nixa English Language Development Academy (NELDA). The district-wide cohort has allowed the participants to increase their knowledge of English language acquisition and best practices for ELs. Mathews is the only elementary school in the district to have every grade level represented. Collaboration is strongly encouraged between the EL specialist, classroom teachers, reading interventionists, and special education. This has enabled English Learners at Mathews to thrive and reach their fullest potential.

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

At Mathews, our Title 1 reading teachers work collaboratively with district leaders, teachers, parents, and students on a regular basis. At the beginning of the school year, the building reading teachers worked with district leaders to analyze the building's literacy data to specifically target students who are performing below grade level in order to serve them in a 1:1 setting or in a small group. These students are served each day with lessons that are tailored to their literacy processing needs. In order to best support classroom teachers, the reading teachers provide professional development, model lessons, and serve students within all grade levels (K-4). Students move flexibly in and out of these groups based on building data throughout the year. Along with these services, the reading teachers collaborate monthly with kindergarten, first, and second-grade teachers within their own classrooms. During this time all students are impacted through on-site professional development and collaboration. This ensures that continuous growth occurs for all students and teachers. The reading specialists hold parent involvement meetings as well as individual conferences with parents throughout the school year to create clear communication regarding literacy expectations and systems in place. The reading specialists also receive monthly professional development to help support the literacy knowledge that they provide to classroom teachers and students.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

As students enter Mathews they are greeted by no less than four adults in the morning. Hallways are lined with student academic and artwork, uplifting images and words, and character banners that support our building-wide character words. Our goal is to create a positive and uplifting start to their day, and students are often greeted with a dance party to share our excitement for the day. Once our day has officially started, students are greeted with a warm welcome from our principals over our overhead speaker system. Students then participate in a whole-building brain break activity to help support getting our minds and bodies ready for learning. On Fridays, we gather together for “Family Time” in the gym with all staff and students. Led by our Student Leadership team, we use this time as a building to share celebrations and positive things that have happened in our classrooms throughout the week, review our character word for the month, and participate in our morning brain breaks. Each day, staff and students are reminded that our principals are here to help, support, encourage, and love us. Building this community helps students to become more engaged in their daily activities in the classroom.

At Mathews, we work to provide praise, reinforcement, and celebration regularly. All of our teachers and students set goals as individuals, in classrooms, and grade levels. Celebration of reaching those goals is an important part of our culture and is done daily through words of affirmation, shout-outs over the intercom, recognition during family time, positive notes and phone calls home, and texts through Seesaw or School Status.

We value engaging and authentic learning experiences and our teachers seek ways to implement highly effective instructional strategies that will provide opportunities for all students. Examples can be found across all grade levels and include activities like kindergarten’s unit on hibernation where classrooms are converted to bear caves to create memories and bring learning to life. First grade has the opportunity to learn all about sounds with collaboration between grade-level teachers and building speech-language pathologists. Students engage in activities that allow them to understand sound waves and how they travel to create the sounds we hear all around us. Second graders have the opportunity to engage in a disgusting critter investigation where they learn about various creatures through literature, writing, and live and preserved creatures that allow them to have their learning brought to life. Third-grade students investigate force and motion by building race cars to put their learning to the test. Fourth grade students engage in real-world exploration where they learn about bagworms and how they impacted the foliage right outside their doors. These experiences are not only memorable, but they also bring learning to life.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Mathews understands that a partnership with the community, parents, and all stakeholders is an important part of our building's success. We value feedback from our parents, students, and community that ensures that we continue to monitor the needs of our communities. Mathews's building theme for this school year is “Mathews Family, our Connection is Strong” because this encompasses our view of the community that supports us and our students.

Teachers communicate with parents and families via weekly newsletters, and often send daily communication using Seesaw and School Status. Families also receive monthly newsletters from the school with important news and upcoming events. To start the year, each teacher contacts every family to make a positive point of communication. This is important for building strong family connections. Along with many points of contact with families throughout the year, we also host two parent-teacher conferences (fall and spring) with the goal of meeting with 100% of our families. We also host Title 1 night, Bingo for Books, Student Showcase, and several musical performances throughout the year. Mathews also hosts a community parade where we invite community members, high school students, and families to participate. In November, community members are invited to join us in our celebration of Veterans Day. We also work closely with our PTA to find ways to engage families and our community.

In addition to families and business members, Mathews staff and teachers host high school and college students for the purpose of sharing our love of educating students. These opportunities include inviting students from the high school participating in the A+ Program, high school students considering a field in education (Child Development interns), practicum students, student teachers, and student interns from the local universities (OTC, Missouri State, Drury, Evangel, and College of the Ozarks).

Mathews staff and students also enjoy reaching out to our community for volunteer opportunities such as donating time for Ringing of the Bells for the Salvation Army, creating homemade animal biscuits to donate to local animal shelters (this supports our math measurement units), and creating thank you notes and donating pumpkin pies to the police station, firefighters, Christian County Library, City Hall, and the local EMTs.

Mathews also involves the community by sharing our culture of engaging lessons through opportunities provided by our district media team and through our district communication tools.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The professional culture at Mathews is rooted in the belief that collaboration enables everyone to serve our students and, ultimately, our community. Everyone is actively involved in the decision-making process of the vision of Mathews and the follow-through to achieve this vision. Teacher-directed leadership teams (SOAR Coalition, Guiding Coalition, Student Success Teams, and Special Education Team) meet regularly to ensure the teachers feel valued and supported. Grade-level teams meet weekly with administration to ensure each person has the support needed to confidently lead students academically and behaviorally.

The SOAR and Guiding Coalitions are teams of teachers that gather to share ideas, work through book studies, and collaborate on ways to support teachers and students academically and emotionally within the building. This team-based approach ensures real situations are brought to the table, and voices are heard. Working collaboratively has allowed for a deeper understanding and better solutions to support students. These teams also incorporate students into the process, creating a culture of inclusivity and value in others.

Mathews teachers have ownership of their professional development. Teachers advocate for their learning needs as they create their Educational Growth Plans. As part of their professional learning, they can observe best practices by visiting other schools or classrooms within the building. Mathews teachers can also use the Pineapple Chart, which is a system for teachers to share what they want to learn or monitor, then schedule a time when they work with our instructional coach and other teachers. This has created a sense of sharing and open communication with all teachers on ideas and strategies to improve instruction and foster a community of learners.

Each month Mathews teachers collaborate with their teams to discuss their students individually through a Multi-Tiered System of Support data tracking process. Teachers can talk about each of their students, brainstorm solutions, and share strategies as a team. Teachers not only share teaching strategies but also work with all students to do what is best for each student. It has become a building in which 'all' students are 'our' students.

Teachers and staff feel included in the many activities embedded throughout the school year. They participate in numerous team-building activities, including book studies, shout-out awards, whole weekly building 'Family Time' where we share with everyone the positives in our classrooms, bi-weekly teacher appreciation activities, holiday-themed fun, and gatherings outside of school. Students feel and experience the joy and love teachers feel when teaching, and this creates a sense of fun and positivity throughout the building.

4. School Leadership:

At Mathews Elementary, every staff member adds experience, skills, and valuable knowledge to help create our positive learning committee. Each team member plays a pivotal role in the success of our students and the school as a whole.

When we collaborate with teams, we collectively have years of professional development, academic successes, and real world experiences. We work together to create a valuable curriculum that benefits every learner, from every background. Composed of grade-level and enrichment teachers, specialists, administration, instructional coach, and special education staff, our building professional learning teams meet multiple times a week to focus on student learning.

Mathews Elementary has created two leadership teams called the Guiding Coalition and SOAR Coalition. Both the Guiding Coalition (academic team) and SOAR Coalition (behavior team) consist of grade-level team leaders as well as administrators, the counselor, the instructional coach, and reading, enrichment, and special education teachers and specialists. Each leadership team meets bi-weekly to discuss items on agendas that ensure that the members are innovative leaders in our building. Each coalition sets high expectations in order to become better instructional leaders for our students. To do this, teams review data in order to empower all students to achieve academic, social, and emotional excellence in a safe and supportive environment.

The Guiding Coalition team uses school-wide data points from teacher-created common formative assessments (CFA) as well as district-wide assessments to hold meaningful data conversations as a way to provide resources and ideas to help all students to be successful.

The SOAR Coalition uses data from our building using a behavior flow chart. The team works to review trends in data and work collaboratively to think of school-wide interventions that need to be in place to support students' behavioral needs. Through our SOAR leadership, we also focus on providing professional development for grade-level teachers in providing behavior interventions based on data. The team has done book studies focusing on texts called Restoring Practices and Hacking Discipline. By reading through these texts and having meaningful conversations regarding the information in the studies, team members were able to develop best practices for supporting our students.

Both teams partner with our families and community to create a culture where students discover their strengths and reach their maximum potential. We intentionally set high expectations for each student and celebrate the belief that all children can and will learn through meaningful, engaging learning experiences.

Mathews encourages student leadership with our fourth-graders. Each year, teachers recommend students for the team. Those students then interview with our counselor and are selected based on attendance, grades, history of office referrals, teacher and parent reports, and interview responses. These students are offered opportunities to welcome our school board, take new families on tours of our building, provide different learning experiences for our younger students, and be involved with interviewing new teachers. They work with the counselor on leadership skills and various projects throughout the school year. Members of this group are expected to behave as leaders in and out of the classroom and to strive to maintain good grades and integrity as representatives of our school. We are incredibly proud of this group and how they reflect the culture of Mathews.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Mathews collaborates with Burrell Behavioral Health to address the mental health needs of our students and families. These services are available to those students who may not otherwise have access to mental health support. Burrell works with families as well to ensure a solid support system is in place for the students' success. Clinicians meet with students and collaborate with teachers to ensure supports are available in the classroom and other school settings. Further assistance in the home is made available when needed as well. This collaboration is a team approach in which students, teachers, parents, and clinicians are all involved in the success of students at school.

The Second Step social-emotional program helps students build life skills, like nurturing positive relationships, managing emotions, and setting goals, so they can thrive in school and life. Mathews staff have invested in this program and implemented its strategies and goals as a part of daily operations in and out of the classroom. This program works hand-in-hand with restorative practices. Our daily "circle-up"

time has been beneficial to building our classroom and building culture with parents, students, staff, and stakeholders. Common language is encouraged throughout the building in order to maintain consistency in all grades and in all settings.

The SOAR Coalition is made up of a representation from each grade level/department in the building. These members disaggregate building data, looking for patterns, areas of strength, and concern and make plans to address those with data-driven interventions. This group shares ideas, both academically and behaviorally, for the classroom and building, and helps to identify and support teachers with specific students who may need further assistance. This team helps to create a culture of inclusivity and value in others; there is a deep trust in the group that allows for open and honest conversations that leads to positive outcomes and plans for continued growth.

Mathews continues to look for ways to be more culturally responsive in its teaching and school environment. The Mathews staff believes that to fully understand the true abilities of all students, students, and families need opportunities to engage with the school community in a variety of ways. The EL specialist has two parent nights every year to provide opportunities for parents to learn and network. Mathews's teachers promote and celebrate cultural diversity through units such as holidays around the world and a unit on folktales from around the world. A NELDA (Nixa English Language Development Academy) group from Mathews is creating a world map to show how our students come from all over the world. Our goal is to ensure that all students feel seen, heard, respected, and appreciated.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

In the words of Bob Nelson, “You get the best efforts from others not by lighting a fire beneath them, but by building a fire within them.” Through the development of a clear mission, vision, and collective commitments, the staff at Mathews Elementary focuses their efforts collectively on the four key questions of a PLC, allowing continuous improvement efforts to be clearly aligned to four central questions:

What do we want our students to know and be able to do?

How will we know when our students learn it?

How will we respond if they do not learn?

How will we respond when they already have mastery?

On-going, systematic focus on the PLC process coupled with a high level of collective teacher efficacy is the foundation on which high levels of student success are built.

As we transitioned into the practices of a strong PLC, distributed leadership became common practice. Development of teacher leaders allowed us to grow exponentially in our understanding of what it means to function within a PLC. Teacher leaders supported by building administration and the instructional coach worked with their teams to fully understand and implement the work of a PLC. As teams were researching to have a clear understanding of standards, learning targets, and levels of mastery, they began to establish common formative assessments aligned to learning targets. Throughout this process it was clear, distributed leadership was essential to our progress as a PLC.

Two years into our journey, our district developed our strategy implementation guide (SIG) that allowed us to deepen our learning and understanding of PLC processes. This began our exploration of RTI within the master schedule. Through RTI, we do not just teach the students sitting in our individual rooms; we take responsibility for each child that walks through our building doors. When one student succeeds, we all do.

We recognize that teachers have different and unique strengths that may reach a students’ needs more effectively than their individual classroom teacher. During collaboration time, teachers work together to determine which strategies were most effective based on CFA and benchmark data and plan targeted and intentional lessons to reteach or extend skills.

Teacher teams at Mathews have worked through the PLC process to learn how to effectively implement PLCs in a culture of trust, mutual respect, and high expectations of ourselves and our students. Through this intentional focus, student achievement has dramatically increased on both MAP and Evaluate assessments. Teachers focus on tier 1 instruction in their planning and pacing meetings, then focus on interventions and extensions when analyzing student data. This focus on PLCs and the four critical questions through a systematic process results in high levels of success for students and for teachers. Aligned to the work of PLCs and RTI, the core belief of Mathews’ staff can be summed up with the following statement:

RTI should not be a program to raise student test scores, but rather a process to realize students’ hopes and dreams. It should not be a way to meet state mandates, but a means to serve humanity. Once we understand the urgency of our work and embrace this noble cause as our fundamental purpose, how could we possibly allow any student to fail? (Buffman, Mattos, and Weber, 2010)