

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. David Keibler

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

Official School Name David Leech Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 200 Siberian Avenue

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

City Leechburg State PA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 15656-1278

County Armstrong County

Telephone (724) 845-6071

Fax (724) 845-2241

Web site/URL https://www.leechburg.k12.pa.us

E-mail dkeibler@leechburg.k12.pa.us

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. Tiffany Nix E-mail tnix@leechburg.k12.pa.us

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

District Name Leechburg Area School District Tel. (724) 845-7701

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 Maj. Anthony Shea

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

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

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

- ☐ Urban (city or town)
☐ Suburban
☒ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 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	19
K	42
1	50
2	32
3	57
4	54
5	47
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	301

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1.7 % Black or African American
 - 1.7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90.3 % White
 - 6.3 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 15%

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

The mobility rate for the district is 15% for the 2021-2022 school year. This high number results from a transient population moving into our district from surrounding communities. Ten percent of our population moved into the district after the October 1, 2021 timestamp. Our data team notes that this transient population must be observed to ensure we meet their needs as soon as they enroll in our district.

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	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	45
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	301
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.15
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
2 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 38 %

Total number students who qualify: 114

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 15 %
Total number of students served 44

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>7</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>7</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>5</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 1 %
Total number of students served: 4

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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 21:1

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	93%	98%	98%	97%	97%
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.

The Mission of David Leech Elementary School is to maximize student learning by assembling a data team to analyze student data to develop instructional plans that meet students' needs and maximize their achievement in our building.

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

https://www.leechburg.k12.pa.us/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1573773&type=d&pREC_ID=1702514

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

The Leechburg Area School District is a small, rural public school about 32 miles northeast of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The district serves residents from Leechburg Borough and Gilpin Township in Armstrong County and West Leechburg in Westmoreland County. There were three elementary buildings, Gilpin, West Leechburg, and Leechburg, and one 6-12 junior/senior high school in the Leechburg Borough until 1996. At this time, the district renovated the 6-12 building and moved all the elementary students into the newly renovated David Leech Elementary. During these restorations, the elementary building, junior/senior high school, and the Baker Building were all connected to form one K-12 building for the district students.

David Leech Elementary is a School-Wide Title I building that educates kindergarten through fifth-grade students. The district partners with the Arin Intermediate Unit to provide a Pre-K classroom for 20 students on the high school's first floor. The elementary building has a population of 382 students, with 51.06 % identified as economically disadvantaged. Allegheny Technologies Inc. had two steel production plants, one in West Leechburg, which closed in 2007, and the Bagdad plant in Gilpin Township, which closed for good in 1996. These closures have since drastically changed the demographics of the district residents. As a result of this change in demographics, the administrative team identified the teacher's understanding of the students they teach as an issue impacting student learning.

To strive towards excellence, the elementary staff committed a team to participate in the Statewide MTSS Initiative offered by the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network during the 2021-2022 school year. The framework supported the building's alignment of the state standards to the core instruction being taught.

Through this initiative, we developed shared ownership of the data-driven approach to instruction across all grade levels. Universal screenings and progress monitoring have become common over the past two years. The team holds bi-monthly meetings to determine the best action plan to address the students' social, emotional, and academic needs. The team focuses on specific intervention strategies that meet the referred students' needs and the growth shown. As students close the achievement gap, they are moved back into the general classroom for instruction. At the same time, the data can be used to support the identification of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) when little or no growth occurs.

Although the small class sizes are a huge advantage for instruction, it taxes the building staff since they are called upon to participate in all new initiatives and many district and building committees. All elementary teachers are highly qualified, and many have obtained additional degrees or certifications to enhance their ability to reach our learners. As the building has transformed into its current state, educational research focused on best practices has guided the change of educational practices. The emphasis has been on the professional development of staff members and selecting materials that focus on the individual needs of all learners at David Leech Elementary. The building focus has been that of high-quality professional development that builds the capacity of all stakeholders in the district. This process began Learning at the start of the 2017-2018 school year with the implementation of the Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI) for at-risk learners developed by the University of Oregon's Center for Teaching. The intervention program was just being released, and the district had to contract with Hill for Literacy from the state of Massachusetts for the training. Four years later, Enhanced Core Reading Instruction was offered by intermediate units and Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (Pattan) to all schools in Pennsylvania. Professional Development presented by experts in the field has increased the capacity of our teachers, which has improved the instructional practices of all staff members.

The stakeholders at David Leech Elementary have bought into the philosophy that we can always offer more to our students. As a result, we are constantly looking at the most current research and best practices to improve instruction to meet student needs and maximize learning. The new schedule has allotted forty minutes for each grade to incorporate a What I Need Time (WIN) where instruction can be leveled depending on the needs of each student. These initiatives have helped the building close the achievement gap of all students in ELA. Notably, our fourth-grade ELA scores on the PSSA went from 63% in 2021 to 76% in 2022. The scores were even more impressive in fifth grade, rising from 47% proficient and

advanced to 78% proficient and advanced. The fourth-grade science scores also increased from 75% to 90 % proficient and advanced. The data team attributed these gains to students learning the missed skills in small groups during the What I Need (WIN) block without compromising the core instructional time at each grade.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

ELA/Reading teachers design their curriculum to align with the PA Core Standards, and various resources are utilized to teach each one effectively. These resources are not limited to the reading series; Into Reading provides a plethora of rigorous and research-based materials, but they are only a portion of what is used. Supplementals are used to enhance and fill gaps within the series. In addition, as a LETRS school, we refer to the Progression of Word Study through the Grades chart to guide instruction.

Kindergarten through second-grade teachers focuses on all five big ideas of reading. First, Heggerty and ECRI are used with all students; these two programs are Into Reading and PA Core-aligned supplemental resources that reinforce phonemic awareness, phonics, and whole language fluency through a scripted, repetitive daily routine. Through benchmark screening, students identified as well-below benchmark preview these lessons a day in advance during their intervention and enrichment block. Their inclusion in the early grades remedies early intervention concerns for many students who enter school with documented delays in Kindergarten readiness. This has prevented students, without later-identified learning disabilities, from progressing to third grade with notable reading deficiencies. In addition, teachers incorporate content-rich text sets which help build decoding skills, fluent reading, and comprehension skills and strategies. They include decodable books, leveled readers, and anchor texts. Last, vocabulary instruction is critical for students to gain meaning from their reading. Teachers use explicit instruction in academic and generative vocabulary to build a strong foundation and expose their students to robust language through read-aloud.

Because of the components in place in these grades, third through fifth-grade teachers can primarily focus on vocabulary and comprehension with most students because they are reading to learn versus learning to read. Vocabulary and comprehension strategies and skills are modeled by the teacher and practiced by students. For example, scaffolding the analysis of Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Greek morphemes, using context clues, and awareness of tier III content-area words as vocabulary strategies further build students' vocabulary acquisition, strengthening their vocabulary comprehension.

Teachers scaffold each stage of the writing process using Writing Workshops and mini-grammar lessons. Students conference with their teacher to build their confidence in writing. Third through fifth-grade teachers also teach the process of writing a text-dependent analysis. Teachers collaborate to develop a scope and sequence for writing so that every grade level understands how to prepare students best to meet the expectations of the next grade level's writing curriculum. Teachers supplement the writing component of the series with relevant resources that align with those expectations, such as incorporating mentor sentence routines and an author's chair.

Teachers use formal and formative assessments in the classroom to evaluate spelling, comprehension, sight words and vocabulary retention, fluency, grammar, and writing. DIBELS and Star Reading are screening measures used to plan instruction for all students, including enrichment and intervention.

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

David Leech Elementary teachers create lessons aligned to the PA Common Core Standards, utilizing various materials (curriculum textbooks, online resources, and hands-on opportunities) to guide students to mastery of the state standards. The Reveal Math series, published by McGraw Hill, and different supplemental academic materials are used as resources to create a comprehensive math curriculum at all grade levels. Students are also provided with individualized plans when data shows a gap in their learning. Students can collaborate with teachers and other students and engage with the online resource ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) offered by McGraw Hill. This web-based, artificially intelligent assessment and learning system helps close mathematical gaps.

Additionally, the teachers use a variety of instructional strategies and tools to amalgamate the math curriculum (technology, curriculum spiraling, and visual aids to name a few). In the primary grades, an emphasis on number sense is developed, rather than just memorizing the sequence of numbers. Observing students, number collections, number talks, and subitizing are techniques to help students build a fundamental mathematical progression. Understanding numbers helps build flexibility and fluency as they progress through elementary school. As students progress through the grade levels and gain confidence in their number sense, various academic approaches include hands-on math activities and standard problem-solving methods. Students are taught and encouraged to use manipulatives and apply knowledge gained to solve real-world problems. This exposure to real-life situations through project-based learning fosters higher-order thinking and application skills.

David Leech Elementary uses both formative and summative assessments to evaluate the students' acquisition of content knowledge and provide data that can be used to remediate and enrich the students. STAR Math Assessments (administered several times during the year) and frequent unit tests are the primary sources of data collection that elementary teachers use. After data is gathered and analyzed, some students have the lesson retaught using different strategies, while other students have their learning extended. The overall goal of using the data from the various assessments is to have all students reach proficiency in the grade level skills. Teachers meet weekly to discuss and plan instruction and intervention to meet all students' needs. A Math Coach can provide additional daily support to all kindergarten through fifth-grade students.

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

David Leech Elementary science teachers develop lessons around each grade level's required PA Science Standards. The teachers have used the Atlas curriculum mapping resource to create lessons using various resources, including textbooks (Science Fusion), digital lessons, supplemental materials, real-world experiences, and hands-on activities to best meet the curriculum requirements in a fun and meaningful way. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) opportunities are also provided for the students as an additional hands-on, collaborative approach to learning and teaching science concepts. We strive to reach the students at their level and challenge them to become more innovative and critical thinkers. Students are assessed with locally developed assessments that measure mastery of each standard taught. The teachers vary the assessments and offer various, including paper and pencil tests, project-based assessments, or others using web-based platforms such as Nearpod.

In response to the upcoming changes to the PA Science Standards in July of 2025, the Fox Chapel Area School District wrote and received a PA Smart grant to become fluent with the new science standards. Fox Chapel led the initiative and developed a cohort with six other school districts (Leechburg Area, Aliquippa, Duquesne City, Freeport Area, Grove City Area, and New Kensington-Arnold). According to the grant's parameter (2022-23), "The purpose of this initiative allows teachers to not only receive professional development in engineering design theory, systems thinking and sensemaking, but they will be proficient in effective facilitation ahead of the new science education standards." Our science teachers are shifting from a curriculum-centered classroom to a human-centered one focusing on building, creating, inventing, designing, and solving problems.

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

The teachers develop the social studies curriculum at David Leech Elementary and emphasize the four main subject areas of the PA Standards- Civics and Government, Economics, Geography, and History. This curriculum is often reinforced within the reading curriculum when appropriate. Students can learn about the world's history, geography, and cultures near and far through well-designed lessons, field trips, and other real-world experiences. Often, lessons focus on current events, which leads to the students being able to make vital connections between both school and the world around them. Assessments for social studies are teacher-generated and sometimes project-oriented, measuring the mastery of each standard taught.

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

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

The Leechburg Area School District offers a Pre-K Counts program for 20 students. The classroom is made up of one teacher certified in preschool and two paraprofessionals who support daily learning.

The staff utilizes the Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum in conjunction with the online digital format Teaching Strategies GOLD to gather data on student progress. The Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum is a researched-based whole-child curriculum, aligned to the PA State Standards, for preschoolers to ensure they become creative, confident, and caring critical learners. The curriculum highlights nine domains and 38 objectives for development and learning. The curriculum focuses on a whole-child approach with nine domains; Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, and Art; an additional domain, English Language Acquisition, is included as needed for English Language Learners. Each of the 38 objectives is broken down using a Developmental Continuum Assessment System. The staff utilizes the Developmental Continuum Assessment System to track students' progress and target areas of need. A checkpoint is completed three times per year on all students to ensure they have the foundational skills to enter kindergarten when they are five. In addition to Teaching Strategies, we have introduced Heggerty phonemic awareness lessons to supplement our curriculum.

The Pre- K Counts program also uses the Battelle II Inventory to screen students as they enter the program so that, if needed, additional support can be put in place to ensure kindergarten readiness. Additionally, the staff uses the ECERS, Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, to ensure that our program provides an optimal learning environment.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade participate in art and music classes once every five days.

The visual and performing arts classes create a well-rounded student at David Leech Elementary. Elementary art classes are a connective pathway to help meet standards using many materials and tools to produce a tangible product. Connections are made to other subjects when appropriate such as the shapes of geometry in the art lessons.

Music class lessons allow students to develop creativity and connect to other curriculum areas. Rhythmic activities, for example, help students develop their fine and gross motor skills. Students learn to perform as an ensemble while also learning the historical and cultural background of the music. Students use their literacy skills to read the lyrics of songs and improve the retention of facts through repetition.

Both visual and performing art classes not only teach lessons for creating an end project but also address the history of the content. Students can display these fine art skills through concerts, art shows, and displays.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade participate in physical education class once every five days.

Physical education is more than exercise for our students. Concepts of games are taught to prepare students to participate in community or school sports. Lifelong fitness is stressed to support a healthy lifestyle for students. This class utilizes cross-curricular activities when the connection exists. To illustrate this point, the teacher integrates the math into the physical education curriculum. Students commonly do calisthenics

and count during these warmups. Students also learn the importance of aerobic activity at various exertion levels. (eg., 50%, 75%, 100%).

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

2d. Technology/library/media

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade participate in computer and library classes once every five days.

In technology class, students apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills to utilize various computer applications in grades K-5. Students can use these vital skills in a project-based curriculum in middle school. Students get opportunities to learn some entry-level coding knowledge using applications on Code.org or CodeJoy.

In the library, students are provided opportunities to expand their background knowledge on topics and gain a deeper understanding of the resources found in a library. The lessons teach about resources just as much as they focus on using that particular resource. They are provided with enrichment opportunities to carry their learning beyond the confines of the school day.

Moving forward, the students at David Leech Elementary will apply the research and digital literacy skills to a combined STEAM activity. The district has purchased Hummingbird Robotic Kits to provide a platform to apply their learning.

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

At Leechburg, students' social, emotional, and mental health is paramount and serves as a precursor to the overall success of students. Leechburg's Social Emotional Learning (SEL) course provides students access to work on and develops their skills to achieve their overall well-being using the Wayfinder curriculum.

The elementary guidance counselor runs a student council for fifth-grade students. Their peers vote on this group and meet regularly. They discuss their daily activities' strengths and weaknesses to help improve the daily practices at the building. The student council also handles the daily announcements each morning.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

The data team utilizes the data analysis to determine whether students perform below grade-level expectations. Sometimes, the discovery of weakness comes from an MTSS referral. Individual plans are created for identified students, and those students are considered for Tier 2 intervention support. This support is provided in a small group setting by an interventionist or classroom teacher during our daily 30-40 minute WIN (What I Need) block. Once Tier 2 groups are established, diagnostic assessments are given to determine a point of instruction based on student needs. Students receive direct, explicit instruction that targets the five big ideas of reading. Interventionists utilize research-based resources to close the individual achievement gaps for Tier 2 students. The interventions include: Heggerty, Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI), and many resources, including Phonics for Reading, Bridge the Gap by Heggerty, and Read Naturally. The Tier 2 students are progress monitored bi-weekly, and instruction is adjusted based on individual student progress.

Students who fail to progress adequately with Tier 2 intervention are considered for Tier 3 intervention. This would allow for one-on-one instruction by a reading specialist and a more intense, systematic approach to target the individual student's needs. Tier 3 students are progress monitored weekly to determine the success of the intervention. The data from this Tier 3 instruction can be used when considering a Specific Learning Disability should less than adequate progress occur.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

As part of the building data meetings, students performing above grade level on benchmark assessments are identified, and a plan to offer enrichment is developed. Students are placed into flexible groups for the WIN (What I Need) block and challenged with lessons that force an application of the concepts. This enrichment occurs for 30-40 minutes daily. These lessons are often project-based, where students are asked to apply multiple concepts to complete the challenge. For example, students in upper elementary grades may dig deep into a book study, focusing on vocabulary and comprehension. Students in the primary grades will utilize advanced leveled readers to enhance vocabulary and teach higher-level comprehension skills. Within these groups, teachers also incorporate a variety of writing experiences. Upper elementary students may express their understanding of a story through creative writing projects. In contrast, students in the primary grades may work on restating questions and finding evidence for their responses. Students can receive small group instruction on utilizing more advanced writing skills. In both the primary and upper elementary grades, teachers also work to incorporate STEM activities. This is done during core instruction so all students can participate in this learning process. Along with teacher-based instruction, students may also use personal online learning for enrichment.

To promote reading, our school uses the Accelerated Reader program. This program is used to enrich the reading development of all students. Reading ranges are set individually so that all kids can access reading books at and above their level. Student success is celebrated at the end-of-the-year awards assembly.

3c. Students with disabilities:

A student who is academically at risk or struggling to progress in the general education curriculum is referred to the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team. The team collaborates to create interventions that may be implemented to provide that student with the tools they need to access and make progress within the general education curriculum, to give opportunities to enhance their strengths and participate with students without disabilities. As this process proceeds, the team will include parents and other specialists to review student data and achievement. When the collected data shows little or no gains, the team may decide to move the process into an educational evaluation. If a student is found to be eligible for special education or has a disability, which affects their learning, an individualized education plan (IEP) will be developed. In the IEP, present education levels and student need will drive the document to provide an educational plan annually to ensure that the student's needs are met and barriers to learning are addressed to be moved so that they may make adequate academic progress. Students who are already identified as a student with a disability have individualized education plans, which include interventions provided through differentiated instruction, specially designed instruction, related services, and accommodations in the least restrictive environments. Related services such as speech and language services, occupational therapy, and physical therapy can assist in removing barriers to learning. There is a continuum of services for students with disabilities, at David Leech Elementary, from life skills to learning support. Our school offered behavioral support and autistic support through learning support as well. We have had students with dual exceptionalities, where a student receives specially designed instruction for both giftedness and a disability category of eligibility. Our students are placed in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent possible. There are Tier 3 WIN groups, push-in support, and pull-out replacement interventions, among many options which are individualized to each identified student's needs. Some examples of interventions include reteaching and repeating new concepts, extended time, use of multisensory approaches to learning, and differentiated instruction. Special education teachers confer and collaborate with all general educators, parents of students on each of their caseloads, and all service providers. These relationships and open communication have been the most successful for our students with disabilities.

3d. English Language Learners:

Title III, part of the No Child Left Behind Act, supports educational services for limited English proficient and immigrant students and their families. Historically, the ELL population in our community is limited or nonexistent, which limits the district's ability to hire a full-time ELL teacher. Therefore, the Leechburg Area School District uses Title III funds to participate in a consortium led by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in Pittsburgh. The consortium provides services to 56 school districts in Western Pennsylvania.

Through this program, a certified teacher comes to the building daily to work with our English Language Learners. We currently have two students identified as ELL students who receive instruction daily through this consortium.

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

David Leech Elementary cares deeply about our student's social, emotional, and academic well-being. We have a full-time elementary counselor who is available for students when needed. This counselor helps students and families when in need of support. She is also a member of the PBIS and MTSS teams for the building. The district has implemented a K-12 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) platform using the Wayfinder platform. Students in grades K-5 participated in 20 lessons that helped address students' mental health, ways to manage emotions, and anti-bullying instruction. The district also contracts to have a behavioral specialist available one day a week and a social worker two days a week. These specialists support the building administrator and counselor in creating plans to support students' needs in these areas.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

An actively engaged student is a successful student. Student progress and development from a positive school climate. At David Leech Elementary, we strive to provide opportunities that promote student engagement, team building, and active learning.

David Leech Elementary School has an involved PTA that helps to add to our positive school climate. Before the start of each school year, the PTA organizes a Back to School Splash, held at the local community pool. At this event, students and families can socialize before the start of the school year. During this event, the PTA provides valuable items such as pencil pouches, notebooks, and other things students can use. Information about becoming a PTA member is also provided for new and upcoming families. Another event that helps students feel more prepared for the start of a school year is Meet the Teacher Night. Families are invited to visit the school to look at classrooms and meet new teachers before the first day of school. This event alleviates some first-day jitters and allows the staff to meet families. Once the school year is in full swing, some other activities that the PTA is involved in include book fairs, classroom parties, field trips, fundraisers, Santa's Workshop, Spring Fling, and Color Run.

Stemming from the pandemic, our school saw a need for a program to help focus on our student's social and emotional needs. Student needs are being met by implementing SEL (Social Emotional Lessons) through the Wayfinder program. This year, the district also added social and behavioral therapy services to serve better our students who are showing a need.

Our district has begun an after-school program to help with academics and career readiness. This program is free of charge for families and allows students to have help with homework. It also provides a safe environment for after-school care. Our guidance counselor implements the career readiness program called Xello. Xello is a self-paced, K-12, future-ready computer-based program that allows students to create their individualized roadmap for future success.

Our elementary school has a unique setup because our building connects to the middle and high schools. Some of our elementary teachers have coordinated with our high school's Creation Nation to be involved in lessons with high school students. For example, high school students taught elementary students how to make, advertise, and sell candles.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The Leechburg area is small and tight-knit. It comprises a community that works together to ensure our students are safe and successful. At David Leech Elementary, our staff communicates regularly with parents/guardians about student behavior and academic progress. Benchmark assessment scores and data are sent home three times a year, and families know how students are supported in their areas of need. We also hold parent/teacher conferences in the fall to ensure all parties support student success. Additional meetings are held throughout the year if a student enters the MTSS process or if it deems necessary.

We have developed ways to support families to ensure our students' needs are met. Throughout the school year, PATH bags are sent home on Fridays with students to provide meals for the weekend. During the summer, free, nutritious lunches are offered in the cafeteria Monday-Friday.

To ensure student success and parent/guardian involvement, our school provides many opportunities for families to come to the school to participate in various activities. Before students enter kindergarten, they participate in transition events designed to alleviate first-day jitters. Pre-K students participate in a Polar Express Night, a Dr. Seuss Party, and a Kindergarten Picnic to prepare for their first year at David Leech Elementary. The activities at these events include kindergarten readiness skills and are designed to teach parents how to prepare their children for kindergarten. Throughout the school year, K-5 families are encouraged to attend Meet and Greet Night, Family Reading Night, and Education Celebration.

Our school collaborates with organizations within the community, like the local fire department, police department, and the Elks. The fire department provides fire prevention lessons for our students, and the Elks members educate our students on drug awareness. Our students appreciate our police department for delivering homemade cards and baked goods. Having relationships with organizations in our community promotes safety among our students and our school.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

David Leech Elementary School places professional development as one of the most critical components of school improvement. For teachers to identify and address the needs of the students, they must have a deep understanding of the content they are teaching, as well as data to identify the needs of their students. In-Service days are built into the district calendar to provide training for teachers. Over the past few years, federal and state mandates have taken up more and more of this valuable time for teachers. As a result, we have had to become creative in planning our professional development opportunities. The district has paid teachers to come in outside their contracted days; we have placed building subs into classrooms to allow time to work during the school day, and we have offered compensatory days that can be taken as a personal day if needed to ensure we can provide teachers with the appropriate training.

During the 2022-2023 school year, all K-5 ELA teachers are enrolled in Course 1 of the Learning Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) developed by Louisa Moats and Carol Tolman, who are literacy experts. This year, we have devoted forty hours of learning. They are developing the skills necessary to master the fundamentals of reading and writing instruction in the classroom. The same teachers will complete Course 2 of LETRS next year. Another group of teachers is participating in the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) training to implement a School-Wide Positive Behavior program next school year. This evidence-based three-tiered system will help address the behavioral distractions impacting students at the elementary level.

This year our K-5 science teachers are participating in an initiative called STEM ACES. The Fox Chapel Area School District received a \$480,000 PAsmart Advancing Grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Leechburg Area is one of six local districts working alongside Fox Chapel Area School District to participate in this initiative. Through the initiative, STEM teachers at the elementary level will receive professional development sessions in next-generation concepts such as engineering design theory, systems thinking, and sensemaking aimed at creating a cohort of educators proficient in the effective facilitation of STEM learning ahead of the rollout of new science education standards in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Representatives from the Consortium for Public Education, the National Science Teaching Association, and the Fox Chapel Area School District will conduct professional development sessions.

4. School Leadership:

The principal at David Leech Elementary implements a Distributive Leadership Model to guide the cycle of continuous improvement in achievement. This shared leadership concept creates teams within the building to analyze data and develop action plans in areas of need. Collaboration develops mindsets focusing on curriculum alignment, accelerated learning, maximizing instructional time, professional development, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

This cycle of continuous improvement at David Leech Elementary starts with the data team consisting of the principal, guidance counselor, reading specialists, special education teacher, primary (K-2) teacher, intermediate (3-5) teacher, and grade level teachers when appropriate. The team follows the Response to Intervention (RTI) model, creating a three-tiered instruction system. This system allows the team to meet students' needs by aligning resources to one of the following tiers; the whole group, a small group, or an individual student. The team analyzes the data to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of the student population. Benchmark data from Dibels, Star Reader, and Star Math is combined with state assessments, local assessments, and teacher observations to create a data triangulation, increasing the data's validity and reliability. The goal of the data team is to create a learning environment using appropriate resources that maximize student learning.

To support the shared distributive leadership model, the principal has provided the teaching staff with many opportunities outside our district to increase their knowledge and bring these findings back to the team. During the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, teachers were enrolled in a multiple-day training run by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in Pittsburgh. This allowed them to learn from experts who worked in the Reading Achievement Center and Math and Science Collaborative. This training deepened their understanding of the Math standards and shared how to use comprehension, close reads, and complex texts as foundational skills.

District teachers participate in the ABC Create initiative, which partners 14 school districts from a section of Western PA with local STEAM leaders. ABC Create is led by Penn State New Kensington and supported by the Grable Foundation, the Arconic Foundation, and the PA Department of Education through PASmart grants. Teachers gain access to resources from the Create Lab at CMU, Birdbrain Technologies, CodeJoy, the Consortium of Public Education, and the Digital Foundry at New Kensington.

This design of using a cycle of continuous improvement builds the capacity of all stakeholders in the building. Every cycle of this process helps the leadership team prepare our students for the future.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

With a commitment to excellence, David Leech Elementary School provides a safe, caring environment where students receive a quality education through a rigorous curriculum. The home, school, and community participates as partners to collaboratively ensure that all students have an opportunity to maximize their unique potential. Mutual respect and self-worth are fostered as essential qualities. Emphasis is placed on enabling each student to adapt to change, recognize the value of lifelong learning, and become a contributing member of a global society.

Our staff delivers a rich, standards-based curriculum that allows all students to support and attain academic proficiency and become critical thinkers and problem solvers. A professional learning community features highly competent teachers and school leaders whose primary focus is the improvement of all aspects of student academic achievement. A significant emphasis of the learning community is shared decision-making and goal-setting through collaboration among students, teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, and the community. Our staff provides high-quality, ongoing professional development customized to meet our students' unique needs. A data-driven decision-making system drives systematic improvement, instructional practice, differentiated supervision, resource allocation, and professional development activities as current best practices. Students learn in an environment that meets students strengths and needs in a highly competitive world.

David Leech Elementary School prides itself on several core values. Students demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and property within the school and community; a school learning environment that is safe and nurturing; students who are tolerant of individual differences and unique needs of other members of our school community. We strive to provide students with a safe school environment that nurtures emotional, physical, social, and intellectual growth.

We have implemented the Wayfinder Program, a comprehensive K-12 curriculum designed around six core skills encompassing social-emotional learning and future-ready skills. The program provides a holistic approach to Social Emotional Learning through Tier I classroom lessons. Wayfinder's core skills and competencies are Self-Awareness, Collaboration, Empathy, Adaptability, Agency, and Purpose, aligning with the five CASEL competencies and Common Core State Standards. The Wayfinder program is built around uplifting students' strengths through a universal language that promotes trauma-informed practices. It empowers students to embrace their full potential while developing the necessary skills to grow purposefully.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Reflecting upon the cycle of continuous improvement at David Leech Elementary School over the past five years, one practice that stands out as the most instrumental in positively impacting student achievement is the district's ability to provide high-quality professional development for our teachers. The Board of Directors has approved a budget that allows us to hire experts in the field and monies for resources that have influenced the improvement of student achievement. These authentic learning opportunities allow teachers to understand the grade or subject content. The new materials provide strategic resources to address students' specific learning needs.

The improvement plan for student achievement began in 2019 with implementation of the Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI) multi-tier program. The teachers now had a series of routines designed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of reading instruction in the primary grades. The building saw an increase in achievement for students in both Tier 1 and Tier 2. The teachers embraced these daily routines, and increased student mastery of these skills became evident. ECRI was just released by Oregon University's Center for Teaching and Learning. We had to work with the writers to find an expert to train our staff. Three years later, ECRI was being pushed throughout our state by the intermediate units and Pattan.

The next opportunity for teacher growth occurred during the 2020-2021 school year. The district worked with the Center for Reading Achievement, run by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in Pittsburgh. Teachers in grades K-3 participated in a four-day training series focused on comprehension, close reads, and complex texts to teach foundational skills. ELA teachers in grades 4-5 attended multiple training days focused on text-dependent analysis. These two pieces of training were instrumental in increasing the rigor of our reading instruction.

During the 2021-2022 school year, the elementary team at David Leech Elementary participated in the MTSS Initiative developed by PDE and training run by Pattan. This opportunity developed a documented process to identify students' behavioral and academic needs while providing a meeting platform to collaborate on best practices for improvement. The team meets bi-weekly and is an additional resource to add to our improvement cycle.

The ELA teachers in grades K-5 are enrolled in Course One of the Learning Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS). They will spend at least forty hours increasing their understanding of how children learn to read and applying that learning to their lessons. The group will complete Course 2 of LETRS next school year, improving their knowledge and making them highly knowledgeable in structured literacy.