

U.S. Department of Education
2009 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

Type of School: (Check all that apply) Elementary Middle High K-12 Other
 Charter Title I Magnet Choice

Name of Principal: Dr. Elton Bouldin

Official School Name: West Elementary School

School Mailing Address:
303 Rosemont Avenue SW
Cullman, AL 35055-3244

County: Cullman State School Code Number*: 01250040

Telephone: (256) 734-4271 Fax: (256) 737-9378

Web site/URL: http://wes.cullmancats.net E-mail: ebouldin@cullmancats.net

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

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*: Dr. Jan Harris

District Name: Cullman City Tel: (256) 734-2233

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Ms. Brenda Howell

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

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

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Original signed cover sheet only should be mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as USPS Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2008-2009 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.
6. The nominated school has not received the No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, or 2008.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:
- | | |
|----------|---------------------|
| 3 | Elementary schools |
| 1 | Middle schools |
| | Junior high schools |
| 1 | High schools |
| | Other |
| 5 | TOTAL |

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 7964

Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: 7683

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- Urban or large central city
 Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
 Suburban
 Small city or town in a rural area
 Rural

4. 7 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

 If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK			0	7			0
K			0	8			0
1			0	9			0
2	58	60	118	10			0
3	57	48	105	11			0
4	56	64	120	12			0
5	62	61	123	Other			0
6	67	53	120				
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL							586

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: _____ % American Indian or Alaska Native
 _____ 1 % Asian
 _____ 1 % Black or African American
 _____ 15 % Hispanic or Latino
 _____ % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 _____ 83 % White
 _____ % Two or more races
 _____ **100 % Total**

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting 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.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 14 %

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

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	29
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	51
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	80
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	554
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.144
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	14.440

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 9 %

Total number limited English proficient 52

Number of languages represented: 3

Specify languages:

Spanish, Russian, Indian

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 46 %

Total number students who qualify: 272

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 9 %

Total Number of Students Served: 53

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>3</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>4</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>21</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Mental Retardation	<u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>2</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>26</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>10</u>	<u>4</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>
Support staff	<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>
Total number	<u>57</u>	<u>6</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Daily student attendance	96%	99%	98%	97%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Teacher turnover rate	6%	5%	10%	10%	16%

Please provide all explanations below.

In 2003 - 2004 six of 38 teachers changed. Two teachers retired. One teacher was non-renewed. One teacher returned to a central office assignment. One teacher completed guidance certification and accepted a position.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2008 are doing as of the Fall 2008.

Graduating class size	<u>0</u>	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>0</u>	%
Enrolled in a community college	<u>0</u>	%
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0</u>	%
Found employment	<u>0</u>	%
Military service	<u>0</u>	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	<u>0</u>	%
Unknown	<u>0</u>	%
Total	<u>100</u>	%

PART III - SUMMARY

“Teachers at West realize it is not all about the curriculum; it is about giving each child an opportunity to make his/her life better. The students are respectful and work tremendously hard on every task assigned. I am amazed each year with the success students and faculty members achieve.” West Teacher

In the 1870s, German refugee Col. John G. Cullmann and 10,000 native Germans migrated to Cullman County in search of new opportunities. Their search for new opportunities and a more successful life is a legacy that continues at West Elementary today. In Cullman, we believe that everyone experiencing success is the only acceptable legacy! We begin each day with West Words of Wisdom heralding the challenge, “Do your best at West today!”

Opened in 1950, West Elementary became SACS accredited in 1960 and is one of the five oldest accredited public elementary schools in Alabama. Located at the gateway to Cullman City, West students reside in both country club homes and public housing. Our student population includes 47% Poverty Students, 10% Special Education Students, 11% Gifted Education Students, 15% Hispanic Students and 8% Limited English Proficient Students. The school motto, “West: We Experience Success Together” is a reality as we seek new opportunities and work for success by accomplishing our school goals:

- Increasing Academic Proficiency
- Developing Social Competency
- Promoting Healthy Lifestyles
- Practicing Good Citizenship
- Fostering an Appreciation of the Fine Arts
- Building Relationships Between School, Home and Community
- Providing a Positive Learning Environment

West students are experiencing academic success. Our school received three state academic awards for “Exceeding the Challenge” with both Poverty Students and Hispanic Students. In 2007, our student proficiency rates in reading and math ranked in the state’s top 8%. During the last five years, student rankings on the SAT 10 assessment improved from the 65th to the 72nd percentile as the school poverty rate increased from 35% to 47%.

West students are experiencing success in an expansive elementary school curriculum. Students are making healthy lifestyle choices, practicing good citizenship, enjoying the arts and developing social competency. West is one of six Alabama schools implementing an innovative physical education program, Healthy Eating Active Lifestyle (HEAL) that integrates healthy life choice lessons with heart rate monitors, and exercise. Students practice citizenship by sponsoring charitable activities such as American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life, Jump Rope for Heart, and the March of Dimes campaign. They earn Good Citizenship Recognition, present a Veterans Day Program and participate in student council. Character Education occurs each morning with the Pledge of Allegiance, Moment of Silence and West Words of Wisdom. Certified art and music teachers immerse students in a progressive fine arts curriculum. West students experience success in the arts through community art contests, exhibits and performances. Cooperative learning groups and weekly Guidance Education lead to success in social competency. Students also participate in D.A.R.E., Student Council, Beta Club, Scholars Bowl and Math Teams.

Lastly, we experience success by building positive relationships. On annual surveys, “My family feels welcome at our school.” is a Top 5 response from both students and parents. Every year we embrace positive relationships among faculty, students and families with school-home communications, Fall Festival, field day, field trips, homeroom celebrations, academic award programs, physical education awards program, Volunteers in Public Schools, student performances and an active Parent-Teacher Association.

The Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools named West Elementary a 2009 Alabama Banner School in recognition of our academic achievement, expansive school experiences and positive relationships. We truly believe that both faculty and families can say, “West: We Experience Success Together!”

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

Introduction: Alabama State Assessments

The Alabama State Department of Education evaluates West Elementary students with the following assessments:

Alabama Alternate Assessment (AAA).....	2nd – 6th Grades
Alabama Reading and Mathematics Tests (ARMT).....	3rd – 6th Grades
Stanford Achievement Test Partial Battery (SAT-10).....	3rd - 6th Grades
Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT -8).....	3rd – 6th Grades
Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing (ADAW).....	5th Grade
Alabama Science Assessment (ASA).....	5th Grade
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).....	2nd Grade

Alabama determines Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) using student proficiency rates and test participation rates on the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Tests (ARMT). The additional AYP indicator is student attendance. Four academic achievement levels define how well students are mastering the state’s grade level academic content standards on AAA, ARMT, ADAW, and ASA.

- Level IV: Exceeds Academic Content Standards
- Level III: Meets Academic Content Standards
- Level II: Partially Meets Academic Content Standards
- Level I: Does Not Meet Academic Content Standards

Students are rated proficient, meet state academic standards, when they score at Level IV or Level III. To access West Elementary’s testing data:

- Select: <http://www.alsde.edu>
- Select: Accountability Reporting
- Select: Accountability Reporting System
- Select: School Year
- Select: Report
- Select: Cullman City System
- Select: West Elementary School

West Students are Closing the Achievement Gap

West’s ARMT data documents that our students have high proficiency rates and our student subgroups are closing the achievement gap. In 2007, West Elementary’s 95% reading proficiency rate and 92% math proficiency rate placed us in Alabama’s top eight percent, ranking 49th among 657 elementary schools. West Elementary’s *Paid Lunch Students* are over 98% proficient in reading and math. In reading, *All Students* proficiency increased almost 10 percentages, from 85% to 94%. *Poverty Students* posted an increase of 22 percentage points, from 68% to 90%. *Hispanic Students* experienced a staggering 52-percentage point improvement, from 33% to 85%. Math data indicates the same gap closing performances for West Elementary’s student groups. *All Students* math proficiency grew 10 percent, from 79% to 89%. *Poverty Students* recorded a 15-percentage point growth, from 66% to 89%. *Hispanic Students* scoring proficient in math improved 32 percentage points, 39% to 71%.

Fifth grade student proficiency on the Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing increased from 73% to 90% between 2003 and 2008. In the first year of the Alabama Science Assessment (2008), 94% of our fifth grade students met academic content standards.

“This is the best school I have ever been at and I’m not just saying that. The school teachers will help me outside of class any time, and they are never to busy to help me.” West Elementary Student

Success Validated on National Normed Assessment

West Elementary’s improved ARMT proficiency rates are validated by similar gains on SAT 10, a nationally normed achievement assessment. Between 2004 and 2008, *All Students* improved from the 66th to the 72nd percentile and *Paid Lunch Students* improved from the 75th percentile to the 81st percentile. During this time of unprecedented academic growth for West Elementary, OLSAT 8 indicated a decline in student academic ability from the 54th percentile to the 50th percentile. *All Students* reading achievement improved from the 64th to the 71st percentile and math increased from 66th to 73rd percentile. As ARMT indicated, *Hispanic Students’* SAT growth was significant, soaring from the 33rd percentile to the 56th percentile. *Poverty Students* narrowed the achievement gap with a 14-percentile gain (47th to 61st).

“I like the high level of achievement that is expected at the school. I like the friendliness of the staff and faculty. I like the extracurricular activities.” West Elementary Parent

2. Using Assessment Results:

West uses data to understand and improve student and school performance based upon two precepts. As a faculty, we are investing the best hours and days of our lives, school performance should reflect a legacy worthy of the personal investment we are making. Secondly, improvement is a process, not an event, a measurable quest that must be sustained over time. Four outcomes frame our use of data in the pursuit of providing an honorable elementary school experience for our constituents:

- An Essential Quest: Excel on Student Assessments
- An Exemplary Quest: Expand the Elementary School Experience
- An Educational Quest: Enliven Faculty Scholarship
- An Eternal Quest: Embrace Positive Relationships

Data Sources

West uses a variety of sources to measure progress on these four quests. Accurate descriptors include formative, summative, quantitative, qualitative, standards-based, norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, benchmark, formal, informal, rubrics, disaggregated, sub-groups, and achievement gaps. Specific examples are SAT 10, Discovery Education Think-link, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Alabama Reading and Mathematics Tests (ARMT), Alabama Science Assessment, Alabama Alternate Assessment, RosettaStone, Orchard, STAR Reading, STAR Math, TestTrax, National Study of School Evaluations (NSSE), Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing and National Council Staff Development Professional Development Survey.

Systematic Decision Making Process

West Elementary’s decision-making sequence has allowed us to transform inorganic data into productive practice. Our process for converting data into practice includes the following steps:

- Identify, celebrate, and replicate strengths
- Select improvement priorities
- Determine scholarly solutions
- Implement solutions
- Evaluate progress

Subject teams, intervention teams, grade level teams, leadership team, faculty team meetings and individual teachers follow this process during annual, quarterly, monthly and weekly meetings.

Improved Teaching and Learning Example

West faculty annually selects 3-8 school improvement priorities from all data sources. In 2003, our 3rd grade scored at the 42nd percentile on Word Study Skills. Faculty members reviewed the data, read research and visited proficient schools. With this scholarly foundation, the faculty developed an instructional plan, completed training, implemented and annually evaluated progress. From 2003 to 2007, student achievement increased from the 42nd percentile to the 72nd percentile. This is an example of how West Elementary systematically transforms data to practice.

3. **Communicating Assessment Results:**

Effective communications of both our school and student success is evident. A 29% increase in enrollment (454 to 585) has culminated in an out-of-district student waiting list. West Elementary communicates school and student performance to parents, students and the community in a variety of ways

Communication of School Performance

West communicates school-wide information through:

- Annual Open House
- School Report Card
- Cullman City Schools Annual Report
- School Website (wes.cullmancats.net)
- Principal Newsletters
- Parent, Teacher, and Students ratings on National Study of School Evaluation
 - o Quality of Instructional Program
 - o Support for Student Learning
 - o School Climate and Environment for Learning
 - o School Administration and Organization
 - o Student School Relationships
 - o Parent-School Relationships
 - o Resource Management
- Press releases
- Presentations to civic clubs and organizations
- Weekly Homeroom Newsletters

Communication of Student Performance

West strives to provide every student and family with multiple, individualized academic and physical fitness reports. In addition to mandatory reports (SAT, Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test, Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing, Alabama Science Assessment) West families receive an annual Fitness Gram. With each report card, West issues the following objective student reports:

STAR Reading (national norms)

- STAR Math (national norms)
- DIBELS (benchmark)
- Discovery Education ThinkLink (state content standards)

These additional assessments provide West families with real-time knowledge about their progress versus both national norms and state content standards.

In addition, homeroom teachers distribute a weekly *West School-Home Communications Folder* containing a newsletter that describes what students will do every day in every subject. These newsletters, which are also posted online, provide detailed information on homework, classroom activities, projects, evaluation dates, and assessed content. The *School-Home Folder* also coordinates work samples and evaluation results. Every school night, West families have actionable information that empowers them to express expectations, support and monitor their child's school experiences from home.

"Everyone is friendly and courteous-my experience w/the teachers has been excellent...they care about their children in their classrooms and involve parents in day to day activities." West Parent, 2006 NSSE Survey

4. **Sharing Success:**

West Elementary currently shares our success with other schools through participation in the *Alabama Reading Initiative* and *Alabama Best Practices Center Initiative*. Both of these school improvement initiatives facilitate the sharing of successful practices and instructional innovation. West's experiences relative to improving student and school performance are also communicated through participation in professional organizations (Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators, Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools, AdvanceEd Accreditation) and involvement in state and university improvement initiatives (State Board of Education Assessment Advisory Committee and University of Alabama Educational Leadership Redesign Team).

Obviously, West Elementary's designation as a Blue Ribbon School would identify and validate our school as a resource for schools working to narrow achievement gaps, exceed proficiency goals and increase percentile rankings on state assessments. In particular, our unique experiences with maintaining high academic standards for Paid Lunch Students while significantly improving the math and reading proficiency rates of Poverty Students, Hispanic Students and English Language Learners might prove beneficial for our elementary colleagues experiencing these demographic changes. At a minimum West Elementary would:

- publicize a process for contacting and scheduling campus presentations and tours
- publish, distribute and present West Living and Leaving a Legacy School Plan
- develop multi-media presentation for seminars and conventions
- make faculty members available for accreditation and improvement reviews
- participate in state and university initiatives
- serve as adjunct professors or presenters for Educational Leadership programs

If designated a Blue Ribbon School, we would be particularly interested in promoting the importance of a balanced approach to school planning. It would be rewarding to model and encourage schools to use data that measures success on multiple levels. In our case, school planning that incorporates elements for succeeding on state assessments, expanding the elementary school experience, enlivening faculty scholarship and embracing positive relationships.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

The state required curriculum for West Elementary includes language arts, reading, mathematics, science, social studies, technology, character education, art education, music education and physical education.

Curriculum Guides containing grade level, content specific, student-learning objectives ensure instruction focused on significant standards. Parents receive an abbreviated listing of Student Learning Objectives selected from the following sources:

- Alabama Course of Study
- SAT-10 Compendium
- Alabama Reading and Mathematics Tests
- Alabama Science Assessment
- Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing

Vertical Teams (instructional committee with faculty representatives from each subject and grade level) discuss student performance:

- identify strengths
- select improvement priorities
- determine and implement solutions

These teams are critical in communicating successes and solutions across grade levels and play a significant role in fostering effective practices. Vertical Teams and Grade Level Teams cooperatively develop pacing guides that sequence student learning objectives and ensure they are scheduled and completed.

The daily instructional schedule includes one hour of common professional development and planning time for each grade. Each grade level team uses this time to coordinate scheduling, implementation, and evaluation of instruction. Improved preparation for instruction is evident as teachers formally and informally address individual and grade level student instructional issues during this time each day.

“I like the fact that we work as a team at our school. The school atmosphere is overall great! You can feel that everyone is working together to reach a common goal! I also like the one-hour common planning time that allows teachers to plan lessons together. I enjoy working with the faculty each day. It is truly like a close family.” West Teacher

West’s cornerstones for instructional presentations are student-centered initiatives and technology. Student achievement through engagement is the primary focus of the *Alabama Reading Initiative* and The *Comprehension Toolkit* (Harvey & Goudvis, 2008) instructional programs. West Elementary’s on-going participation in these two nationally recognized initiatives equips our teachers to instruct in a manner that develops active learners. Basing instruction upon these ideologies has created classroom environments where students are reading and writing, investigating and organizing, talking and demonstrating comprehension in ways that bring learning into the open; we know that they know!

This student-centered instructional focus is evident in every curriculum. Our science, social studies, resource, and fine arts teachers have completed training. They use these contemporary strategies with textbooks, trade books, supplemental informational texts, web-resources and hands-on experiments. Math students daily demonstrate proficiency with math facts and a comprehensive review of math skills, Drops in a Bucket. Language Arts students, likewise begin class applying their knowledge of grammar by editing. Language

students' use of practical, repetitive, student-led application at every grade has resulted in West consistently ranking above the 80th percentiles on SAT 10 Language Arts. In 2008, 90% of the fifth grade students were also proficient on the Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing.

Students in grades two through five participate in weekly music education classes under the direction of a certified teacher. Sixth grade students have the opportunity to enroll in Beginning Band or Choral Ensemble. All students in grades two through six attend bi-weekly Visual Art classes. A certified art teacher provides instruction in art history, concepts and production.

The integration of technological resources has facilitated unprecedented levels of student engagement. West is wired! Every classroom has access to global educational resources. Classroom digital resources begin with internet-connected multi-media projection systems, document cameras, wireless connectivity, over 200 desktop stations, and a mobile laptop lab in every grade. SmartBoards will be installed in the spring of 2009. An exhaustive inventory of digital instructional and assessment software accentuates these hardware resources and truly allows individualized instruction for accelerating and intervening.

"I like the resources that we have to use as alternate to...boring books. I like that our school has updated it's technology... We also have many colorful magazines and hands-on learning experiences. I also like the fact that we have open discussions because I get to tell my opinion on important issues. Sometimes when this happens there are two different sides with ideas that conflict and that makes the discussion a lot more interesting." West Student

2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:

Reading Curriculum

West Elementary utilizes the *Harcourt StoryTown Reading Series*. The reading selection committee determined the Harcourt Series provided a comprehensive resource that integrates most of the *Alabama Reading Initiative* (ARI) recommendations for assessing, reading skills, tiered intervention and progress monitoring. In addition, the reading faculty believed the selection would facilitate a uniform presentation of reading instruction across the grade levels and it offered an extensive inventory of web-based resources. *StoryTown* provides a variety of fiction and nonfiction literature. Fiction offerings include narratives, poems, plays, and fantasy while nonfiction features contemporary news articles, biographies and research material. The authors included a robust vocabulary designed to foster growth through selected words.

West Elementary School became a chartered ARI School in 2003. Since that time, ARI has provided continuous professional development aligned with contemporary research and instructional strategies. In accordance with ARI practice, reading instruction focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. An ARI Reading Coach assists teachers in data analysis and instructional practice. Teachers collaboratively evaluate and implement the reading curriculum based on both norm-referenced and criterion-reference student achievement data. Curriculum Guides and pacing guides ensure content standards are completed in an appropriate sequence.

Reading teachers also complete the researched based lessons outlined in the Comprehension Toolkit. Science and social studies teachers support integration of reading instruction across the content areas by utilizing toolkit comprehension strategies.

In 2003, when West became an ARI School, our *All Students* SAT 10 reading achievement rank was the 65th percentile and *All Students* OLSAT ability rank was the 53rd percentile. In 2008, *All Students* achievement had increased to the 71st percentile as *All Students* OLSAT ability declined to the 50th percentile. In essence, the SAT indicated achievement versus ability increased from 12 percentile to 21 percentile in five years, a significant increase.

3. **Additional Curriculum Area:**

Physical Education

West Elementary's mission includes increasing academic performance, promoting healthy lifestyles and building relationships between the school, home, and community. HEAL ME and HEAL MY FAMILY are portions of HEAL Alabama that supports these purposes. According to summaries of Healthy Kids Learn Better (www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth) schools that offer intensive physical activities see positive effects even when time is taken from the academic day including:

- Increased concentration
- Improved reading, writing and mathematics
- Higher self-esteem
- Reduced disruptive behaviors
- Associated with high academic achievement

Physical education at West Elementary includes more than teaching lifetime skills and sports. HEAL Alabama is an innovative, multi-faceted program that promotes *Healthy Eating and Active Living* through school curriculum and family outreach. Including West, the HEAL program is currently being piloted in six Alabama schools. HEAL ME surpasses state standards through a creative "Motor Skills in Motion" design. Students learn about and move in their "Healthy Heart Zones" while learning motor skill development and healthy lifestyle habits. The curriculum is broken down into three phases. Each phase builds on the previous phase, focusing on each letter of HEAL for one to two weeks at a time.

HEAL MY FAMILY is an outreach program that further supports healthy habits students adopt from HEAL ME. Monthly calendars and worksheets offer ideas for fun physical activities families can do together, healthy meal planning, and grocery shopping tips. The curriculum also uses personal fitness assessments to record aerobic capacity, body composition, muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility. Students are pre and post-tested during the school year. FitnessGrams relay this information to students and parents. The FitnessGrams also offer suggestions that empower students and parents to improve fitness levels.

Overall, the HEAL Alabama program teaches students how nutrition and exercise affects the body and why. Students are receiving a deeper explanation of the importance of Healthy Eating and Active Living in hopes that the information will overflow into the home and community to fight childhood obesity.

4. **Instructional Methods:**

West Elementary differentiates instruction and meets the diverse needs of subgroup student groups through staffing and scheduling, professional development and differentiated instruction, individualized assessment and resource acquisition.

West Elementary employs a highly qualified faculty where homeroom teachers have less than 25 students per classroom. Each grade level has a paraprofessional to assist with small group instruction and clerical work. Departmentalized fourth grade through sixth grade instructional teams provide an intensive and specialized curriculum. West Elementary staffing includes many additional resource teachers:

- Three special education teachers
- A gifted education teacher
- A Title I resource specialist
- An English Language Learner teacher
- A library media specialist
- A guidance counselor
- A school nurse

- An ARI reading coach
- A music education teacher
- An art teacher
- A translator

Pragmatic, best describes resource scheduling. Using both “Push-in” and “Pull-out” models, student academic and social needs are the primary concern when scheduling supplemental tutoring during the instructional day.

Each grade level has one hour of common professional development planning time because two physical education teachers and paraprofessionals provide one hour of grade level PE instruction each day.

Professional Development and Differentiated Instruction

Intensive professional development equips faculty to meet diverse student needs. Using national standards, West professional development is needs based and continuous. Each faculty member has a \$400 professional development allocation and completes an individualized Professional Education Plan. In addition, faculty participates in professional development aligned with school needs.

West faculty has completed ARI training, Comprehension Tool Kit training, Response to Intervention training, Building Based School Support Teams and other identified professional development activities. With this expertise, West teachers are proficient with differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction includes whole group, small group, tiered intervention, individual instruction, after school tutoring and enrichment presentations.

Individualized Assessment and Resource Acquisition

A multitude of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced data identifies student needs and informs student instructional plans. A plethora of instructional resources fills our classrooms. Smartboards, document cameras, computer workstations, portable laptop labs, science lab, gymnasium, and music room, provide a variety of learning experiences for students. An extensive inventory of digital curriculums provides effective and intensive differentiated instructional capacity.

5. Professional Development:

An Alabama Best Practices Initiative member school, West Elementary implements professional learning community practices in which faculty collaborates to improve student learning. The school Professional Development Plan incorporates the National Staff Development Council Standards for Staff Development. Professional development activities, school and individual, are data driven and based on student and teacher assessments. Staff development opportunities are on-going, job embedded and focused on quality teaching and student achievement.

A variety of activities enhance instructional knowledge and skills. Grade level meetings, vertical team meetings and faculty meetings provide many opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Teachers have a one-hour professional development and planning time. Faculty members annually complete a Professional Development Plan, supported with a \$400 allocation. In accordance with NSCD standards, teacher may schedule substitutes during the instructional day to:

- Observe model lessons
- Improve practice with other teachers
- View educational videos
- Plan Instruction
- Attend outside conferences
- Work with consultants
- Complete book studies

- Analyze student work
- Visit model schools
- Job shadow

The Alabama Reading Initiative provides the West ARI Reading Coach with monthly training focused on research based instructional strategies.

In 2007, student achievement data and faculty conversations concluded that West students would benefit from consistent and uniform reading comprehension strategies. In addition to reviewing research literature, a faculty reading team visited a model school to observe their process for multi-strategy reading lessons. West teachers then completed training that included modeling practice using graphic organizers to teach explicit reading comprehension. Later, third-grade teachers participated in ARI Comprehension Toolkit training.

The combination of these two programs was determined to be a good solution for uniform comprehension strategies across all grade and content areas. An outside consultant provided Toolkit training to the entire faculty. Additionally, Vertical Teams observed and practiced model lessons presented by West's ARI Coach and Library Media Specialist.

West Elementary student achievement, as measured by SAT 10 Reading, has improved from the 65th percentile in 2005 to the 71st percentile in 2008, posting systematic gains each year.

6. School Leadership:

On the 2008 National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) West parents gave "The education offered to our students is of high quality" survey item their highest rating (4.7/5.0). West's high NSSE ratings and academic gains can primarily be attributed to transparent school management and scholarly leadership. Both practices allow the principal access to the collective management and leadership input of stakeholders. Transparent management promotes consensus on what we are doing well and what needs to be improved. Scholarly leadership, a communal approach to deciding where we go and how we will get there, promises efficient school improvement.

Systematic communications and annual surveys are the cornerstones of transparent management. Numerous, ongoing, open communications about school operations and performance provide constituents with information and access that allows them to contribute to school management and leadership. Each year faculty, students, and parents complete the NSSE web-based surveys. The surveys focus attention on valid indicators of school quality and provide stakeholders with a meaningful opportunity to exercise school leadership. They evaluate what we do well, what we need to improve and provide recommendations.

Improvements are implemented by practicing scholarly leadership. Former Berry College President, Dr. Scott Colley describes scholarship as the communal pursuit of what is true, within a community of one's fellow scholars. Scholarly leadership is concerned with "what is already known and is directed toward what needs to be known." In accordance with Dr. Colley's insights and our scholarly purposes, leadership (where we will go and how) is a public activity, with open give and take, because that is the way "ideas are tested."

When given discretion, school direction and processes are communal decisions. A testament to the effectiveness of scholarly leadership is that for three consecutive years faculty members have accorded School Organization and Administration their highest NSSE rating (4.9/5.0).

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 3 Test: Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2004 Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III & Level IV	87	92	91	73	
Level IV	66	75	77	44	
Number of students tested	116	104	106	95	
Percent of total students tested	98	100	97	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	0	3	0	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	0	3	0	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III & Level IV	80	86	85	64	
Level IV	56	61	71	34	
Number of students tested	54	49	52	53	
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Level III & Level IV	42	86	83	62	
Level IV	17	50	67	39	
Number of students tested	12	14	18	13	
3. (specify subgroup): Limited English Proficient					
Level III & Level IV			79	55	
Level IV			57	27	
Number of students tested			14	11	
4. (specify subgroup): Special Education					
Level III & Level IV	55	71	92	36	
Level IV	55	57	54	14	
Number of students tested	11	14	13	14	

Notes:

Alabama did not administer the ARMT test to third and fifth grade students in 2003-2004.

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2004

Grade: 3 Test: Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test
Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III & Level IV	90	93	91	82	
Level IV	70	64	57	44	
Number of students tested	115	104	105	95	
Percent of total students tested	98	100	96	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	3	0	3	0	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	0	3	0	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III & Level IV	85	90	80	74	
Level IV	60	53	41	32	
Number of students tested	53	49	51	53	
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Level III & Level IV	73	71	76	77	
Level IV	27	21	29	23	
Number of students tested	11	14	17	13	
3. (specify subgroup): Limited English Proficient					
Level III & Level IV			69	73	
Level IV			15	27	
Number of students tested			13	11	
4. (specify subgroup): Special Education					
Level III & Level IV	55	79	77	36	
Level IV	36	21	31	0	
Number of students tested	11	14	13	14	

Notes:

Alabama Reading and Mathematics test was not given in 2003-2004 to third grade and fifth grade students.

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 4 Test: Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test
Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III & Level IV	88	89	87	91	85
Level IV	61	66	49	61	54
Number of students tested	106	105	99	103	85
Percent of total students tested	99	95	98	97	93
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	4	2	2	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	4	2	2	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III & Level IV	81	82	77	87	73
Level IV	42	52	35	38	27
Number of students tested	52	50	52	47	37
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Level III & Level IV	81	80	73		
Level IV	50	53	33		
Number of students tested	16	15	15		
3. (specify subgroup): Special Education					
Level III & Level IV		80	77		50
Level IV		20	15		20
Number of students tested		10	13		10
4. (specify subgroup): Limited English Proficient					
Level III & Level IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Proficiency data not provided on subgroups of less than 10.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 4 Test: Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III & Level IV	93	94	92	92	87
Level IV	71	70	57	70	59
Number of students tested	106	105	98	103	86
Percent of total students tested	99	95	97	97	95
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	4	2	2	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	4	2	2	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III & Level IV	89	92	84	85	74
Level IV	54	58	45	55	41
Number of students tested	52	50	51	47	28
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Level III & Level IV	88	93	93		
Level IV	38	43	43		
Number of students tested	16	14	14	8	7
3. (specify subgroup): Special Education					
Level III & Level IV		80	69		40
Level IV		20	15		10
Number of students tested		10	13		10
4. (specify subgroup): Limited English Proficient					
Level III & Level IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Proficiency rates are not reported when there are fewer than 10 students participating in a student group.

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2004

Grade: 5 Test: Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test
Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III & Level IV	92	92	93	90	
Level IV	77	67	65	57	
Number of students tested	111	94	104	88	
Percent of total students tested	97	97	97	99	
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	3	2	1	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	4	3	2	1	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III & Level IV	84	87	88	81	
Level IV	62	56	40	34	
Number of students tested	45	45	43	32	
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Level III & Level IV	80	79	80		
Level IV	67	64	30		
Number of students tested	15	14	10		
3. (specify subgroup): Special Education					
Level III & Level IV				70	
Level IV				20	
Number of students tested				10	
4. (specify subgroup): Limited English Proficient					
Level III & Level IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Alabama did not administer the ARMT test to third and fifth grade students in 2003-2004. Proficiency data not provided on student groups with less than 10.

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2004

Grade: 5 Test: Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test
Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III & Level IV	96	97	89	91	
Level IV	74	70	64	67	
Number of students tested	110	94	104	88	
Percent of total students tested	96	97	97	99	
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	3	2	1	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	4	3	2	1	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III & Level IV	93	96	81	78	
Level IV	55	56	51	47	
Number of students tested	44	45	43	32	
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Level III & Level IV	93	86			
Level IV	43	50			
Number of students tested	14	14			
3. (specify subgroup): Special Education					
Level III & Level IV				70	
Level IV				20	
Number of students tested				10	
4. (specify subgroup): Limited English Proficient					
Level III & Level IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Alabama did not test third and fifth grade students in 2003-2004. Proficiency data is not provided on student groups with less than 10.

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 6 Test: Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test
Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III & Level IV	89	93	91	88	72
Level IV	50	57	68	46	44
Number of students tested	105	105	102	99	89
Percent of total students tested	97	97	98	98	89
Number of students alternatively assessed	3	3	2	0	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	3	2	0	3
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III & Level IV	78	88	81	75	59
Level IV	39	29	47	20	30
Number of students tested	46	42	32	44	46
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Level III & Level IV	77	79	80	64	39
Level IV	54	21	20	14	23
Number of students tested	13	14	10	14	13
3. (specify subgroup): Limited English Proficient					
Level III & Level IV				64	27
Level IV				14	9
Number of students tested				14	11
4. (specify subgroup): Limited English Proficient					
Level III & Level IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Proficiency data not provided on student groups with less than 10.

Subject: Reading Grade: 6 Test: Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test
Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Level III & Level IV	95	95	92	86	83
Level IV	80	78	76	60	68
Number of students tested	105	103	102	99	100
Percent of total students tested	97	95	98	98	89
Number of students alternatively assessed	3	3	2	0	4
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	3	2	0	4
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students					
Level III & Level IV	94	90	84	75	63
Level IV	70	68	56	30	41
Number of students tested	46	41	32	44	46
2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Hispanic					
Level III & Level IV	85	75	80	64	33
Level IV	69	25	50	14	17
Number of students tested	13	12	10	14	12
3. (specify subgroup): Limited English Proficient					
Level III & Level IV				58	20
Level IV				0	0
Number of students tested				12	10
4. (specify subgroup): Special Education					
Level III & Level IV					
Level IV					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Proficiency data not provided on student groups with less than 10.