

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Marilee J. McConnell

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

Official School Name Indian Creek Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2900 Indian Creek Road

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

City Marion State IA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 52302-1645

County Linn County

Telephone (319) 447-3270 Fax (319) 373-9233

Web site/URL http://www.linnmar.k12.ia.us/default.asp E-mail mmcconnell@linnmar.k12.ia.us

Twitter Handle https://twitter.com/MJMcConnell Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/Linn-Mar-Community-Schools-219127094767706/ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Quintin Shepherd E-mail qshepherd@linnmar.k12.ia.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Linn-Mar Community School District Tel. (319) 447-3002

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be 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.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

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

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	40	28	68
1	50	45	95
2	49	36	85
3	43	43	86
4	51	36	87
5	50	43	93
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	283	231	514

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 91 % White
  - 1 % 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 2%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	11
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	533
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.021
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
5 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Urdu, Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin) and Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %  
Total number students who qualify: 56

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %  
33 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 1 Autism
- 1 Deafness
- 1 Deaf-Blindness
- 3 Emotional Disturbance
- 3 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 10 Multiple Disabilities
- 5 Orthopedic Impairment
- 2 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 8 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 8 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	23
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals	1
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	96%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes    No X

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

The mission of Indian Creek Elementary School is "Success and learning for all every day!" The school's vision is "Through cooperation, collaboration and camaraderie among school, family and community, students will become successful, productive citizens in an ever-changing society."

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

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Indian Creek Elementary School is one of seven elementary schools in the Linn-Mar Community School District in Marion, Iowa. Our K-5 school is nestled in the heart of the school district and reflects our school mission of “Success and learning for all every day!” Marion, Iowa, is a progressive, thriving community with approximately 35,000 residents that strongly believe in the importance of education. The families in the Linn-Mar Community School District are highly involved and engaged in the education of their children and we have a close relationship and partnership with them. Children at Indian Creek are fortunate to have such supportive and active families who send their children to school each day ready to learn. Within our community, Indian Creek is known for its high expectations, academic achievement and its nurturing, student-centered environment.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

The Linn-Mar Community School District has utilized a quality and continuous cycle for curriculum review and improvement for grades K-5. Our district uses sound and rigorous expectations, the Iowa Common Core Standards, and we are in the process of unpacking these standards in order to have a deep and thorough understanding of what the standards mean, and what students need to be able to know and do. This work is guiding us to utilize student friendly “I Can” statements where students will be able to name and own their learning.

#### Reading/ English Language Arts

Our state’s standards in English/Language Arts form a strong foundation for the teaching and learning in this curricular area. We have worked diligently over the last several years--and will continue this work over the next school year--to review our curriculum tools and to gain clarity around what constitutes high quality reading instruction. Teachers work with students in whole group instruction, small group instruction and independent application of learned skills each day for a minimum of ninety minutes. Whole group instruction includes direct instruction in print/phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. These threads are taught through shared reading, read alouds, think alouds, modeling, discussion and guided practice. We use at or above grade level text for this piece of our literacy instruction. Small group instruction is differentiated to meet individual students’ needs and is focused on targeted skill development using leveled readers. Students practice the concepts taught and gain immediate teacher feedback. Our staff uses explicit instructional strategies through modeled, direct instruction with a gradual release of responsibility using the I do, we do, you do together, you do approach. Skills are scaffolded for our learners and literacy instruction in our school is systematic and sequential.

#### Mathematics

Iowa Common Core Standards in Mathematics guide our teaching and learning in this area. Students gain a wide range of sophisticated mathematical knowledge and skills that extends far beyond basic calculation skills. "Everyday Mathematics," our curriculum tool, lays the groundwork for mathematical literacy for our entire student body. Concepts and skills are informally introduced in the early years and then revisited, developed, and extended as children progress through the grades. Increasingly sophisticated content can be introduced at each grade level because of the carefully planned spiraled, sequenced instruction. Mathematics is taught for 60-70 minutes daily in grades K-1 and for 75 minutes daily in grades 2-5. Teachers again utilize the gradual release of responsibility approach in Mathematics using the I do, we do, you do together, you do model. Mathematics is taught in both whole group and in small, differentiated groups in our K-5 classrooms.

#### Science

The Iowa State Board of Education adopted new state standards for what Iowa students should know and be able to do in science. This adoption was based on a state review team’s recommendation that Iowa adopt the Next Generation Science Standards. Our students are exposed to learning and understandings in life science, physical science and earth science. An exemplary science learning environment requires a quality curriculum. At Indian Creek, we partner with our local educational agency, Grant Wood AEA and the Van Allen Science Teaching center or VAST center. The VAST center supports our standards and has proven to be effective in creating meaningful long-term student learning in science. The VAST center delivers complete, ready-to-use, hands-on teaching and learning science materials to our classrooms. Our school’s curriculum facilitator teacher leaders receive training from the VAST center. They, in turn, coordinate and provide our Indian Creek teachers the explicit training they need in order to effectively use the VAST center science kits in their classrooms with students.

#### Social Studies/History

Iowa Core Standards are the foundation for the teaching and student learning in the area of Social Studies in our school. Our teaching tool is "Harcourt Social Studies" which provides theme based grade level units focusing on essential questions to instill the learning of the overarching big ideas. We want the students to become informed citizens, active members of their community (participate), realize there are diverse points

of view, understand democratic values, know history and its impact on how people live today, recognize there are people who have influenced positive change over time, understand how people are similar and different, learn about the development of geography (local, national, world - land forms, natural resources, etc.) and have an understanding of economics (money, government's role in money - taxes, how taxes are used, etc.) The standards are taught through themes: K--Self, 1--A Child's View, 2--People We Know, 3--Our Communities, 4--States and Regions and 5--The United States: Making A New Nation. Community resources are used for our social studies experiences. We invite guest speakers to come into our school for various topics at many grade levels. We also have community volunteers teach Junior Achievement units to various grade levels throughout our school. We are able to enrich our students' experiences in social studies through many, various field trips such as the Herbert Hoover Museum and the district court house. Some grade levels plan special days to culminate the learning such as State Fair Celebrations, Native American Days and Colonial Days.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

### Visual Arts

Students in our K-5 visual arts program at Indian Creek participate in art class every four days for forty-five minutes. The visual arts curriculum was co-designed by our district teachers to correspond with the national and state standards. Key learning targets include art history, art from various cultures, skill development and creative processes through experiences with various media.

### General Music

Students in K-5 also participate in vocal music class every other day for 25 minutes. Students learn a curriculum that is comprised of district standards and benchmarks tied in with the National Standards for Music Education. Students learn key skills in music appreciation, vocal music and the basics in instrumental education. Each grade level presents a music program that gives the students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning for an audience who sees specific vocal and instrumental skills. In addition, folk dancing is woven throughout each grade level. Cooperation, community spirit and engagement are outgrowths of traditional dance. A fourth and fifth grade choir is offered twice a week for 45 minutes after school. Any student who wants to learn more about singing is eligible for this group. Over 70 students participate in this special program.

### Band/Orchestra

Elementary students are introduced to band in the spring of their 4th grade year. All 4th graders attend a band recruiting concert hosted by Middle School students. They also see a demonstration on all of the instruments and get "hands on experience" with them. Parents can then attend informational meetings about the program and sign their student up for an individual interview. At the interview, students/parents tryout and select which instrument the child will play. Students can then participate in the summer program, where beginners meet in small groups of like instruments. During the 6 week program, beginner groups meet twice a week for one hour. Once school begins in the fall, 5th grade band meets one day a week.

Group band is held before school for 30 minutes. During the school day, each band student receives an individual 12-15 minute lesson. During the school year, the 5th grade band performs at three evening concerts and gives two concerts at school assemblies.

Students may sign up for the Orchestra Program after completing 4th grade. Approximately 90% of students register for beginning strings classes during the summer. There are currently 28 students in the Indian Creek Orchestra and of those students, 26 either studied with a private string teacher over the summer or enrolled in one of the beginning strings classes (93%). This has been the largest orchestra class ever at Indian Creek with 4 students learning the bass, 7 learning to play cello, 10 learning to play viola, and 7 on violin. Indian Creek also has the second biggest orchestra program among all the elementary buildings at Linn-Mar and has grown tremendously in the past few years. Orchestra students meet twice per week for rehearsals - after school on Tuesdays for 30 minutes and before school on Thursdays along with the Novak Orchestra students for 30 minutes (60 minutes total of rehearsals per week). Students also receive an individual lesson or a small group lesson once per week during the school year where they focus on bowing technique, left hand posture, note reading, and other exercises from their music book as well as learning to

read sheet music.

Students have the opportunity to perform in three main performances during the school year - once in the fall, once in the winter, and then again in the spring. They also are able to perform in several assemblies in their own building during the school year as well as at Barnes and Noble during the holiday season.

The "Music Connects" Program (started in 2014) provides band/orchestra instruments for families with financial considerations. Any student who receives "free/reduced" lunch can apply for the program. Once verified, students not only receive an instrument to use free of charge, they also can receive a summer program tuition waiver. The "Music Connects" program is supported by financial contributions from the Linn-Mar School Foundation. For the 2015-16 school year, six Indian Creek students applied for the program.

#### Guidance

The Linn-Mar Community School District comprehensive school counseling program is designed to promote the formation of productive and responsible life-long learners by ensuring the academic, career and personal/social development of all students. The Indian Creek Guidance Counseling program is a comprehensive program for prevention, intervention and support for the social, emotional and behavioral development of our K through fifth grade students. Guidance lessons are presented on a regularly scheduled basis using "Second Step" curriculum. Other lessons from a variety of research based social skills curriculum are incorporated as needed to address specific skill development. Small group social skills sessions are scheduled as identified by parents and/or classroom teachers and individual counseling sessions are available through parent, teacher or student self-referrals. Coordination of and referral to community resources are available through the school counselor as well as coordination of instructional supports and behavioral intervention strategies. The school counselor is available daily to meet the social, emotional and behavioral support needs of all students.

#### Physical Education/Health/Nutrition

Students at Indian Creek Elementary School participate in physical education (PE) classes every other day for twenty-five minutes. The goal of the PE program at Indian Creek is to teach the five National Physical Education Standards from SHAPE America. SHAPE America's national standards define what a student should know and be able to do as a result of a quality physical education program. Our philosophy in teaching is to positively motivate students to enjoy physical activity so they can maintain a healthy lifestyle. PE classes strive to involve all children, keep them active, incorporate social skills and emphasize both health-related fitness and skill development. We use a variety of activities to teach our students lifelong movement skills, learn and practice strategies for games and activities, help students learn how to enjoy physical activity and the importance of being active to maintain a healthy body, helping students understand the importance of showing kindness and respectfulness during activity and group movement time and learning the importance of cooperation and sportsmanship. Indian Creek Elementary School is a designated Blue Zone School which means we have pledged to optimize our school environment so that students and staff are encouraged to eat better, move more, reduce sedentary screen time, increase healthy social interaction and increase mindfulness. Through all of this, we are providing the best possible environment for our students to learn and grow in and out of PE classes.

#### Media/Technology

The students at Indian Creek Elementary come to the library every four days for forty-five minutes in grades 2-5 and twenty-five minutes in grades K-1. During this time, students get the opportunity to hear a variety of quality literature and are exposed to a wide assortment of technology. The mission of the Indian Creek library is to teach students to think critically, locate information in any format and be effective and independent users of the library and a variety of information resources.

#### English Language Learner Program

The purpose of the English Language Learner (ELL) program is to help students and their families feel comfortable and welcome in a new culture. Academically, ELL helps students access the general education curriculum so that they can be successful learners in the classroom. Socially, ELL helps students become

acclimated to a new environment and build relationships with peers. Indian Creek ELL staff serve five students in this program.

#### LEO Program

Indian Creek has a significant number of learners identified as gifted and talented and a highly qualified TAG teacher directing services to these students. In the primary grades classroom teachers send learners to the TAG teacher for a variety of mini-units based on categories such as accelerated learning, meaning motivation, and advanced language. The students may vary from unit to unit based on observed strengths. In grades three to five students are more formally identified using a valid and systematic identification process including multiple measures of standardized achievement and ability assessments as well as observational data. The intermediate grade program is called LEO (Learning Enrichment Opportunities) and is essentially an enrichment pull-out model meeting weekly. In the LEO room, students are engaged in multi-disciplinary units to develop research, collaboration, technology and presentation skills as well as creative and critical thinking. The social and emotional needs of these learners are also addressed. When appropriate, recommendations may be made for individual students to formally accelerate their learning by moving to the next grade in a particular curricular area or possibly by moving to the next grade level for all instruction. The “Iowa Acceleration Scale”, a research based tool, is used to guide this decision making process.

#### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

The state of Iowa utilizes a Multi-Tiered System of Supports or MTSS for short. The first key to this system at Indian Creek is universal core instruction for all students. Teachers ensure that the core instruction is delivered to all students in a comprehensive and differentiated manner. Individual classroom teachers respond daily to instructional data gathered in their classrooms. Grade level teacher teams meet weekly in collaboration around student learning and this is the next key to our MTSS approach at Indian Creek. Teams share information across the grade level related to student performance. They carefully scrutinize the assessment data and plan their collective response to this information. Teachers at Indian Creek utilize a daily, thirty-minute intervention block which allows grade level teams and additional adults assigned the opportunity to swoop in and meet student learning needs within the school day.

Our next important key to MTSS at Indian Creek is when students move into tier two. Students identified through results of assessment data as needing additional time and support for their learning are assigned to various adults within our school for that additional support. Indian Creek has two reading support teachers, a para-educator, associates and volunteers who provide these additional supports in a wide variety of ways. Students receiving tier two interventions are monitored frequently to note their progress over time and these supports are given in addition to the supports provided in tier one. As students respond positively to the instruction provided, they move back into tier one, just as another student might flow into tier two. This is a very fluid approach at our school.

Some students need even more intensive supports and they move into tier three interventions. We utilize an Instructional Support Team (IST) which is called together to review data and information, share results of assessments and brainstorm additional supports and next steps. As students move into this next tier, the instruction becomes more focused, more intensive, happens more often and is provided in a smaller group. Students in tier three are closely monitored and instructional strategies are changed if students do not make progress. A few students may require more intensive support and may eventually be evaluated for services under special education.

#### 4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

The staff at Indian Creek Elementary School administers a variety of assessments to guide their instruction as well as to target the interventions for students. Many staff are utilizing student data binders in our school. We believe that this is a very visible way to assist students to “own” their learning, to speak about their learning and to set goals for improving. Families are invited to meet with teachers two times each year. During these conference times, student learning information and assessment results are shared with families. Students receive report cards three times per year. In addition, the Linn-Mar Community School District

Board of Directors receives an annual report from the Associate Superintendent regarding the results of the assessments given in our school district that monitor our annual yearly progress.

In ELA, classroom teachers utilize the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST). This is a suite of assessment and progress monitoring tools for teachers. All K-5 students are universally screened three times per year. Students not meeting the benchmark are progress monitored until they meet the benchmark at the next universal screening time. If students do not meet the benchmark for the second time in a row, they are assigned to an appropriate intervention and progress monitored weekly. In addition, an informative letter is sent to the students' families, a conference is held and a learning contract is drawn up and signed by all parties. Indian Creek staff uses a diagnostic screener on each student not meeting the FAST benchmark for the second time in order to diagnose each student's reading deficiency and to plan appropriate interventions for them. Additionally, we utilize the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Kit with students performing below grade level targets for guided reading throughout the school year. K and 1 use it at the end of each trimester to determine guided reading levels. Our Reading Recovery teachers use the Reading Recovery Observation Survey to determine which students will receive Reading Recovery services in first grade.

Some teachers in first through fifth grades use the Basic Reading Inventory (BRI) to determine a student's accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. All 2-5 students are assessed twice a year using NWEA's MAP assessment in reading and all 3-5 students are given the Iowa Assessments each year.

In Mathematics, all K-5 students are assessed at the beginning-of-year, mid-year and end-of-year using the Everyday Mathematics Assessment for their grade level. As in ELA, all 2-5 students are assessed twice a year in mathematics using NWEA's MAP assessment and all 3-5 students are given the Iowa Assessments each year.

Students are also informally assessed in all subject areas throughout the school year so that teachers can monitor their student's progress adequately, adjust their instruction as needed and pace their instructional units.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Indian Creek has made the commitment to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS, for our school. PBIS is a perfect match to our common beliefs as a staff as well as to MTSS. The staff has formed a core PBIS team, which is receiving the initial training, and also a larger PBIS team that assists the core team with implementation. Defining and clearly articulating our school wide expectations has really set a positive tone in our school. Students know what is expected and adults know what to expect. All staff offers students “thank you” notes when they see the expected behaviors that respect the learning. Unexpected behaviors are handled in a clear manner through reteaching opportunities, corrective feedback and practice sessions. As data is gathered and reviewed, we are able to identify which students need tier two interventions to assist them in meeting the behavior targets. These students may receive check-in/check-out services and/or point sheets to give them feedback on the expected behaviors throughout their day. The school has also worked to refresh the walls of the school so that they reflect our expectations and send the message to all that we respect the learning in our school.

Along with this initiative, several staff members have begun class traveling trophies designed to highlight our school wide expectations. We have the Golden Shoe Awards, the Golden Palette Award, the Golden Lunch Tray Award and the Caring Heart Award. Classroom winners are announced each week and the trophy travels to that classroom to be proudly displayed for the week.

Booster Club is an after school at-risk program for fourth and fifth grade students. The students meet weekly from October through May with the coordinator and one other staff member. They are involved in specially designed activities to promote healthy lifestyles and lifelong learning. This program is also designed to build deep, meaningful relationships with other students in order to lift their confidence, self-esteem and energy.

The district has been highly committed to a bullying prevention program called Olweus over the last ten years. This well-researched program is used throughout our school to reduce existing bullying problems among students, prevent the development of new bullying problems and achieve better peer relations at school. Each week, classes have an Olweus Class Meeting or OCM to teach the lessons within Olweus. All staff, including bus drivers, nutrition services and associates have received training for this program so everyone knows how to respond and teach the Olweus content.

We have a severe and profound special education classroom at our school. The students are integrated into the general education classrooms for many portions of their school day. Also, the general education peers help out in the special education classroom by working with the students, reading with them, assisting them as they walk in the hallways, and participating alongside them during their group language or math times. This special relationship is a vital piece to the climate and culture in our school.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

We have a dedicated and hard-working PTO at our school. They meet monthly to plan and organize special events for our families. Typically, the PTO hosts our fall Meet and Greet open house before the school year begins. Later in the school year, they invite families in for a movie night at our school. Skate Night is another fun event that is organized by PTO. The grandest event of the year is Family Fun Night. This is a huge event attended by staff and families alike. It is also an amazing fundraiser. A large majority of the funds raised by PTO on this night return to the school for important purchases to enhance the student’s experiences at Indian Creek.

Our Volunteer Program is also vital to the work at our school. We have two Volunteer Coordinators at Indian Creek who coordinate the requests for volunteer work, run a volunteer workshop each month and communicate weekly to all of our volunteers. Their efforts assist the staff at our school in the important work of educating our students.

Community members are utilized to teach Junior Achievement (JA) curriculum each year to our students. Each grade level has a different theme. Our JA program fosters work-readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy skills. The programs use experiential learning to inspire students to dream big and reach their potential. With the help of many volunteers, our students develop the skills they need to experience the realities and opportunities of work and entrepreneurship in the 21st century global marketplace.

Grade level music programs are organized by our music teacher. The students are invited back to school in the evening to perform for their parents and families. We have large crowds at these special concerts and the children are very proud to share their talents. Grade levels also perform for the entire school as a dress rehearsal. Anytime the entire school community can come together to celebrate some learning, it builds a strong sense of community.

Each year, our PE teacher organizes a Bike Rodeo for the 85 or so third graders at Indian Creek. Each child brings their bike and helmet to school for the day and if anyone is without either, there is a thoughtful plan that takes care of that situation so all can participate. The students and the adult volunteers--and it takes a ton of volunteers--work in different stations to assist the kids in learning all about bicycle safety, the rules of the road, hand signals, and other important tips for bike riding. We are certain that this annual event engages our families in our school.

Our art teacher organizes an annual huge, all-school event called the Art Show. Each of the 500+ students in our school selects four pieces of their artwork to have on display in the Art Show. The entire building becomes an art gallery! The massive group of volunteers arrive at 7:15 AM to begin hanging the artwork and setting up the show. Families are invited to attend after school and into the evening to view all of the art work. Children take their families all around to see their pieces. It is a very special night at Indian Creek each year!

Lastly, Indian Creek Elementary School has several service projects throughout the school year. These projects are opportunities for our students to show they care about their community. In the fall, the students sponsor a food drive to donate to our local food pantries. There is also a spring drive to help pets in local animal shelters. These are just a few of the ways our school engages our families toward the goal of student success.

### 3. Professional Development:

The Linn-Mar Community School District has made a huge commitment to the Professional Learning Community framework. Over the course of the last several years, the district has sent busloads of staff to PLC Institutes in various cities in our country. At this time an extremely large majority of our staff has attended at least one PLC Institute and they are able to implement the learning back in their schools. This has been an important focus of our professional development over the last several years at Indian Creek as well.

Along with this focus, the professional development in our school follows the continuous cycle modeled in the Iowa Professional Development Model. This model revolves around continuous improvement and learning based on the data gathered about student learning. Lately, the data collected suggests that our district should zoom in on literacy and literacy instruction and so that has been the focus of the last two years of learning for our staff. Typically, as new curriculum materials are purchased for teachers to use, the district ensures that there is adequate professional learning associated with the new curriculum so that teachers can implement with confidence and fidelity.

The last two years we have focused some training on the state of Iowa's Early Literacy Implementation (ELI) using FAST as our early warning system. FAST provides a suite of assessments and progress monitoring tools that track student progress and teachers have had to become certified with the system and tools.

Two years ago, the district also took steps to begin to get elementary teachers on track for the Next

Generation Science Standards by providing training for the VAST kits to support implementation in classrooms.

Also, Indian Creek is provided time to develop building-specific learning around topics of importance to our school. We are in the process of reading the book entitled "In Praise of American Educators and How They Can Become Even Better" by Rick DuFour. Grade level teams can identify new learning that they require in order to serve student learning needs and can utilize Teacher Quality Student Achievement funding to learn together for a day.

Substitute teachers are brought in and teachers focus on their own learning around the identified needs. Our instructional coach is in attendance with the grade level teachers and together they map out the learning to transpire--all focused on achieving better outcomes for students. Often, this learning is directly related to teacher career professional development goals as well. Along with this, Indian Creek has rolled out training for all staff with PBIS and the important features for our school.

#### 4. School Leadership:

School leadership at Indian Creek Elementary is shared in many ways. The school is organized into various teams. Teacher leaders in our school lead these teams with support and assistance from other teacher leaders as well as the principal. We have a PBIS Committee and a Technology Committee which are both lead by teacher leaders. Our Literacy and Math Committees are led by two teacher leader curriculum facilitators. The principal and the building instructional coach work closely with these teacher leaders to assist them in this work.

Indian Creek Elementary School also has a School Administrative Manager or SAM. The role of the SAM is to oversee the management of the building, work with the classified staff and their scheduling, be the first line for student discipline and generally assist with duties that are management related. The SAM position at our school allows the building principal to focus on instructional tasks and leadership items. The goal is for the principal to spend at least 60% of their time on instructional tasks. Time is tracked daily in order to ensure that the principal is focused on instructional leadership tasks tied directly to student learning.

The SAM meets monthly with representatives from staff in Building Management Meetings. The agenda focuses on the safe and orderly management of our school in order to keep the focus of the school on the learning. Also, the principal meets at various times in the school year with the Lead Learning Team. This team is made up of representatives from the teaching staff and oversees the learning in the building. This team will look at building and district learning data, discuss implications of that information for our school and generally guide our journey to becoming a professional learning community. Lastly, teacher meetings are held once or twice a month after school. This time is dedicated to short chunks of learning for teachers.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Indian Creek Elementary has a positive, student-focused culture. This culture is built collaboratively from the caring, dedicated staff at our school. Staff here truly believe that all students can learn and they embrace our mission of “Success and learning for all every day!”

We are working to become a professional learning community at Indian Creek Elementary School. We have set the foundation of our PLC work by writing our mission (see above), our vision, our values and our goals. The vision of our school is: “Through cooperation, collaboration and camaraderie among school, family and community, students will become successful, productive citizens in an ever-changing society.” We also agreed upon these collective commitments to guide our adult behavior at Indian Creek: “We have agreed upon these collective commitments as a basis for our values as adults working with students at Indian Creek Elementary School. These commitments are intended to serve as a means to guide our conduct, represent our shared purpose and to direct us as professionals. We aspire to align our work to the mission, vision and professional expectations of the Linn-Mar Community School District and Indian Creek Elementary School. We believe that every child deserves instruction and assessment that is tailored to their individual learning needs in order for them to reach high levels of learning and meet with success every day. We will create conditions using collaborative practices and professional conduct to foster an atmosphere conducive to reaching our mission. We honor traditions and culture while embracing innovation and implementation of best practices for student success.” Along with the mission, vision and collective commitments, we also have building goals and grade level SMART goals that assist us to mark our progress and stay focused on the work at hand.

Grade level teacher teams work collaboratively to ensure that each student at Indian Creek Elementary School will have a similar educational experience, no matter which teacher they have been assigned. Grade level teams are provided 45 minutes each day of collaborative planning time. Teachers use this time effectively to pace their instruction, plan for assessment windows, and share successful instructional sequences and strategies. Once per week, grade level teams collaborate around these four critical questions: What is it we want all students to learn? How will we know if they have learned it? How will we respond when they do not learn it? How will we respond when they have already learned it? Teams plan for their daily intervention block as they answer these questions. The staff at Indian Creek understands that we must act as a team in order to impact student achievement. They realize we can no longer work in isolation and do whatever we want behind closed doors. There is such power in collaboration.