

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Lauren Joy Hunter

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

Official School Name Gaines Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 300 Lansing Street

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

City Gaines State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 48436-8926

County Genesee County

Telephone (810) 591-1076 Fax (810) 591-1099

Web site/URL

<http://www.swartzcreek.org/Schools/GainesElementary.aspx>

E-mail lhunter@swcrk.org

Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Gaines-Elementary-School/944550682240661>

Twitter Handle

<https://twitter.com/GainesElem>

Google+ _____

YouTube/URL

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGmuODcvI-2AxbMRZgbQP3w>

Other Social Media Link

Blog _____

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Jeff Hall E-mail jhall@swcrk.org

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

District Name Swartz Creek Schools Tel. (810) 591-2300

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Carrie Germain

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. 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

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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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	10	15	25
1	13	8	21
2	16	10	26
3	20	20	40
4	28	9	37
5	22	12	34
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
Total Students	109	74	183

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 92 % White
 - 2 % 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: 3%

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	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	6
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	200
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.030
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0%
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 37%
Total number students who qualify: 67
8. Students receiving special education services: 19%
35 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	7
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals	8
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 26:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	93%	96%
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.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No

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

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

Gaines Elementary students will be self-directed learners, effective problem solvers, and responsible decision makers as they contribute to an ever-changing, diverse society.

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

Parents of students apply for admission to our school through the State Schools of Choice program under section 105 and/or 105c. There are unlimited openings at this time. Students are not charged tuition and they do not need a release from their resident district if accepted for enrollment. All students are accepted unless they have been suspended or expelled in another district.

PART III – SUMMARY

Community:

Gaines Elementary is a pre-kindergarten through 5th grade school, nestled in the beautiful village of Gaines, a small, family-oriented, rural community. Much of the surrounding land is farmland. Parents and area residents devote extensive time volunteering and contribute supplies for special events at the school. The Lions Club, Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus, Masons, Barons and three local churches provide volunteers to help in our after school enrichment program. Our school consistently gives back to the community by raising thousands of dollars for multiple local charities throughout the school year including: The Children's Miracle Network, The Old Newsboys, United Way, Adopt-a-Pet, Hurley Pediatric Burn Unit, American Cancer Society, Toys for Tots, Habitat for Humanity, University of Michigan-Mott Children's Hospital, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, American Red Cross, Whaley's Children's Center, Carriage Town Ministries, and Angelman Syndrome Foundation.

History:

The building that houses Gaines Elementary was once a K-12 building. At that time Gaines was its own district. We have had three and four generations of families attend school at Gaines. Their commitment continues to this day to be the linchpin of the relationship between our children's education and community involvement. Our dedicated parents are one of our greatest assets. They are actively involved in their child's education with our parent-teacher conferences at a 98% attendance rate.

Traditions:

Gaines Elementary has numerous annual traditions. We kick-off every school year with a meet-the-teacher open house the week before school begins. In the fall we celebrate Homecoming Spirit Week with special dress-up days, high school cheerleaders and football players come to our gym for a pep rally and Gaines students participate in our district Homecoming Parade. On Halloween, staff and students parade through the town of Gaines. Each Christmas the Gaines Community Band plays for our students at no cost. We host a Santa's Workshop where crafters fill our gym with inexpensive gifts for children to buy for their family members. Classrooms and individuals Adopt-a-Family for Christmas then purchase and wrap gifts for all of the children in that family. Less privileged students enjoy the unique experience of Shop-with-a-Cop. Our local police officer graciously volunteers an evening to take students shopping for their family members as well as purchasing a gift for them. Highlighting our Christmas celebration is a Christmas Sing-a-Long where students, faculty, and parents gather to sing Christmas carols together. Spring brings many more traditions at Gaines including, March is Reading Month, book fair, field trips, Field Day, Family Fun Nights, a Spring Musical in our Performing Arts Center, Donuts with Dads, and Muffins with Moms. Our culminating event for our 5th graders, before they transition to the middle school, is an overnight field trip in early June to Mackinac Island where they learn about and experience our wonderful Michigan history.

Milestones:

Overall, we are leaders in the district on ELA-English Language Arts and Math achievement scores on our state assessment (formerly MEAP and now M-Step). Gaines Elementary students performed exceeding well on the 2014-15 M-STEP with 57.5% of our students proficient in Math and English Language Arts as compared to an average of 38.9% of students in the other four Swartz Creek Elementary Schools. In Genesee County, 26.9% of students were proficient and state wide, 31.5% of students were proficient compared to our 57.5%. We routinely excel on our local ELA and Math assessments such as DIBELS and STAR, with more students reaching grade level benchmark levels than students in the other four elementary schools. Teachers and support staff at Gaines believe that by working diligently they will ensure that all students learn and grow socially, develop emotionally, and succeed academically. We are extremely proud of these outcomes.

Key Strategies:

Multiple key strategies are used to challenge, motivate, and support our students to achieve their full potential which include our MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support). The behavioral component of MTSS is PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) and the academic component is RtI (Response to Intervention). We believe these 2 support systems together have solidified our consistent success with our

student population. RtI delivers differentiated instruction of our research-based curriculum to students based on the analysis of formative and summative assessments and is explained in detail in Part IV - Instruction. We have universal behavioral expectations that are kid-friendly. C.R.E.E.K. = Commit to learning, Respect others, Everyone is responsible, Everyone is safe, and Kindness counts. Students embrace the concept that these are the behaviors expected of them in the classroom, hallways, playground, and on field trips. In addition, students understand and adhere to our zero tolerance for bullying. Staff members share the responsibility of communicating these expectations to all students in the school, not just those in their own classroom. Students are recognized as CREEK Kid of the Month for practicing responsible behaviors. At the end of each month students who have exhibited positive CREEK traits are given the opportunity to choose a special Super Kid activity. Each month there is an increase in the number of students who earn Super Kid participation. Gaines provides 2 social workers who support the social-emotional needs of students and their families. CICO: Check in-Check out is used for a small group of students who need to be held accountable for their behavior and completion of assignments. They are assigned to an adult who mentors them in the morning before class starts and just before they leave in the afternoon. These strategies keep behavioral issues to a minimum allowing staff and students to focus on building strong character and succeeding academically.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Gaines Elementary teachers are focused on teaching the CCSS - Common Core State Standards through the professional development and research-based core curriculum materials our district provides for us. Teachers also extend and enrich the curriculum for their students using supplementary resources. Instruction is differentiated to adapt to the needs of all students. Students who struggle with grade-level concepts are provided with RtI instruction from a team of teachers and support staff. These students are provided additional opportunities to solidify key concepts and fill the gaps in their learning background. Learning is extended for those who have above grade-level achievement.

English Language Arts - ELA:

Reading instruction is taught through the workshop model which includes a variety of programs such as CAFÉ, Daily 5, Making Meaning, Anita Archer, The 40 Book Challenge, and the MAISA (Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators) reading units. Teachers use a combination of mini-lessons, guided reading/strategy groups, and individualized instruction through conferences to ensure that every reader finds success and acquires the skills and knowledge necessary to move forward. Specifically, our classrooms emphasize the importance of student engagement and active learning that is student-centered through discussions and writing about reading (reading responses) students learn to think critically about the texts they read.

Writing is taught through the Writer's Workshop model using methods from Lucy Calkins and the MAISA writing units. Students are encouraged to become independent writers and develop their talents as they progress through narrative, opinion, and informational writing units. Within each unit, mentor texts are studied as writers become immersed within each style of writing. Through mini-lessons, strategy groups, and individualized instruction, students engage in the writing process. Teachers use benchmark writing pieces and rubrics to help guide student's understanding of expectations at each grade level. Through the use of pre and post on-demand pieces we are able to assess student growth and guide future instruction.

Word work is taught with Fountas and Pinnell Phonics, Words Their Way, and/or Grade Level Spelling depending on the needs of the class and each student. These programs allow staff to meet the needs of every student, as they all lend their self to instructing students at all levels.

Math:

Math instruction is delivered through a math workshop approach along with Math Expressions, a math program aligned with the Common Core State Standards. This program promotes student-generated solutions and multiple strategies to approach mathematical concepts. Students are active learners in the classroom through dialogue and problem solving in pairs and small groups as well as leading large groups in "math talks." Using data collected from pre-assessments, students are placed in flexible and fluid groups based on need and skill level. To differentiate instruction, teachers use ongoing formative assessments to adjust their instruction and student groupings to meet the needs of all students. The specific needs of the over-performing students are met through additional or more complex problem solving and reasoning activities that push their thinking beyond grade-level expectations.

Science:

Our instructional materials for science are developed by FOSS (Full Option Science Systems) and are based on the inquiry philosophy. FOSS is an active learning program which engages students through various inquiry-based explorations. Students are required to think, explore and explain how they formed their understanding of grade-level concepts. Kindergarten through second grade focuses on live science and observations. Third through fifth grade students focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) concepts and activities. Our students demonstrate their knowledge through hands-on activities and real world application.

As our curriculum shifts, we educators are adapting as well. Currently we are at the very beginning stages

of implementing NGSS (The Next Generation Science Standards). As part of our professional development a district wide committee is working on the implementation of these standards. The district also plans on implementing STEM labs into all schools in the district in the near future.

Social Studies:

Our social studies curriculum is taught through the MAISA social studies units. These units comprise four distinct disciplines: history, geography, civics, and economics. The curriculum is a continuum that gradually increases students' content knowledge. To expand students' understanding within each discipline, students engage in discussions and writing that deepen their critical thinking skills, utilize technology, interact with guest speakers, and attend field trips.

In kindergarten through second grade, students begin to see themselves, their families, and their communities as part of a larger geographical space. They use basic maps and globes to study the location of their community relative to other communities. They learn how communities develop, grow, and function to meet the needs and wants of its people. In third through fifth grade, social studies becomes more specific to certain geographical regions and time periods. Third graders focus on the geography, history, economics, and government of Michigan. In fourth grade, students extend their knowledge to study the United States. Fifth graders focus on American history from the Age of Exploration through the American Revolution.

Preschool Program:

Our preschool uses The High Scope Curriculum which is a play based, child-centered curriculum that is specialized to meet the needs of all students. This curriculum focuses on "active participatory learning" in which instructors and students are partners in learning. The High Scope Curriculum encompasses many categories that are the essential core areas of development in preschool children. Those areas are: Approaches to Learning, Social Development, Emotional Development, Physical Development, Health, Language, Literacy, Communication, Mathematics, Creative Arts, Science, Technology, and Social Studies. The Key Developmental Indicators in High Scope directly align with the Common Core State Standards.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Art:

All students are introduced to the visual arts using Discipline Based Art Education practices when attending their weekly 50-minute art class. Different lessons are intended to highlight one or more of the four disciplines, aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production. Students are also introduced to cross curricular lessons blending ELA skills like identifying adjectives and how they modify their noun, with Visual Learning Skills like being able to describe accurately what they are looking at. Students also participated in a community event, creating ceramic art to be donated to the Empty Bowls Fundraiser with profits benefiting the Swartz Creek Food Basket. Student artwork is continuously displayed throughout our school's hallways.

Music:

Music at Gaines is active and hands on. All students attend a weekly 50-minute class where they learn to listen to, participate in, and talk about music. They're introduced to famous composers, music history, music around the world and music throughout the seasons. They discuss how music enters into their world, how it communicates with and through them. They learn about instrument families and how to play several different instruments. Students sing in large and small groups, and sometimes by themselves. They learn and practice pitch, rhythm, beat, diction, posture, breathing, dynamics, timbre, reading music, following a conductor, performing, and good audience manners. The culmination of their musical learning experience is celebrated in the spring with an all school concert at our district's performing arts center.

Physical Education:

All students participate in a 50-minute physical education class once or twice a week. At Gaines we follow the Michigan Physical Education Grade Level Content Expectations. Physical education classes prepare our students for a wide variety of lifetime activities and develop physical abilities. Students learn and participate in physical fitness activities, team and individual sports, and games that are developmentally appropriate for their grade level. Besides health and fitness, physical education teaches cooperation, teamwork, and

leadership skills. In addition to regular classes, Gaines students participate in a variety of extra-curricular physical activities such as snowshoeing, field day, and Jump Rope for Heart. Students also have daily opportunities for structured and unstructured physical activity through recess and classroom “brain breaks.”

Technology:

All students engage in at least 50 minutes of direct instruction from our technology teacher on a weekly basis. In addition to that she spends time in the regular classrooms supporting students and teachers in implementing instructional technology which includes the use of document cameras and Smart-Boards.

Students at Gaines have access to thirty-two laptops that can be used in the classroom, thirty-two desktops in the computer lab, and teachers have at least three or four iPads in each classroom for students to use. Students use computers to research, learn computer science, review academic concepts, learn new academic content, read digital content, communicate and collaborate with peers at other schools, and learn how to navigate and explore resources found on the internet in a safe and responsible manner. Students are currently learning how to create digital evidence of growth in their learning with Google Classroom. Examples of student use include showcasing class projects, building an electronic portfolio of school learning experiences, and working in small groups on presentations to share with others. Student learning in technology focuses on the ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) student standards; 1. Creativity and innovation 2. Communication and collaboration 3. Research and information fluency 4. Critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making 5. Digital citizenship 6. Technology operations and concepts.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Our staff uses the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as a starting point, basing instruction on learning goals that are engaging, interactive and include higher level thinking. Instruction begins with the learning goal and pre-assessment of our students in order to determine each student’s prior knowledge. When delivering instruction, teachers use a wide range of resources which include district-purchased materials, web-based materials, games and manipulatives. Our teaching staff continuously seeks out professional development opportunities that will help them perfect their teaching skills.

When providing instructional approaches and methods for interventions for our under-performing learners, we take a team approach. The collaboration among our principal, paraprofessionals, and teaching staff is the basis of the culture at Gaines Elementary. After assessment data is gathered and analyzed a meeting is held to review this information. At the data meeting the principal, classroom teachers, special education teacher, RtI paraprofessionals, and ancillary staff meet to discuss results and focus on assigning the students to instructional groups with the same learning needs. We refer to these meetings as our building Data Meetings and they are held three times a year after each of our predetermined district testing windows. Intentional instruction for grouping is needed to move our students forward who are below grade level in order to close the instructional gaps. Classroom teachers, paraprofessional, and the special education teacher group children based on their specific needs, determine the program to be used to address their areas of deficit and create targeted intervention (RtI) groups to which they provide direct instruction.

The programs that are used in our RtI room have been research-based and scientifically proven to bring students to grade level achievement in reading. All of the paraprofessionals and teaching staff who use the various programs have been trained by certified district teaching personnel with expertise and knowledge of the program. Additionally, paraprofessionals are retrained each year to refresh their knowledge of the program. Beyond the extensive training, the special education teacher observes and does fidelity checking of the programs to make sure that they are being implemented as intended. Our students that are achieving at grade level or higher are given enrichment opportunities to meet their individual needs as well.

The RtI program runs daily in 30-minute increments. Those students who through testing are considered well below grade level are given an additional 30-minute lesson in reading, for a total of 60 minutes a day, five days a week. Besides RtI reading, the RtI staff include push-in and pull-out mathematics support. The groupings of students who need support change as needed based on teacher recommendation. This type of

ongoing collaboration and sharing of best teaching practices has been the basis of our continued success in moving our students forward.

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

At Gaines Elementary School, a wide range of assessments are given to each of our students in reading, mathematics and writing. The goal of the district assessments is to help identify those students who are reaching and exceeding grade-level understanding and to target and differentiate instruction for those students who need additional instruction so they may reach their greatest learning potential.

First, all children are given the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment by a group of trained paraprofessionals and special education teaching staff. The results of this assessment are used as a screener and color-coded to indicate whether a student is Well Below, Below, or At/Above Grade Level. Additionally, each general education teacher individually evaluates their students' reading ability using the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment). The STAR (Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading) is also given in both reading and mathematics. In writing, pre and post assessments are given to focus teacher lessons when teaching. The information from these various assessments is compiled and analyzed giving a full and accurate picture of each of our student's academic needs.

Our students who have an achievement gap of 10 percentage points or higher receive small group or one-on-one tutoring by trained instructors. The goal for every student is to achieve at least one year's growth. Our targeted instruction includes push-in and pull-out support, which is offered 30-60 minutes a day, five days a week. Our students who are high performing are given enrichment opportunities in their classroom provided by the general education teacher.

When determining whether these additional programs are meeting the needs of our at-risk students, periodic progress monitoring with DIBELS and STAR is conducted weekly or bi-monthly. Students take ownership of their progress and are motivated to work hard when they are able to watch their own progress monitoring goal lines continue to rise.

As long as our students continue to make progress toward the benchmark goal, the prescribed method of instruction continues. If after a predetermined amount of time, we are not getting results from the interventions; grade-level meetings are conducted to determine the next course of action. Through the RtI practice, students move in and out of groups when needed. All of the interventions and instructional practices used with a student are documented on the DIBELS and STAR online record-keeping programs.

Our parents are notified and information is shared with them a number of ways during the school year. At parent-teacher conferences, teachers share and celebrate every student's growth and learning and each parent is given copies that show their child's growth on the DIBELS and STAR progress monitoring tests. Parents are also notified by mail of their child's M-Step scores and every parent has complete access to our Parental Portal. Our school uses standards-based grading for report card marking and we include a parent guide to standards-based grading on our website. Our stakeholders can also access information regarding our student achievement from our Annual Report and the MI School Data Portal.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Families who attend Gaines Elementary reference the strong family feeling that can be felt throughout the school. One of the benefits of the intimate size of our school is the relationships created between staff and students. Many of our staff members live in or have families that live in our attendance area. It is common to see staff members at our students' extra-curricular events which add to our family like atmosphere. We pride ourselves on getting to know our students personally in order to understand and support them through the ups and downs during their time with us.

Gaines Elementary uses a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) system to recognize and reinforce positive behaviors. Students earn CREEK (acronym) cards during the school day. Some of the incentives we have used to recognize the students who earn CREEK cards include the opportunity to receive a good citizen certificate during our Commit to learning, Respect others, Everyone is responsible, Everyone is safe, and Kindness (CREEK) show that is broadcasted to every classroom, a special pizza lunch for earning CREEK cards on the playground and in the lunchroom, classroom treasure boxes, extra privileges, and the opportunity to participate in Super Kid Friday (children who are demonstrating CREEK behaviors watch a movie, have game day, or other fun activity). We receive many compliments from guest teachers and visitors regarding our kind and respectful students.

Our principal is very supportive of all the effort the staff puts into making sure our students have their academic, social, and emotional needs met. She may send out an uplifting email, put on a staff luncheon, or simply stop in and visit with us or share positive feedback on something teachers or students have done. She spends time in the cafeteria interacting with the students and walks through the classrooms to keep a pulse on how things are going.

Our staff members work well together and truly enjoy working and spending time together. We collaborate on cross-grade learning opportunities. Teachers have common planning time to work with grade level partners on lesson plans. Specials teachers join forces with classroom teachers to create and co-teach core standard lessons. We celebrate personal milestones with birthday potlucks and baby (and grand-baby) showers. A monthly night out is arranged so that staff members can get together outside of the school setting to socialize, either at a local restaurant or a staff member's home. A strong network of support exists among the staff.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The members of Gaines Elementary are closely connected. Each staff member, student, family member, and community member plays a significant role in the success of Gaines. The small-town atmosphere fosters relationships that are genuine and long-lasting. Here at Gaines, engaging families and community members is of utmost importance.

Parent volunteers and community members are welcomed in the halls and classrooms of Gaines on a daily basis. Many parents choose to volunteer their time to show their support and involvement in their child's education. These individuals are also welcomed to come along on field trips and partake in class celebrations. Numerous parents and community members have volunteered to appear as mystery readers on Fridays or to help with the after school programs.

Gaines has many programs and special events that nurture strong family relationships. Some of these events include Donuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom, Family Fun Night, Movie Nights, Daddy-Daughter Dance, etc. These special events are intended to help family members connect with their child. At Gaines, we believe that students need and desire a strong family support system. These special events provide a fun experience to build and strengthen these relationships. These events also provide the opportunity for the staff to interact with the students and family members outside of the classroom setting. The students enjoy interacting with their teachers and leaders in more relaxed settings. These experiences allow the staff

members to display their genuine interest and care for the students as individuals.

On-going communication is vital to the success and positive climate of Gaines. Parents are able to access their child's records and keep an eye on their progress through our online Parent Portal. This access to real time information allows concerns and misconceptions to be addressed in a timely manner. School newsletters are also sent to families on a weekly basis. These newsletters include any and all important information, accomplishments, events, etc. The Creek Chronicle is a district newspaper that features articles about Gaines in every issue. Teachers use social media such as, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Remind, and Bloomz to stay connected with parents. The parents enjoy seeing pictures of their children working, presenting, and interacting. These snapshots into the classroom are priceless to countless parents.

Gaines is been blessed with an extremely active Parent-Teacher-Organization. The Gaines PTO provides ongoing support for the staff and students. The PTO organizes fundraisers, plans student and family events, funds educational assemblies and provides staff luncheons and dinners during parent-teacher conferences and Teacher Appreciation Week. Recently, the PTO created the Flint Community Water Crisis Fundraiser. Our small school raised over \$1,200 in just one week!

3. Professional Development:

One of the most powerful professional development opportunities we have taken part in over the past few years is "Teacher Labs". This is an opportunity for teachers to learn from each other and grow together as professionals. A host teacher allows a small group of teachers to observe a lesson in their classroom. There is a pre-observation conference in which teachers are informed of the lesson plans and goals. After the observation, the host teacher meets with the observers to receive positive and constructive feedback. Teacher Labs are used across all grade levels and are proving to be valuable and meaningful experiences as all teachers attempt to fine tune his/her practice. Last year, Teacher Labs were focused on math instruction as we had recently adopted a new core math program (Math Expressions). This year, our Teacher Labs shift focus to writing instruction. Based on formative and summative assessments, many teachers noticed a general need to strengthen our writing instruction.

The teaching staff participates in district wide professional development activities throughout the school year that come in a variety of formats. There are professional speakers, Ed-camp style workshops designed to focus on individual interests and needs, and monthly early release days set aside to address issues that arise throughout the school year. Staff members are also actively involved in weekly Twitter chats (COLchat) that link them to other professional educators across the country. In addition, all new teachers participate in "New Dragon" training. This is a program designed to help new teachers adjust and reflect with one another throughout their first year of teaching. Additionally, we have also had multiple teachers in our building take part in SWCRK21, which is a professional development group geared towards enhancing teacher's instruction and student learning through the use of technology and other 21st century tools. These teachers then share their learning with the rest of the building so they could also enhance their own instruction and student learning through the use of technology.

Our staff has a member on each of the ELA and math leadership programs through our county's intermediate school district. These staff members attend workshops throughout the school year that are designed to keep them up-to-date on the most recent and effective practices in ELA and math. Information, online resources, and upcoming professional development opportunities that are gathered at these workshops are shared with the entire staff through email and/or staff meetings. On top of the leadership programs provided by the county, most of the staff has also been formally trained in Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI) training through the intermediate school district. This is a program designed to help prevent crisis situations as well as to keep all students and staff safe during a crisis situation.

On top of professional development opportunities within the district and county, several teachers within our school have or are currently seeking further degrees from accredited colleges and universities. These courses are taken outside of the teaching day by dedicated professionals and lifelong learners who want to continue to improve their practice.

4. School Leadership:

At Gaines Elementary there is a sense of shared school leadership centered on the staff's belief in our ability to equip our students with the skills they need to become productive members in society who are socially, emotionally and academically successful.

Our building manifests itself through unified leadership roles that involve all staff members. Our principal's role is that of guidance and leadership. She serves as the main facilitator and continues to provide the vision for our school. The principal honors and respects the devotion to student success that the entire staff holds near and dear. She strives to support teacher delivery of effective instruction by removing distractions and providing them with the resources and professional development needed to continuously improve their practice. Teacher leadership is encouraged. The principal has an open door policy, willing to meet with teachers, support staff, parents and students whenever possible. Ongoing communication is conducted through face-to-face meetings, weekly staff bulletins, e-newsletters, emails, and phone calls.

Teacher leadership is strong in curriculum and student-related programs. Four of our classroom teachers each have a leadership role in one of the four key curricular areas. They attend monthly county wide meetings and relay information back to the staff. We have teachers and our school secretary who assist in leading student groups such as Student Council and Safety Patrol. Teachers at Gaines represent our school on district committees such as; MTSS, Curriculum Council, Technology Committee-SWCRK21, and Crisis Team.

Our school MTSS Team also serves as our School Improvement Team and is led by our special education teacher and the principal. The MTSS team involves the majority of our teaching staff, our school social worker, and parents. The MTSS team oversees the building needs and is consistently reevaluating the needs of our students regarding school-wide goals and to ensure that every student is provided with the support they need to be successful.

Our data meetings are led by teachers and qualified support staff. Using current assessment data these individuals determine the type of intervention needed for each student and also work with the principal on classroom placement.

The students who serve on the Student Council are guided by staff but encouraged to make decisions as a group in order to teach them about being members of our society and the important role that they will one day play. Our fourth and fifth grade students participate in our Safety Patrol Program and are identified as leaders in our building. They perform safety patrol procedures to help our walkers get to and from school safely each day. Our Younger Buddies Program involves the fourth and third grade students being both leaders and role-models to our younger students. Our students also help each morning with the pledge and announcements and daily flag raising. Students assist with weekly bake sales that involve marketing and the handling of money.

We also have strong leadership in our PTO-Parent-Teacher Organization. Parents enjoy serving as officers on PTO and leading fundraising events and special activities for our students. They have a cadre of volunteers who are willing to assist any way they can, at any time.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

We believe at Gaines Elementary that our single most important indicator of success is undoubtedly our personal and school wide commitment to data-driven, differentiated instruction. Our staff sets high expectations for all learners while acknowledging that not all children learn in the same manner or with the same method. Teachers work collaboratively to individualize instruction and perfect researched-based practices to provide the highest level of focused instruction to our students. Our process is explained throughout this document. Below is a brief recap.

Under the umbrella of the MTSS-Multi-Tiered System of Support model we have an academic support structure called RtI-Response to Intervention and a behavioral support structure called PBIS-Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. This is a problem-solving model that helps students reach their academic potential.

RtI: Using universal formative and summative assessments, student achievement is measured at least three times per year. Following each assessment window, grade level data meetings are held. During these meetings assessment data and anecdotal notes from teachers are discussed and evaluated to determine the area of skill development needed for each child to progress to the next level. Students are grouped based on similar needs. Each group is prescribed an intervention tool, assigned to a staff member and a schedule is created for all groups to receive 30-60 minutes per day of intensive intervention. Progress monitoring is administered and adjustments in instruction are made if and when needed. Throughout the process we work diligently to maximize our human and material resources for the benefit of our students.

PBIS: Behavioral expectations are taught just as an academic subject would be. Our school focuses on five expectations that are positively stated and easy to remember. In other words, rather than telling students what not to do, we focus on the preferred behaviors. C.R.E.E.K. is the acronym for these expectations which are described in Part III of this document under Key Strategies. The program is also described in Part V under School Climate and Culture.

The Gaines staff and students have been faced with many challenges in the past few years. Declining enrollment across the district and county, the need for split classrooms (one teacher teaching two different grade level curriculums), and the potential threat of our school closing for financial reasons. Despite these challenges, the staff at Gaines continue to give everything they have to maintaining a positive, productive learning environment for their students and these students continue to come out on top with assessment scores. This is evidence of the resiliency and tenacity of our staff when it comes to putting student achievement first and foremost.