

**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) [X] Title I    [ ] Charter    [ ] Magnet    [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Wade Pilloud

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

Official School Name Halmstad Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 565 East South Avenue

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

City Chippewa Falls    State WI    Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 54729-3402

County Chippewa County

Telephone (715) 726-2415    Fax (715) 720-3756

Web site/URL http://cfsd.chipfalls.k12.wi.us/    E-mail pillouwh@chipfalls.org

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook Page \_\_\_\_\_ 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.

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

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Heidi Taylor-Eliopolous    E-mail taylorhe@chipfalls.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Chippewa Falls Area Unified    Tel. (715) 726-2417

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 Mr. Gerald Smith  
(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

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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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 2 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 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	37	77
1	26	34	60
2	36	32	68
3	36	43	79
4	36	22	58
5	35	31	66
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>	209	199	408

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 5 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 87 % 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: 10%

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	21
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	41
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	409
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.100
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Hmong, Mandarin Chinese, Macedonian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 48 %  
Total number students who qualify: 197

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
42 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
- 2 Mental Retardation
- 11 Multiple Disabilities
- 1 Orthopedic Impairment
- 3 Other Health Impaired
- 8 Specific Learning Disability
- 29 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 3 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:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	18
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 23:1

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%	96%	96%	96%	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.

<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

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.

With collaboration and support from all parties, we challenge and empower students to reach their maximum potential in a safe and respectful environment.

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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Halmstad Elementary is located in the beautiful Chippewa Valley in the town of Chippewa Falls. Built in 1971, it is the nest of 413 Mighty Hawks. We are a school-wide Title I school with 48% of students free/reduced lunch rate and have three sections each of grades kindergarten through fifth. Halmstad is the most diverse elementary school in the district because we house the only English Language Learners (ELL) program at the elementary level. We believe that in order to prepare our students to be college and career ready, we must live the three “R’s”; Rigor, Relevance and Relationships.

Building relationships is the keystone of our success. We believe that in order to get students motivated about their learning, we must first build a relationship with them and show each and every one of them that we care about them and their learning. One of the things we do to promote this is to send out customized postcards to students and families. Along with a short note stating a positive comment about the student, the handwritten postcard connects the school with the household in ways an email cannot compete. There is something special about getting something in the mail, even in this age of technology. Teachers also contact all families with at least three phone calls every year to keep families informed of school happenings and to update them on their child’s education.

We have earned the Positive Behavior, Intervention and Support (PBIS) School of Distinction for two years in a row in part because of relationships, and in part because of a well implemented program. A fine example is when we contacted a therapy dog handler to come into school with his dog to work with students on a volunteer basis. “Jack” reads with students, helps with their math, or just gets petted; but he is always kind and non-judgmental. This has been a great PBIS reward for students as well as some that need a friend. Halmstad Elementary is one of only a handful of schools in the state that has a functioning tier III PBIS system in place. Tier III works with the entire family to provide types of wrap-around services along with including agencies outside of the district to help assist the whole child.

The Building Leadership Team discovered we were not immune to summer regression, a decline in student academics between spring and fall. We set out to combat this regression and created the Summer Learning Challenge. Starting with a spring family picnic, we challenged students to read, do math, exercise and activities in the arts. We provided a method for them to keep track of their activities over the summer and turned back in the fall. Students completing the challenge are put into a drawing of like-minded prizes; educational games, and books, etc. Students participating, but not completing the challenge, are given credits to buy books through a book order. A study of the data concluded that students completing the challenge were less likely to regress. Many even grew over the summer. This entire program was made possible by teacher leaders using their own time. The challenge was a direct result of data analysis. It was born out of a discussion of what we could do to prevent the regression and help students remain academically involved when not in school.

For the past two years, Halmstad has kicked off the school year in dramatic fashion. In an effort to get students and families excited about returning to school from summer break, we instituted themes. The first year was a pirate theme. The first day, staff dressed as pirates, the school was decorated with sailing ship themes, a treasure map was given out to help navigate to each destination with in the building, and the principal went all out and dressed as Blackbeard the pirate. Then, throughout the year, the pirate theme continued. Family reading nights were about pirates, both fictional and non-fictional. Certain meals revolved around it, assemblies and celebrations also fed off the excitement. While it was a lot of work, we saw how excited and engaged the students were so we decided to continue with a theme the following year, but changed it into a superhero theme. Both years were covered local media and helped generate the excitement. While no decision has been made yet for next year, students are already asking and giving suggestions about what we should do. This type of engagement was exactly what we were shooting for; having students eager for school and their learning.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

Halmstad Elementary is successful due to highly effective teachers collaborating and instructing using curriculum that is best practice and research based. At the district level Wisconsin Academic Standards drive curriculum development. At Halmstad we continually collaborate to enhance instruction to best connect the selected quality curriculum to our children's needs and increase student achievement.

Effectively implementing researched based curriculum at Halmstad is done through methods such as Gradual Release of Responsibility; "I do, we do, they do." First students receive effective modeling. Then it is practiced as a class with the teacher, next in small groups, after that with a partner and finally performed individually. It is very important that learning targets are clear to students so they know what the expectations are.

Our framework focuses on intense early instruction at the primary grades in order to secure a solid foundation for students to grow as they move into the upper levels. Key skills include phonemic awareness, phonics, word work, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. In addition to the skills it is essential to have consistency in our curriculum from one grade level to the next. For example, several years ago many of our staff members were trained in guided reading and word work skills to help increase reading achievement. Kindergarten specifically implemented the Beverly Tyler's 26 Lessons. First and second grades followed with the word work that builds upon those phonetic lessons. Being dedicated to this consistency has proven to be extremely successful. With this phonemic awareness and phonetic base, students are stronger readers as they move into the higher grades.

The Halmstad balanced literacy program includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. We believe that a 90-minute block of uninterrupted reading is extremely important. Whole group reading instruction focuses on comprehension strategies, word building skills and fluency. During guided reading, students are specifically instructed in small groups at each student's reading and word work level. High level informational and narrative text and flexible grouping drives the Halmstad guided reading structure. Writing instruction is implemented around the Six Traits of Writing language and delivered through Houghton Mifflin, Writer's Workshop and Lucy Calkin's frameworks. Writing focuses on narrative, informational, and opinion and response to literature. Students who need additional literacy support work with Title I teachers for another 30-minute time block in a small group situation, and/or with classroom teachers during intervention block. When further help is required, students receive one-to-one specifically designed instruction. Often this instruction is short, but is given daily and has proven to be highly effective. The most important factor to keeping this whole instructional framework functioning effectively in a fluid manner is constant communication between staff about students.

Halmstad uses a balanced math program. The first step of the program reinforces prior learning and connects to the concept being taught in the main part of the lesson. Students build strategies and skills by completing problems and then conferencing with other students about their answers. Then as a class, strategies are discussed and students become the teachers to each other. Every ten days a short assessment is given. Based on the results, a new review is developed to support areas students need more practice with and to introduce new concepts. The second step is concept development. In developing the math concepts students use manipulatives, see quality modeling and have an opportunity to practice a concept in teams before they perform knowledge of the concept independently. The next step is problem solving where students are applying the learned concepts to a problem-solving situation. Students begin working independently to solve the problem and then compare answers cooperatively to come up with their answer. This reinforces students' teaching and learning from each other. Fourth is mastery of math facts. This piece is about teaching students sophisticated strategies to solve facts that go beyond memorization and counting techniques. The last step of the balanced math program is common assessments. The assessments are critical to the program in that it evaluates the effectiveness of instruction, and targets where adjustments need to be made to improve student achievement. Continual monitoring and checking of students' conceptual knowledge once again guides team planning, effective instruction and ultimate student learning and success.

The FOSS Science program is used at Halmstad along with units designed in both science and social studies that are based on grade level standards. These units are highly supported and developed in reading through quality literature and in writing by responding to literature through writing.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Halmstad Elementary, all students from kindergarten through fifth grade receive instruction in music, art, or physical education every three days for forty minutes. The music teacher helps support students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge by reinforcing many of the same areas they learn about in their own classrooms. Whenever they begin learning a new song, they are given cultural information about the song such as what country it is from, what language, where that area is on the map, and the population of that area. This information reinforces many concepts the students learn about in Social Studies. Many of the songs used with the younger students (kindergarten through second grade) are rhyming songs. This ties into their English/Language Arts (ELA) content. Another area of ELA reinforced is the idea of poetic structure or phrase structure. Students analyze which phrases in the song are similar and which ones are different. Learning to sing and perform rhythmically is a great reinforcement for the concept of reading fluency. Music must have a flow to it, just as students are taught to read fluently without starts and stops.

Art is an important subject for students at Halmstad Elementary because it challenges them to learn to problem-solve, be creative, try new things, and gain confidence and encourages them to use all parts of their brain instead of only tapping into the logical side of learning. Art history, which is incorporated into many units and lessons, is an extremely influential part of our world's history and teaches students about the world around them in a visual way. Finally, and most significantly, art is a place where fun is allowed to happen. This fun fosters a love of learning extending beyond their elementary years. Students in fourth grade have the opportunity to visit The Minneapolis Institute of Art and Sculpture Garden in spring to enhance their art history education. In addition, real life art occurs when selected students can choose to be part of an all-district art show at a local popular cultural center where students experience displaying and viewing art.

Technology plays an intricate role in the achievement level of the students at Halmstad. It is incorporated into lessons on a daily basis through the use of Smartboards, iPads, Chromebooks and Smart Response systems. We have a 3:1 ratio of students to devices, which allows students to be confident and fluent users. This also allows for efficient communication between students and teachers by providing immediate feedback.

Once a week students visit the library to select leisure reading materials. This in turn creates a love for reading and greatly impacts reading skills. Students also attend library class each week to improve their 21st century skills. By becoming better users of information and technology students enhance their readiness for learning. Currently, the library media center is creating makerspace opportunities, which allows students to be exposed to inquiry based projects, be creative, innovative, and in charge of their own learning. By supporting the love of reading, it improves their information and technology literacy skills and exploring makerspace projects, we are assisting students to obtain the district mission of creating lifelong learners.

In physical education, our students are instructed with a curriculum that provides experiences that develop positive attitudes toward wellness and contribute to include students becoming lifetime participants of physical activity. A few special activities at Halmstad are an intra-district volleyball tournament, a Track and Field Day, as well as a school-wide jump rope contest that sends some students to the "World's Speed Rope Jump Contest" in a neighboring city. We also have the "Mileage Club" at recess, where our students can walk or jog around a quarter mile course and keep track of their miles throughout the year. Being active at recess allows students to be more focused when they are in the classroom. Halmstad was recognized with the State School Health Award in 2015 for achievement in student wellness.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Halmstad has been following the Response to Intervention (RtI) Framework for several years. Our expectation is that 80% or more of all students perform proficiently at the universal instruction level with differentiation or show one or more year's academic growth each school year. At the universal tier I level, we continually evaluate and strengthen core instruction. Teachers use a variety of approaches, structures and groupings to accommodate our diverse learners and their learning styles. Tier II and tier III instructional interventions establish a coordinated continuum of targeted, specific support. These interventions reinforce, extend, and intensify skills and strategies using high quality researched best practices aligned to each student's unique needs. Progress monitoring takes place to validate instruction, determine growth, achievement and needs.

Halmstad is committed to early intervention. This is true both in academic and behavior areas. We work diligently to make sure students experience the right support to ensure achievement. Early intervention applies to students across grade levels. Through collaboration and data review, staff analyze student academic and behavior issues, then address student needs. We strive to form cohesive, fluid intervention groups to enhance learning.

Our most powerful early intervention is Beverly Tyler's 26 Lessons which is used at the beginning of kindergarten. In the 26 Lessons, all letter names and sounds are studied and mastered. Students learn to write using correct formation and to segment and blend using letter sounds. Students work in groups no larger than five with trained staff. Student results are amazing. Following the 26 Lessons most students are ready for guided reading groups while a few require a quick review or repeat of the lesson.

SOAR means Student Opportunities Are Rising. Across all grade levels, thirty minutes of each school day is devoted to SOAR. Based on data and observation, students are placed in one of many possible interventions or enrichments; from providing more time and practice to offering advanced learning opportunities.

Interventions provided by Halmstad's trained staff are available for kindergarten through fifth grade include Guided Reading, Read Naturally, Leveled Literacy Intervention, Six Minute Solution, Reading Mastery, and Peer Assisted Learning. Students may also meet with trained staff for just a few minutes each day for practice on sight words, vocabulary, re-reading, writing, homework completion, and/or organization. Kindergarten through second grade also have the option of Sound Partners Intervention.

Within our RtI tiers, guided reading is a core part of literacy instruction. It is used in all grades including kindergarten. Guided reading involves the use of many best practices including small grouping, reading at one's own reading level, re-reading, sequential word work that is applied to context, instant feedback from the teacher, language and communication skill development through discussion.

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

Within Halmstad Elementary, teachers use formative, summative, and diagnostic assessments to help guide instruction within their class. Three times a year, teachers evaluate student success using AIMSweb, Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, and PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screenings K-2). This data is used to determine starting points at the beginning of the school year and monitor the success of instruction throughout the year. This information is shared with parents during parent/teacher conferences held in the fall and spring, so parents can also view the progress of their child. Along with conferences, report cards are sent out three times a year, so parents can see their student's success connected to Wisconsin Academic Standards.

The above mentioned assessments help keep teachers on track with the success of their classroom instruction, but the most valuable assessment is the formative assessments that occur throughout the day to help guide student success of grasping concepts taught. Teachers have created common formative assessments in math connected to the state standards at each grade level. This data is then used within their collaboration meetings to guide instruction, provide student differentiation, and enrichment. Teachers also use exit slips and observations to track success.

Halmstad's Student Success Team (SST) meets monthly with each grade level to analyze data and make decisions concerning student needs including placement of students in an intervention and what that intervention should be. As with all of our intervention and student decisions, data comes from sources such as AIMSweb, SRI, PALS, Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark, and others. Anecdotal observations, summative and formative assessments, and pre/post assessments are also considered in decision making. The SST team is comprised of classroom teachers, Title I teachers, principal, interventionist, paraprofessionals, instructional assistants, English Language Learners and Special Education teachers, school psychologist and school counselor. Continuous collaboration occurs in regularly scheduled grade level meetings, or department meeting and incidentally as needed.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Starting the first day of school we engage our students by creating a schoolwide theme such as pirate or superhero that carries on throughout the year. Staff make it a priority to build relationships with students and to make them feel like they are an important part of our school community. Through the strong relationships, staff also find ways to make learning meaningful and relevant which leads to an engaged, hard-working, and focused environment. Students are reminded daily of their purpose and to do their best by reciting a school pledge. Additionally, students are active members and play a key role in our daily news program, recycling team, Royal Credit Union (RCU) banking team, safety patrol, flag raisers, PBIS helpers, student council, and morning classroom helpers. The partnership between staff and students make Halmstad a place you want to be at every day!

Creating a culture of respect, responsibility, and safety is something Halmstad prides itself on. Using the PBIS system, students and staff are aware of expectations and take pride knowing and exhibiting these behaviors. These expectations are modeled, practiced, and rewarded throughout the school year. When working towards a school goal, Halmstad students talk about the goal regularly in their classroom meetings, and are reminded through community building activities and the school news. Additionally, we use the Second Step curriculum to reinforce skills, mentors to build additional relationships, small group targeted lessons to support social and emotional growth, student council to enhance leadership skills, and class of the week to honor positive growth. With social and behavioral skills in line, teachers can focus on academic supports such as an intervention and enrichment block and goal-setting.

Halmstad has a collaborative leadership culture. Staff regularly share strategies during staff meetings, lead committees, and play an active role interviewing new staff. The opinions of staff members are heard and valued through monthly grade level rounding meetings, staff meetings, and surveys. The principal's friendly attitude and open door policy make it easy to communicate. Staff know that the principal will do whatever it takes to support them whether it be finding funds to buy equipment or changing something based on the feedback he has received. In addition, there are variety of ways staff members can be recognized such as positive postcards from the principal, an anonymous motivational notebook passed among staff members, and a Hawk Feather that highlights something exceptional a staff member is doing. Last year a post award, and this year a cape award, was passed along week to week to staff members who are going above and beyond. This is shared in front of the whole staff and is an amazing way to hear what staff are doing to make Halmstad the best elementary school.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Every member of our community plays a valued role in the education and success of our students. This statement is one of five core values in our school district. At Halmstad Elementary we take this value to heart and strive to connect and engage our school to students, families and the community. We believe when parents engage in school, students achieve more, have fewer academic problems and are more likely to graduate from high school. We also believe our community has many assets to share with the schools and will support student success when they are invested in our schools. Three foster grandparents are part of each day, actively participating in student's education, and creating trusting relationships. Twenty mentors meet weekly with their student in a caring, supportive relationship.

From the start of the school year through the end, parents receive positive feedback about their children. Staff connect with families through postcards, notes, and emails all year, and three times each year, every family receives a positive phone call about their child. This gives parents an opportunity to ask any questions they may have about their child's learning.

To build a strong community, the first day of school is picture day and an open house for families. Our parent-teacher organization (PTO) hosts a welcome back picnic a few weeks after school begins. Mid-year, a multi-cultural potluck to share in the foods and traditions of our varied cultures occurs. Supported by

Title I and PTO, evening family events focus on each grade level with time to eat together, receive a free book, and share learning ideas. The school year ends with the Summer Learning Challenge Picnic. Through the Summer Learning Challenge, students and families track reading, math, fitness and arts during the summer. The picnic is attended by over half of our students and their families. The public library, RCU, the YMCA, and others partner with our staff to share fun ways to meet the challenge.

Growing leadership skills through performances, service, and support increases self-confidence and builds intrinsic motivation and self-worth. Many students have their artwork or school projects on display at the Northern Wisconsin State Fair each summer. Fourth grade students lead their learning conference by sharing their goals, academic strengths, sparks and career interests with parents and the school counselor. Older students interview and are hired as tellers and marketers in our school site RCU which is open weekly.

The purpose of our student council is to celebrate school pride and connect us with our community. A penny war raises funds so student council members can shop for several families to make the holidays better. Hawk Week is named after our mascot and is celebrated annually with a family involvement project and fundraising to support an actual adopted hawk, Firetail, that resides at the local zoo. Food drives, a pop top contest against a neighboring school to support Ronald McDonald House, letters to veterans and valentines for nursing homes are a sample of building character and empathy by helping others.

### 3. Professional Development:

Halmstad Elementary provides ongoing and targeted professional development (PD) opportunities for teachers, administration, and paraprofessionals. All PD is directly aimed at supporting our district's strategic plan for student achievement. Areas of need are identified through staff surveys and feedback given during staff and committee meetings.

PD is provided by highly trained and qualified professionals during monthly district-wide early release afternoons, staff meetings, and during the summer months. Our instructional coaches model effective teaching strategies and provide feedback and support as we review data relating to our student learning objectives and professional practice goals. Reading specialists provide PD in order to ensure consistency and growth for all students through the use of the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Systems and Leveled Literacy Intervention Systems. Our gifted and talented coordinator offers regular quick classes to share opportunities and interventions for advanced learners. The technology coaches and library media specialists provide PD to keep all staff up to date with technology training for Halmstad's SMARTBoards, Chromebooks, and iPads. This technology enhances classroom instruction and prepares our students for their future education and careers.

All teaching staff have received training on creating and utilizing common formative assessments (CFAs) and on the implementation of a balanced math curriculum. CFAs are an important component of balanced math which includes daily math review, mental math, fact strategies, building conceptual understandings, and problem solving. Through our PD with the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle we are creating SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Result-oriented, and Timeline) goals, reviewing data, and communicating more effectively with staff, students, and parents. We have been able to implement these programs at a school-wide level.

Outside of building and district PD, we are fortunate to have a partnership with the area's Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA). This has allowed staff to receive PD from outside experts and speakers that would not have been otherwise possible such as a fact fluency camp with John San Giovanni and math training with Greg Tang.

With the help of the Building Leadership Team and our administrator, book studies have been initiated to open dialogues on topics such as poverty, brain based research, and using highly effective teaching strategies. Halmstad fosters an environment of shared learning. Staff are encouraged to network and share effective strategies in our staff workroom and during meetings. We are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to increase our students' achievement.

#### 4. School Leadership:

High expectations are set for everyone, including administration at Halmstad Elementary. All leaders are expected to lead by example, modeling servant leadership, and helping out from everything to serving lunch, bus duty, or cleaning up spills. We believe that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and we accomplish so much more by working together. It is expected that all decisions will be student centered and to always do what is best for students, without reservation.

The building principal is visible throughout the school and maintains an open door policy. The principal schedules meetings to meet with each grade level individually to ensure their voices are heard and they have everything they need to be successful. He models a positive, “can-do” attitude that encourages staff and students to do their best and take risks of trying something new and making the school a better place for everyone.

We believe in the philosophy that all staff are leaders when leadership is defined as influencing others to follow towards a common goal. Collaborative leadership and shared decision making teams are seen throughout the building. Teachers and staff chair most teams and committees such as data team meetings, student success teams, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) tier I, II, III teams, and many others. Staff meetings often have teachers sharing ideas or best practices with others or leading book study sessions; guiding each other with a shared understanding of doing what is best for students. In fact, this National Blue Ribbon Schools Award application was completed by staff to ensure a variety of perspectives were given and to provide an opportunity for staff to participate in the event and gain experience from completing the application. Ten different teachers directly contributed by personally writing responses, and several others assisted by providing information, proofing, and editing.

We are always looking to increase our leadership density. This is passed along to students as well. Students are encouraged to join student council, safety patrol, produce a morning news program, recycling team, and be morning helpers for teachers in their classrooms before school. We build leaders and as evidence our Safety Patrol Advisor was named State Safety Patrol Advisor of the Year in 2015, and a student was named State Safety Patroller of the Year in 2014. The school counselor is currently creating a student program to create a student ambassador program at Halmstad. This will provide even greater opportunities for our students to learn leadership and practice it while attending school.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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We have seen success in many areas, and do so many things it is hard to pinpoint one practice alone that determines our progress. Staff collaboration is a very important piece that we have embraced. Along with collaboration comes data gathering and using data to base our decisions when creating a strategy to instruct students. However, the single practice that makes Halmstad Elementary so successful is holding all students accountable for their learning and behavior.

We do not let the students use the excuses of poverty, disability, or life situation to hold them back. We truly believe all students are able to achieve and we hold them accountable based on that belief. Not all students learn the same way or at the same rate, but we help each student achieve his or her personal best and help them to believe in themselves so they are able to succeed. Every adult in the building takes ownership of our students and we hold every one of them to high standards. This culture of high expectations and accountability pertains to staff as well. We all are expected to do our best every single day; our kids deserve nothing less.

After staff form relationships with their students, and get to know what they are capable of, students are pushed outside of their comfort zone and challenged to produce work that requires high order thinking skills. For example, if a student turns in work that is below their capabilities, the teacher will return it to them for improvements with feedback on what they need to do to improve their work. After this happens a few times, students understand there is no easy way out and create habits of doing their best every time. The same goes for behaviors. We expect our students to adhere to the school rules and monitor low level behaviors. Using the Broken Window Theory of watching for low level behaviors keeps more serious behaviors in check; the results are we have very few discipline behaviors at Halmstad. This in turn allows us to focus more on academic achievement and less on behavior.