

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Heidi Stricker

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

Official School Name Marengo Valley Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 62408 State Highway 112

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

City Ashland State WI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 54806-4128

County Ashland County

Telephone (715) 278-3286 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.ashland.k12.wi.us/ E-mail hstricker@sdak12.net

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*Mr. Keith Hilts E-mail khilts@sdak12.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name School District of Ashland Tel. (715) 681-7080

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. Jessica Pergolski
(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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 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	16	11	27
1	18	16	34
2	21	14	35
3	21	14	35
4	9	16	25
5	19	12	31
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	104	83	187

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 99 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 2%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	4
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	192
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.021
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 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: 77 %
Total number students who qualify: 142

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
14 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.

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

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	11
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	4
Paraprofessionals	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 17:1

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%	95%	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. 2004

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

The mission of Marengo Valley Elementary School is to provide a positive learner-centered environment where all students will be challenged to reach their academic potential. We will create an environment that also fosters students' sense of well-being and self esteem.

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

Marengo Valley School began its roots in the very center of the community. In 1955, three old and obsolete rural schools were consolidated into one new modern school. When the planners were trying to determine a location for the new school, they decided on the exact center of Marengo Valley and put an “X” on the spot. Today, 61 years later, our school continues to be the heart of the community. The legacy of Marengo Valley School lives on.

This unique little country school is located 12 miles south of Ashland, Wisconsin where the community members of Marengo Valley have always valued family, faith, and school. We are a K-5 school with approximately 185 students. Most students reside on farms and have two parents in the household with large families and a strong religious affiliation. Many students’ fathers have trade-based occupations, and the mothers often volunteer at school. These students all know each other and have many relatives that are classmates. It is common to see several parents, grandparents, and younger siblings in our building each day, helping out in classrooms, on the playground, in our school gardens, bringing snacks to children and staff, or just visiting.

Our Marengo Valley students are not afraid to work hard on chores at home, and they bring that work ethic to school as well. The students of Marengo Valley School are well mannered, respectful of teachers, and understand that they are here to work hard and meet high expectations. The strong sense of togetherness between families and staff keeps a consistent communication connection that allows for meeting and exceeding the needs of each child. A majority of students spend free time reading and playing outside since most do not have television sets in their homes. That has been a contributing factor to our success, as well as the variety of staff members that work together to create high performing students.

A highly qualified teaching staff has always been part of Marengo Valley School and continues to be a strength we are proud of. The staff consists of 11 full time classroom teachers, one full time Title I teacher, one part time gifted and talented teacher, and three teachers that travel between schools in our district to teach other curriculum areas. There are no special services for children with disabilities in our building, but services are offered within the district 12 miles away. However, most of our families decline those services in town, and keep their family unit together at Marengo Valley School. The small staff helps students grow and learn alongside family members and classmates.

The teachers through the years have valued their education and increased their knowledge base to help students succeed and soar above the norm. Most teachers at the school possess additional licensing, including Reading Specialist licenses. They also have training in Early Reading Empowerment, Barton Reading & Spelling System, Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention, and have completed workshops and online coursework. Several teachers have also completed master’s degrees or national board certification. These 12 dedicated teachers not only work hard to learn new state and district initiatives and curriculum, but they must also serve on committees such as curriculum development, Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) which guarantees class sizes no more than 18:1 or 30:2 in grades K-3, RtI, Schoolwide, Responsive Classroom, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (to name a few). At times this small staff has changed the teaching plan in order to meet the students’ needs by looping, team or subject-area teaching, or multi-grade teaching. This also reinforces the fact that this staff has always been masterful at teamwork and consistent K-5 goals and expectations. The school staff continues to use a team approach to make school, staffing, and curriculum decisions together.

The strong partnership between the staff and parent community at Marengo Valley ensures that everyone involved has a vested interest in all students. The Home and School Association is a big part of the success. The association not only provides staff with monetary support in a variety of ways, it also supports and organizes many events that are attended by community members of all ages. The 50th anniversary of our school was one of the big events they took pride in and helped plan. They also help with annual field trips, a Veteran’s Day celebration, a 5th grade graduation, Field Day activities, Accelerated Reader (AR), book exchanges, Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), fundraiser or achievement celebrations, ordering school t-shirts, helping in the kitchen and classrooms, and serving dinner to teachers on conference nights. Our staff also

returns that generosity to the family community with events such as Fall Fest and Family Carnival where everyone can come and enjoy special time with family and friends.

We are honored that Marengo Valley is the only school in the state that has received the Wisconsin Title I School of Recognition Award each of the 13 years it has been offered. The National Blue Ribbon School honor was also awarded to our school in 2004. The plaques are displayed in our front entrance for all to see. Receiving these awards has strengthened our values and has driven our school to continue this path of excellence.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Our reading/language arts instruction is based on our district's K-5 literacy beliefs: every child is a reader and a writer and should be reading and writing every day; all students will receive a balanced literacy approach; and, we will create culturally responsive classrooms. These literacy beliefs were created by a district K-5 English Language Arts (ELA) committee (which had members from our school) while going through a curriculum review process which included professional development, grade-level meetings, and committee meetings. To be in line with our beliefs, we follow these non-negotiable practices: planning for 120 minutes/day of literacy instruction and practice; utilizing a framework of "I do. We do. You do." (gradual release of responsibility) during which teachers use whole group, shared, small group, and independent instruction/practice for reading and writing; maintaining organized classroom libraries; using an interactive word wall or notebook; and making connections to students' lives outside of school. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Journeys 2014 is our universal curriculum in grades 1-5; kindergarten has written their own curriculum that is theme-based and developmentally appropriate. For small-group learning, teachers use guided reading to meet individual student needs in grades K-2 and literature circles in grades 3-5. Reading at home is encouraged at all grade levels; in grades K-2, students often have a "book bag" with appropriate leveled materials. Accelerated Reader (AR) is used as incentive for reading; students earn points to purchase items at the winter or spring Accelerated Reader store. Students know what they are learning because teachers use "I Can" statements and essential questions derived from the Wisconsin Academic Standards for ELA.

Our math instruction philosophy is that it should be engaging, relevant, consistent, and taught for mastery. My Math from McGraw-Hill has been adopted by our district. Teachers dedicate at least 60 minutes each day to math instruction, providing whole group, small group, and individual opportunities for learning. The K-5 Math Cadre determined the following non-negotiable practices that MVS teachers adhere to: "I Can" statements, essential questions, and vocabulary from the Wisconsin Academic Standards are posted and referred to; common assessments are administered at the end of each unit; progress is recorded on Individual Profiles of Progress (IPPs); conduct basic math fact practice daily; and provide daily opportunities for students to explain answers and share thinking orally and in writing. A combination of formative and summative assessments is used to inform instruction. Teachers use daily practice pages, end-of-unit assessments, online tools, and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) benchmark testing to determine where each student is and what he/she needs next (i.e. extra practice, intervention, enrichment, acceleration, etc.). Online math programs, such as MobyMax, Compass Learning, Khan Academy, and Front Row, are used to provide interventions and enrichment opportunities.

Science instruction is aligned to the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards and guided by Houghton Mifflin Science, Delta Education FOSS kits, and Engineering is Elementary STEM curriculum materials. Students use science text books, periodicals (i.e. Scholastic Let's Find Out), and other non-fiction materials to build background knowledge and develop their vocabularies. Demonstrations and hands-on learning opportunities help students make connections and build deeper understanding of topics. Fourth- and fifth-grade students use the scientific method process to conduct experiments and create science fair presentations.

In alignment with the Wisconsin Academic Standards, social studies instruction addresses the five strands: geography, history, political science/citizenship, economics, and behavioral science. In grades K-3, the five strands are met by making connections to students' lives: the community they live in, our state, and experiences they have had. Social studies is integrated into reading and writing instruction. Starting in first grade, all students conduct research projects to dig deeper. In grade 4, students learn about Wisconsin history in general and specific to our area (i.e. history of Lake Superior, Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians, the logging and iron ore industries, etc.). Fifth grade focuses on U.S. history from the time of the explorers to the civil war. Fourth and fifth grades use social studies text books as the foundation to build background knowledge and then students dig deeper in various projects (i.e. dioramas, tri-fold poster presentations, ABC vocabulary books, slideshows, etc.).

Science and social studies are also supported by videos, other non-fiction materials, guest speakers and field trips. Using a combination of whole group, small group, partner, and individual learning allows for all students to have access to the same knowledge but then provides opportunities for them to dig deeper in areas they have more interest in.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Physical education at Marengo Valley Elementary is offered three days a week to all students. In recent years, a shift was made from a traditional team sport curriculum to a lifetime, fitness, and activity curriculum. This was done through a partnership between parents, students, and teachers. Updates to the curriculum started with conversations with parents and students on what they enjoy doing. Outdoor and adventure education activities immediately stood out which led to the establishment of a disc golf course. The fifth grade class made the course to leave behind something special for the younger students.

Grants have been awarded to the school through programs like Fuel Up to Play 60. Currently, parent volunteers assist students with pedometers to track their steps at recess. Students can see how active they are in physical education class and in their free time. This program also stresses the importance of healthy eating. Fourteen student leaders volunteered to organize and run this program giving them an important experience on how to think and act like a leader.

Through a collaborative effort between the local 4-H group and the physical education department, cross country skiing was recently added to promote winter recreation in grades 3, 4, and 5. This unit concludes with a 4th/5th grade field trip to some of the best cross country ski trails in the midwest. This is something unique to Marengo Valley School.

For the past two years, families have volunteered for a local cross country ski event (Book Across the Bay, the second largest cross country ski race in North America). Through this event we have been able to raise money to establish a trail system behind the school. Future funds are being designated to add more curriculum options such as biking, roller blading, updated pedometers, heart rate monitors, orienteering, and team building challenges.

Twice a week, all students receive music instruction that focuses on appreciation, vocabulary, skills, and authentic experiences (i.e. holiday program, Grandparents' Day, Veterans Day, school board meeting, etc.). Students work collaboratively in speaking, singing, playing instruments, listening to each other, playing games, and tapping beats. Through participation in music ensemble, students learn to work cooperatively in the school environment. Reading skills are naturally supported through an emphasis on prosody (patterns of rhythm and sound). Using phrase-cued reading for practice and repeated reading for fast phonological processing, students work on fluency and comprehension. Close reading strategies are used when learning about musicians, songs, and historical aspects.

Art education occurs once a week for all students with an emphasis on learning art basics, imagining, problem solving, working alone or in groups, following directions, producing quality work, being creative, and making connections with the community. Students use a variety of tools and materials to produce 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional products. Student work adorns hallways, is used for special occasion decorations, and is displayed at the district office.

Once a week, students participate in a lesson with the guidance counselor that is guided by the Second Step program, a sequential social-emotional curriculum. Students learn about understanding and managing their emotions, controlling their reactions, being empathetic, problem solving, and making responsible decisions. The guidance counselor also meets with individuals or small groups as needed for to address specific issues.

The library/media specialist provides a guided lesson once every other week to all students. Students learn about using the library, using technology (Chromebooks, desktops, iPads), research skills, genres of books, authors, and being critical thinkers. The library collection is continually being built to meet the interests and the wide range of reading levels of the students.

The district gifted & talented coordinator comes to Marengo Valley Elementary once a week. All kindergarten and first grade students receive a group lesson on topics such as problem solving, creativity, critical thinking, and cooperation. Students identified as needing enrichment from benchmark screening, classroom assessments, and parent surveys participate in pull-out groups. In the pull-out groups, students work on projects such as book writing, leadership skills, inter-disciplinary research projects, and science inquiry. An end-of-the-year family night showcases student projects from the year.

Marengo Valley Elementary is equipped with classroom SMART Boards, Chromebooks, iPads, and one computer lab. The classroom teachers and library/media specialist provide technology instruction based on the belief that technology is a resource that can enhance learning. All students have Google accounts and first through fifth graders use the Google apps for production and consumption.

The educators who provide instruction in other curriculum areas are all shared with other district schools. Despite limited time and resources, the programs at Marengo are successful because the educators develop lessons that are aligned to content standards and reflective of the culture of our students.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Instructional methods at Marengo Valley School are aligned with Wisconsin Academic Standards and Ashland School District's learner outcomes for all subject areas. Individualized learning goals and differentiation are determined through the RtI, three-tiered approach. This guarantees that all students will receive the universal curriculum, including a balanced literacy approach, from highly qualified and trained teachers. All students know what they are learning through focused wall posters, essential questions for the day, and "I Can" statements in kid-friendly language.

A schoolwide needs assessment is reviewed quarterly by all teachers in our building after students have completed testing on Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), STAR 360, running records, or classroom benchmark assessments. This determines which students are in need of Tier II or Tier III interventions and enrichments. Students then receive appropriate interventions or enrichment opportunities with our Title I teacher, gifted and talented coordinator, or tutor. Staff members have also been trained on Responsive Classroom (RC) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and therefore use consistent language and procedures to help all students feel valued and learn in a positive supportive environment.

For many years, Marengo Valley School staff has valued early intervention to identify and remediate reading and language difficulties. Our school is part of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education Program (SAGE) which allows us to have smaller classroom sizes in Kindergarten through 3rd grade. Marengo Valley's Title I teacher and tutor have both been trained on the Early Reading Empowerment (ERE) program which uses specific language and components similar to Reading Recovery. It has been successful in accelerating students' reading level to reach and surpass desired grade-level benchmarks. Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI) kits are also used at our school to accelerate below-benchmark readers in Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade. The Barton System is used with students that still struggle with phonemic awareness and are not progressing at the expected rate after other intense interventions. All K-3 students also read appropriately leveled books at home which allows for differentiation and individualized learning to continue.

Technology-based support is part of our explicit instruction at Marengo Valley School. Online support is available for all students with our Journeys reading and My Math programs, where teachers utilize SmartBoard access during instruction. Compass Learning and MobyMax are also schoolwide online programs used during our RtI time to help our students improve skills in all subject areas. Those students needing additional support in reading and language also have access to Reading A to Z, Reading Plus and Read Naturally online learning.

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

Assessment drives our instruction and learning at Marengo Valley School. All teachers can enter and track various universal and on-going assessment data throughout the year using our Google data document. Regular staff meetings allow teachers to review data and adjust schedules to meet intervention or enrichment needs. The Title I reading teacher, gifted and talented teacher, tutors, and assistants must be flexible with schedules, as they may change often throughout the year as new assessment data is reviewed.

Universal data is gathered in the fall, winter and spring using the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Kindergarten through 2nd grade students take the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screener (PALS) in the fall and spring. Additional assessment measures are in place for students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade, including running records and letter/sound identification. The Wisconsin state exam for our third through fifth grade students also gives us valuable data regarding curriculum and instructional practices. Finally, the STAR 360 is an additional assessment tool used for all students receiving interventions in reading and math.

On-going assessment is also vital to student success at our high performing school. Curriculum-based assessments are used to improve instruction and student learning on a weekly and quarterly basis. Reading skills assessments in comprehension, vocabulary, and phonics are given to determine mastery or reteaching for those struggling with concepts or skills. Read Naturally and Reading Plus are other on-going assessment tools that have been successful with our below benchmark readers to improve fluency, comprehension and word knowledge. On-going assessment also is evident on a daily basis at our school through guided reading lessons where teachers meet with students daily to assess reading level and strategies, which therefore guides future learning.

Progress is communicated with all students, parents and community on a regular basis. Quarterly report cards, parent/teacher conferences, unit assessments, and Individual Profiles of Progress (IPPs), and MAP progress reports are a few traditional ways we share student progress and learning. Our principal and lead teacher also communicate progress with our Home and School Association, Parent/Principal Forums, and our local educational agency. Communication is also on-going with regular face to face visits, emails, phone calls, and newsletters throughout the year.

The Marengo Valley staff and family community continue to believe that high expectations are the norm. Teachers identify students' needs, and challenge students. Parents support expectations through attendance, homework efforts, respect for teachers, and the value of education. Students are also responsible for their learning through homework assignment notebooks, home folders, and home reading leveled books. This togetherness creates high performing partnerships.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Marengo Valley School engages and motivates students by using consistent language, goals, and high expectations throughout the school. Our staff has been trained on Responsive Classroom (RC) techniques as well as Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) strategies. Staff, students, and parents understand the academic, social, emotional and behavioral expectations we all strive for. Students are rewarded through pizza parties, Accelerated Reader (AR) shopping, all school attendance assemblies, ice cream parties, and even collecting soup labels and box tops for our playground equipment.

Marengo Valley is a strong family and faith-based community with many students related to one another. It is common for teachers to discuss concerns and successes daily with one another since most of us have taught the same students or family members of that student. This allows for staff, students, and family relationships to continue from year to year as we teach their brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, and still see previous students daily until they go to middle school. It is also very common for older siblings to visit the school throughout the year while attending Christmas concerts, field day picnics, Grandparents Day, or other community events within the building. The extended families always feel welcome and connected to this school.

Our positive school environment exists because the families and staff connect and care about each other year after year. The staff, parents and children are welcoming and make you feel supported, safe and valued. There is a strong sense of trust between staff and families. Families know the staff will go above and beyond to build lasting relationships with their children, and staff members know the families always respect our efforts, knowledge, and high expectations.

Teachers feel valued and supported because they communicate often to make decisions together in all areas that make our school successful. Being a Title I schoolwide school has further led us to think of all Marengo Valley students as “our students”. Our staff meets weekly to discuss all students and our building, share information and materials, prioritize the budget, or celebrate personal events together. Parents also celebrate with us as a staff through student parties, field trips, and programs. In addition, they also extend that kindness to us with retirement gifts, baked goods, and staff dinners. The families even end the school year by hosting a picnic for the entire staff to enjoy.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging our Marengo Valley families has never been a problem for us! Our parents and extended community have consistently gone above and beyond to be a part of the school and part of their children’s educational experience. Many parents and other family members are visible in the building on a daily basis, and attendance is near 100% for whole-school or community-based events. Parents also participate in various committees including schoolwide and RtI. Our Home and School Association actively meets every month with the principal, lead teacher or other staff to focus on student learning in a positive, safe, and caring environment.

The Home and School Association has always been very supportive of our staff and students. Not only do they support monetary needs in ways such as new playground equipment, field trips, school gardens, and various classroom books and supplies, but they also know how important their time in the school and with students is. During Home and School Association meetings, parents and grandparents take on many roles and responsibilities. Each classroom is assigned “room mothers/fathers” to assist classroom teachers with parties, activities, or classroom needs throughout the year. They also volunteer for keeping up the school vegetable and flower garden areas, prepare food and clean up for parties, programs, and celebrations, collect soup labels, create yearbooks, order school T-shirts, plan fundraisers, attach pedometers daily at recess on children for physical education class, and organize Marengo Valley School historical scrapbooks. Engaging families and the community will continue to be valued.

The Marengo Valley philosophy has also prioritized a close relationship with our community. The school building is often used after school hours for community gatherings such as volleyball or walking on the nature trail. Families also spend time in the evenings or during the summer taking care of the school gardens, updating playground equipment, or just playing outdoors. There are also many educational opportunities offered through partnerships with the Cable Natural History Museum, Northwoods Wildlife Center, North Lakes Dental, and University of Wisconsin-Extension. The school also partners with local businesses for fundraisers and school improvement projects. These business owners and workers even join in the events as many of them are relatives or friends of the Marengo families. These families donated their time and supplies to create our new disc golf course and nature trail. Northland College also provides resources and student teachers. Middle or high school students share various programs and culturally diverse learning experiences with our country school whenever possible.

3. Professional Development:

Professional Development is ongoing and continues to evolve in our school district. Staff development days are district-wide to begin each year and continue throughout the school year. During this time we focus on new goals, curriculum changes, and collaborate with other co-workers or leaders. We also review programs, curriculum, and grade-level goals with all team members. All Marengo Valley staff spend additional time collaborating and planning at our building weekly. Staff members are always willing to loop, team teach, or collaborate to share personal and professional goals while learning from one another's strengths and successes.

In the 2015-2016 school year, we changed our approach to professional development as we have many new initiatives and goals that need our attention. A professional development plan was created to identify subjects and topics to address during professional in-service times for the year. Early release days were incorporated into our calendar, allowing staff to meet about curriculum goals, learner outcomes, and common assessments one to two times each month. Other opportunities were made available throughout the school year as needs or ideas arose such as book studies, technology support, additional educator effectiveness support, mental health issues training, and visits to other schools to observe successful programs and initiatives. Surveys asking for feedback and future in-service ideas are used regularly.

At Marengo Valley School, professional development is best described as a unified approach. In the past several years, our new initiatives have required staff training in the following areas: Schoolwide implementation, RtI, PBIS, Responsive Classroom, Close Reading, Educator Effectiveness, and technology training such as SmartBoard application, Google, online PALS, and MAP assessment. Recently our district also adopted Journeys reading and My Math programs that involved extensive professional development to implement consistently and completely.

Marengo Valley leaders support staff members to use additional out-of-district opportunities to learn and grow. One such opportunity is through our local Cooperative Educational Service Agency which offers various workshops, trainings, coursework, and resources throughout the year. Some staff members also volunteer to attend out-of-district workshops as well as visit other school districts with successful programs. Our Title I teacher recently visited another school to learn about improving our RtI implementation. She observed how to schedule RtI time throughout the whole building using all staff members to meet the needs of Kindergarten through fifth grade learners at Marengo Valley School. These additional opportunities help us grow and support our unified approach to school wide success.

4. School Leadership:

School leadership has traditionally been a collaborative effort at Marengo Valley School. All team members contribute and make decisions together based on cooperation, flexibility, and respect. Usually there are 12 full time teachers, one Title one teacher, one secretary, one custodian, one library aide, two cooks, three part-time related arts teachers and part time tutors in the building daily who make decisions about curriculum, staffing, schedules, data, instructional planning, student needs, budget, building concerns and school events. Being a Title I Schoolwide school, all members know they are vital to the overall

positive learning environment at Marengo Valley School, as well as helping build the foundation the students need to continue learning and succeeding in all areas of life.

The principal at Marengo Valley School is the administrative leader, but empowers staff members to lead as a team. The principal is also the district's curriculum director, therefore her time in our building is limited. The principal can only be at Marengo Valley School once a week, so the staff must always be prepared to make decisions daily regarding students and their families, building concerns, and even filling in for other staff members when substitute teachers are not available.

There is also one staff member serving as lead teacher to help with additional administrative duties as needed. This lead teacher communicates with other staff members to solve problems and reach goals at the school through weekly meetings, emails, and shared documents. All teachers discuss information and data relating to all students in the school using the needs assessment and RtI committee recommendations to plan instruction and reach schoolwide goals. Teachers also use the educator effectiveness framework to plan and focus on professional and student growth goals. They have also recently participated in discussion and planning groups through the Studer Group that is helping us plan for future school goals.

This teamwork approach is nothing new to Marengo Valley staff. Year after year of successful student achievement is a reason to celebrate and to consider why it works. Once a teacher or staff member joins the team at Marengo, it can be expected that they will remain there until they retire many years later. During their time, they build relationships with family and community members and feel a sense of ownership and belonging. When teachers or staff members decide to retire, the others that remain carry on the tradition of excellence. It becomes understood that all remaining staff members take on a part of the mentoring of new members. They share materials, traditions, and values that keep us focused on continuing high expectations and success.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One practice that makes our school successful has been our commitment to schoolwide guided reading. All teachers in our Kindergarten through 5th grade school value the importance of individualized reading instruction. Students are assessed, leveled, and taught according to needs, strengths, or interests. This instruction must be flexible as a student's ability changes and progresses at different levels. Teachers create positive, ready to learn, classroom environments that allow students to take risks, feel successful, and accelerate reading skills.

All primary level students in Kindergarten through 2nd Grade are assessed using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) three times a year, and Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) two times a year. This literacy data along with individual running records given by all classroom teachers helps determine appropriate reading levels and learning paths for every student. Students below, at, and above expected grade level benchmarks are identified, and instructional decisions can be made based on any or all of the areas; phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, or comprehension. Interventions and enrichment opportunities can then be put in place as well to help all students reach their potential and above. This focus on differentiation and individualized reading does not stop at school, as every student takes a reading bag home nightly with appropriately leveled books for that child.

In the intermediate grades, 3rd-5th, guided reading is still valued, but it takes on a different approach with higher level thinking and reading in the content areas. Classroom teachers use universal literacy screeners and other on-going assessments such as running records and STAR 360 progress monitoring for those students not meeting benchmark expectations. Some students may need additional help transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn. Differentiation is done within the classroom through literature groups, research and integrated projects with classmates. Older students even help younger ones every morning with our Reading Buddy Program which encourages good reading habits, and improves necessary skills.

Marengo Valley families value literacy and individualized instruction. They trust teachers to make professional decisions to help their children thrive and excel in reading. Families know there are high expectations and that they must continue working towards consistent goals in reading. They understand time spent in school is very valuable to overall success. Parents encourage children to do their best during the school day, and parents support at home as they check homework, sign notebooks, and encourage nightly reading. Reading at home is a typical activity for Marengo Valley students since most of the families do not have televisions in their homes. This attention to literacy and our guided reading practice have proven successful year after year.