

U.S. Department of Education
2020 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 Mrs. Sonja Ortman
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Canistota Elementary School - 02
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 431 4th Avenue PO Box 8
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Canistota State SD Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 57012-0008

County Mccook County

Telephone (605) 296-3458 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://www.canistota.k12.sd.us E-mail sonja.ortman@k12.sd.us

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. Larry Nebelsick E-mail Larry.Nebelsick@k12.sd.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Canistota School District 43-1 Tel. (605) 296-3458

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. Donna Larson
(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. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	6	11	17
1	8	10	18
2	10	6	16
3	6	7	13
4	12	10	22
5	5	9	14
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	47	53	100

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 2.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1.4 % Black or African American
 - 6.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.5 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 88 % White
 - 1.4 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 8%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

N/A

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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	4
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	8
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	101
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.08
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 5 %

5 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 70 %

Total number students who qualify: 70

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %

20 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>1</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	6
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 12:1

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

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	97%	97%	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 2019.

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.

Our mission is to prepare students to be successful in society by providing a high-quality education enriched with opportunities for all students.

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

With open enrollment options, some of our student population that is served actually live outside of our district, making it a "choice" for them to attend our school. Our school typically accepts all open enrollment applications with the exception of those students whom we are unable to meet the needs of. If we do not have the specific staffing or facilities for a student's need, we do not accept their open-enrollment application. This rarely, if ever, happens.

PART III - SUMMARY

Canistota is a quaint, rural town within McCook County, South Dakota. The town's population hovers at around 650 residents, with the enrollment at the school currently at 224 students. A small percentage of the student population in our district lives on farms or acreages outside of the city limits, but the majority of our student population lives within Canistota's city limits. Culturally, this community is heavily inclusive and accepting of other people, as the town houses a 105-year old chiropractic clinic which serves primarily Amish. On any given day, there are between 100 and 300 Amish walking around town in traditional attire. The children in our community do not stare or point; they are so used to seeing people who look "different" that they can often be seen interacting with Amish children on the playground or visiting with them at the city pool. This character trait that the majority of our population embraces only strengthens our ability to build relationships with other people- all people.

The typical Canistota student is one who is heavily supported by the community. This includes parents, neighbors, grandparents, friends, and other stakeholders. Our community is truly a family in that everyone is involved in the education of the "whole child", and that is evidenced by the level of support displayed by parents and members of our community. Our parents and stakeholders volunteer at our school, attend a plethora of events that are hosted by the district, and show their support by maintaining close working relationships with teachers and staff. The level of two-way communication facilitated by parents and the school district has proven to be a major theme in how and why our district is so successful.

One of the most special components about our school that sets it apart from others is the level of access to extra-curriculars that the district offers. Students are encouraged to participate in athletics (district-run teams are available to students throughout the year) as well as clubs that encourage leadership and foster creativity (such as Robotics Club). It is important for our students to have exposure to a variety of options in the realm of extra-curricular activities, as this develops their passions, cultivates their interests, and helps them learn time-management skills as well as prioritizing.

Within the school day, students are provided with opportunities to volunteer their time. For example, our elementary school partners with Good Samaritan Society to spend time with residents every month. This interaction helps our students develop their character, learn to give of one's time and self, and builds capacity for helping others. Sometimes our students share their skills and talents at a "Nursing Home Talent Show", or they simply spend time with residents while playing Bingo or Scrabble. Canistota Elementary School encourages and facilitates a chance for students to become servant leaders. Canistota School also facilitates a student-run mentoring program in which students are paired with a younger student. Once a week, the mentor/mentee teams meet during lunch, ultimately creating lasting friendships, building trust, and helping younger students feel as though they belong.

The focus of the staff at Canistota School District has been to build meaningful, authentic relationships with students and with each other. We purposefully advocate for students and touch base with every child every day. Students need to know that the adults working with them actually care- and we do!

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

The overall curricular theme at Canistota Elementary is to meet students where they are in terms of academic ability. Teachers embrace the importance of differentiation, intervention, small group instruction, independent work, and constant use of formative assessment. “Total participation technique” is utilized to pulse-check understanding throughout the course of each lesson every day. If students are not ready for a concept in mathematics, for example, teachers take the time for individual pull-out or small group re-teaching of a previous concept. In 2018, Canistota Elementary elected to carve out a full 90-minute block for mathematics instruction, whereas a typical 45-minute period was utilized. An emphasis on math instruction coupled with rigorous ELA facilitation enhances our vision.

In reading class, students work at their level on content that is specifically tailored to their ability level. English/Language arts curriculum is fluidly integrated to every other content area, as teachers all see reading standards as the baseline for all other subject areas. Additionally, every other discipline area has the ability to be seamlessly incorporated into a reading or writing lesson. It is safe to say that the emphasis on reading instruction and cross-curricular merging is one of the reasons our students show proficiency and mastery in all areas of academics.

1b. Reading/English language arts

Aligning curriculum to Common Core Standards is the blueprint for reading and language arts instruction at Canistota School District. The population of students, as with any school, is extremely diverse in terms of ability as it relates to reading comprehension, fluency, and also vocabulary usage. In 2015, our team of instructional experts began to dissect the ever-growing need of intervention for students in the area of reading. Many students were "falling between the cracks" and treating every student as though he or she ought to be meeting grade-level standards proved to be difficult. We needed to provide a full plan of differentiation for students in language and reading instruction. Typically, in the grade-level classrooms, students in grades 2-12 are expected to read out of similar texts at a targeted grade level. Our data revealed that very few students were actually able to comprehend text at the grade-level expectation; approximately 10 percent of students at Canistota School District read "at grade level", and that involved comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Between 10 and 40 percent of our students were reading below grade level, while the remainder was able to read above (some students ranked far above) grade level instruction. Simply put, the practice of attempting to reach all students with one curriculum in a specific classroom setting was simply not working for the majority of students.

In 2015, Canistota School District purchased a tool aimed at students in grades 3-8 called Reading Plus. Within the first full year, this program was utilized as a core piece of ELA instruction in the district and is currently being used as a strong supplement. Students took a benchmark assessment and based upon their ability in comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency, were placed on a specific “path” of learning through this program. Students spend between 20 and 30 minutes per day on this individualized program, teachers use data weekly, monthly, and yearly, to determine what students know, what they need to know, and how to increase fluency and comprehension at every grade level. The use of this particular program has been vital in reaching students and moving them forward in reading instruction.

In grades 4-8, students are provided with a 90-minute block of learning for ELA involving choice, voice, and a variety of interventions. Guided reading instruction with Title intervention is utilized at the K-3 level heavily. Aside from teacher intervention, differentiation, Title, and Reading Plus, literature-based curriculum based on student interest is a focus for teachers at Canistota School District. ELA standards area considered fluid, therefore other curricular areas seamlessly fit into literacy standards within our district. All teachers are teachers of reading, and that is one of the philosophies that drives the instructional best practices at Canistota School District.

Use of formative and summative assessments in tandem with NWEA Map benchmark reports helps teachers pulse-check each student's progress and change instruction as needed in order to provide what each specific student's needs are. Differentiation, accountability for all teachers to teach ELA standards, constant communication between educators, and providing meaningful, relevant lessons are some of the ways in which Canistota School District meets the needs of all learners.

1c. Mathematics

Mathematics at Canistota Elementary is aligned to the Common Core Standards with an emphasis on the critical areas within the grade level standards. We use enVision Math Common Core by Pearson as our core curriculum along with technology support to master learning. IXL is used to supplement learning of skills and concepts. Our math classes are a 90 minute block of time which includes math fluency, daily review, whole group, skill practice, and small group instruction to focus on skills based on need. Teachers differentiate instruction via small groups based on academic level, learning styles, peer interaction, or mastery level of math concepts. While the teacher is instructing a small group, the other students work in centers, which involves reviewing prior skills and concepts learned. Students are taught to model concepts whether it is hands-on, kinesthetic, drawing, using Playdoh, songs, or manipulatives to gain a deeper understanding of operations and algebraic thinking, number and operations in base ten and fractions, geometry, and measurement and data. Students are taught to solve problems by identifying what they know, identify what they are asked to find, the hidden question(s), write an equation and/or draw a picture, and evaluate the question within the problem. Students are truly engaged with mathematics at Canistota Elementary.

We monitor student progress and growth using NWEA MAP assessments as well as assessments within our curriculum. NWEA MAP assessments provide us with the data we need to place proper interventions for students who need extra assistance within the classroom, Title I services, or special education services.

1d. Science

The focus of our science curriculum is to encourage curiosity and apply scientific thinking to real word problems. Using a constructivist approach, we encourage innovation, collaboration, and creativity. We emphasize hands-on/minds-on activities and group discussions to cover our scientific topics. Student collaboration is emphasized during class discussions and lab activities in K-5 grade levels. Many of our reading lessons also incorporate science curriculum. Grades K-5 follow South Dakota Science Standards in the areas of life science, physical science, and earth and space science.

As a foundational base, Canistota Elementary utilizes the Scott Foresman series along with Generation Genius, Mystery Doug, and IXL. Generation Genius is an excellent science resource that offers educational videos paired with lesson plans, hands on activities, discussion questions, and assessments. It is a program that keeps students engaged and interested in the topic that is being taught. IXL gives the students a chance to practice skills that are associated with the science standards. Mystery Doug videos are short five minute videos that inspire students to search for clues, ask questions, and solve the mystery.

K-5 teachers focus labs on scientific methods through project-based learning. Some examples include creating and testing solar energy cars, planning and building recycled cars, exploring a butterfly unit, understanding and explaining ecosystems, creating balloon rockets, designing landforms projects, studying weather, and participating in a variety of stem projects.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Canistota Elementary School uses Harcourt Brace Social Studies as the official curriculum to aid social studies instruction. Family, community, South Dakota History, and U.S. History are the core content areas taught in the Social Studies framework. Social Studies standards are also integrated throughout our ELA lessons through small group instruction. Teachers stay up-to-date with current events with the use of Scholastic News as well as the website newsela.com. The goal for student engagement in the area of social

studies is to expose students to the beauty of the world around them. This is done through cultural lessons that integrate all of the regional/geographical content seamlessly. Newsela is a medium that is used for whole-class discussion (current events) but is tailored to each individual student's reading level. It allows classes to have a conversation regarding current events and everyone is able to participate. Specifically, the same article (written in a number of lexile levels) can be read by students of varying reading abilities. "One text for everyone" is something that the professional educators at Canistota School District do not embrace; instead, teachers reach students exactly where they are, academically, in an attempt to increase proficiency within the content area.

Canistota School has purchased and implemented ixl.com. It is a personalized, interactive learning tool that helps students meet the common core standards. In order to engage students fully to a higher depth of knowledge, teachers facilitate numerous research projects to enhance learning, with a focus on student voice, choice, and also an integration of listening/speaking standards. Teachers monitor student growth with the use of rubrics as well as assessments within the curriculum. Citizenship and community is a focus in the social studies curriculum. Canistota School implemented a character counts program to teach character and personal development. Students have the opportunity to be rewarded for good character each month. The goal of social studies instruction at Canistota School District is to develop well rounded citizens who appreciate and respect the world around them, intelligently discuss current issues and how they affect our local and world population, and be able to question and solve problems.

1f. For secondary schools:

1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Arts:

The Canistota Elementary School provides a variety of opportunities for the students to participate in arts. Classroom art projects are directed by the classroom teacher on a weekly basis. The classroom art projects are designed to provide a connection to the other disciplines in the classroom based on mutual concepts that are being taught. The projects help to reinforce the learning objectives by creating a visual connection to the subject area. Six times during the year, the students are led by a certified art instructor. During the art time, the instruction is geared toward an exploration of the student's interests and talents as well as creating a connection with established art forms. The projects that are created during this art instruction gives the students an opportunity to create items that help expand their imagination and creativity without being limited to a specific content area. Our students start vocal music with a certified music teacher in kindergarten and continue through grade five. They perform at two concerts during the year: First a holiday concert in December and then a spring concert in April or May. The vocal teacher makes the most of this opportunity to develop a life-long interest in music and singing. Starting in the fifth grade, the Canistota students are given the opportunity to begin playing a musical instrument. This also provides the chance to participate in the fifth grade band. Many students choose to continue playing in the band throughout middle school and high school. The Canistota School District brings in the Missoula Children's Theatre every two or three years. This provides an excellent opportunity for all students to participate in a production that is presented to the public. When the Missoula group is here, many of the students get involved either by participating in an acting role or help with all of the things that go on behind the stage.

Physical Education/Health and Nutrition:

One of the many goals of the Canistota School is to promote the physical, emotional and social wellbeing throughout our district. We have a wellness committee that is composed of students, staff, administration, food service workers, parents, and community members. Quarterly meetings are held to discuss, facilitate and evaluate how we can better serve our students with health promotion, nutrition and overall well-being. Physical education class is required for all students up to ninth grade. Students in grades K-3 attend physical education class every other day for 25 minutes. Students in grades 4-5 attend physical education every other day for 50 minutes. Each physical education and health class is designed to meet or exceed state

requirements for students to learn and obtain essential skills and knowledge of fitness, health and nutrition.

Technology/Library Media:

The library is a place where students are able to come in to read, research, or work on online classes. The elementary students have class set aside once or twice a week to enjoy being read to and look for books to check out. Also offered are a wide variety of magazines and two local newspapers. Our budget allows for flexibility in keeping books up to date for students based on their interest or reading ability. New books are released and having the ability to order based on student interest throughout the year is an important part in students staying interested in reading. The library also offers a digital option where all students in grades K-5 can log in to access books at home or at school. The librarian's training through the state library helps students utilize the research options available for k-5 and the digital resources available through local, state and national level. The training aids teachers in digital options to enhance student learning through digital books and current databases. The support from the administration keeps the library relevant and readily available to help students whether it is to find a board book to have their parents read to them or help finding research for one of their papers. The support is vital to take students from K-5 and help them grow in whatever academic area they choose. In terms of technology, Canistota School District is considered a 1:1 district, meaning all students in the district have access to either a Chromebook or a tablet every day.

Character Building:

The school has implemented the Character Counts program at the classroom level as well as school-wide at the elementary level. Each month a student is recognized at an assembly for exemplifying the month's character trait with specific behavior descriptions shared by school staff. The school counseling program functions as a multi-tiered system of support with Tier 1 addressing the general population. This level specifically addresses student development in three domains: social/emotional, academic mindset and career development. In grades K-5, career awareness focuses on jobs in student families and the community while emphasizing that all work has value and everyone can learn skills necessary for future employment. Academic development and mindset lessons are an integral part of K-5 weekly school-counseling lessons at the beginning of the school year as part of the Second STEP curriculum's Skills for Learning unit that specifically address executive functioning skills such as listening, focusing attention, impulse-control, growth mindset and self-advocacy for seeking help. The Empathy unit teaches students how to read facial expressions and situations in order to demonstrate compassion. The Problem-Solving unit encompasses both conflict problem-solving as well as skills to create win-win solutions after learning to weigh possible consequences of different options before making choices.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Canistota Elementary is a targeted assistance Title 1 School. Our Title 1 program services students from Kindergarten through fifth grade. Students are identified using several criteria such as teacher recommendation, classroom performance, NWEA (Measures of Academic Progress) testing, Smarter Balanced test scores (3-5), as well as parent recommendation. NWEA, Smarter Balanced, Reading Plus, IXL, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Interventions, Envision Math Diagnostic and Intervention System are skills tests and curriculum used to best determine a student's strengths and needs in the areas of reading and math.

Students who require more strategic support receive supplementary reading and math instruction through Title 1 services. Students that qualify for Title 1 services attend 30 minute sessions 5 days a week for reading and/or math. Elementary staff and the Title one teacher work hand-in-hand to identify these students who require extra support to be successful in the classroom. During professional development and inservices, NWEA (MAP) testing data is analyzed to help pinpoint gaps that may exist in each student's academic performance. Title 1 lessons are based on student's strengths and needs in order to be successful in the regular classroom. Elementary staff communicate weekly, sometimes daily to discuss any changes Title 1 students require. We emphasize early identification of all struggling readers. It is our belief that early identification of these students is critical to their overall academic success. Our Title 1 Reading and math

supplemental groups are small and flexible, and may change several times throughout the year.

Reading Interventions are created to enhance phonemic awareness for students who need extra practice in this area. Canistota implements Houghton Mifflin Harcourt decoding power intensive reading instruction curriculum to support students in mastering literacy skills. Our curriculum uses letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation, nonsense word reading, word identification and oral reading fluency assessments. A course of action is identified and implemented for individual needs of students. Modeling instruction that is clear and concise is essential to reduce student confusion and increase learning.

Math interventions are determined using data from NWEA (MAP) scores, Smarter Balance test scores, IXL diagnostic screenings and regular skills tests. Our Title 1 curriculum is Envision Math Intervention and Diagnostic system. Interventions in math are specifically tailored to the needs of individual students and level of understanding. Common Core math standards are taught with explicit instruction in a small group setting to gain mastery of standards.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Students performing above grade level may find it more difficult to stay engaged in their learning because content and learning in general may come easily to them. In order to cater to students above grade level, the theme that Canistota School District focuses on is student voice and choice and depth of knowledge. Through numerous mediums, instructors are able to determine specific skill levels of every student. NWEA (Map) is used three times per year to show growth. This particular program allows our teachers to dissect strengths and weaknesses in the areas of Science, Math, and English/Language Arts. Using multiple data points from a variety of assessments lends to a more valid achievement diagnosis. Students performing consistently above grade level will be targeted by classroom instructors to receive a modification of instruction or student out-put (work). This ultimately looks different with every student at every grade level. Students are not necessarily assigned more work; their projects may involve higher levels of DOK thinking and analysis, they may have more choice and voice in exactly what they are interested in exploring more deeply, and are able to elaborate in ways that they would not be able to without being in a differentiated setting. The staff at Canistota Elementary believes that while all students are not officially on an individualized education plan (IEP), we ought to treat each student as though we are creating personalized learning for them, whether students are at grade level, below, or above.

3c. Special education

In the area of special education, instruction, interventions and assessments are individualized per student who has been identified to receive special education services. This individualization includes modifications, accommodations and specialized instruction. Modifications for students with special needs include simplified tests over class materials, alternate grading on classroom assignments or a modified/alternate curriculum. Accommodations for students with disabilities include alternate setting to provide a quieter place to work, preferential seating in the classroom, use of a calculator or numbers chart, or extra time to complete tests and assignments. Specialized instruction included the use of the Barton Reading and Spelling System for students who demonstrate learning styles that align with dyslexia or re-teaching classroom assignments and supplemental activities that allow the student to master a skill.

Progress of students in special education is also individualized and based on individual goals. While the goal to bridge an achievement gap encompasses all students, students in special education may or may not have the capacity to work at grade level. For example, a student with a specific learning disability might be capable of grade level work with just a few accommodations. But for a student with cognitive delays, it would be unreasonable to expect grade level performance; however, this student can demonstrate mastery at their instructional level. Some students have behaviors that impact their academic achievement. These students need assistance in managing their behaviors or a formal behavior intervention plan to work towards reducing negative behaviors.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

For our English Language Learners, Canistota School District provides a certified ELL Coordinator. This individual is a full-time employee who administers necessary baseline documentation through WIDA and ACCESS testing platforms. Using that data, she utilizes the help of a part-time interpreter/translator to communicate with families. Additionally, she works closely with the English Language Learner Consortium that our district is a member of. What language acquisition instruction looks like for each non-native English speaker is different. Depending on the student's age, ability, and needs, students may meet one-on-one with a paraprofessional, have a second instructor or paraprofessional in the classroom during active instruction for support, or they may receive content-specific instruction in both English and their native language. Our goal at Canistota School District is for non-native English speakers to feel supported, confident, and able. Constant collaboration and consulting (check and connects) between teachers, our EL Coordinator, our administration, and our consortium is a vital part of the success of the ELL program. Our coordinator meets weekly with the administrative team to share feedback in how students are progressing in their language acquisition plans. Typically, interventions, support, and accommodations are tweaked and adjusted on a weekly or bi-weekly basis in order to better serve the students in our district who are learning English as a second language. Our district is well aware of the stress and pressure that our EL population faces (their families included), so our approach is one that involves many people with a wide range of support capabilities.

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Canistota School District's unofficial yearly motto is "Relationships Before Content". The teachers, staff, support personnel, and administrators support the notion that students need to know that their support team truly cares about them as people prior to "diving in" to content. At our school, each child is made to feel special and important. Instructing the "whole child" in terms of social, mental, and physical safety is a vital component of the family atmosphere that Canistota School District embraces. Being a smaller district allows teachers to form bonds with students very quickly and also year after year. The teachers at Canistota School District work together to advocate for students. Officially, each student in the building is assigned an adult advocate. It is that person's responsibility to reach out to their paired student at least once a week. Each classroom teacher naturally and effectively nurtures each student under his or her tutelage, but we have found that the more adults we have focusing on each student, the less likely it is that specific learners "fall between the cracks". One of the benefits of being housed in one building that serves students in grades K-12 is that the elementary students are assigned high school mentors as well, and scheduling allows for weekly mentor/mentee meetings during lunch and/or recess time. Again, the more support that we can give our students, the more empowered they will feel to reach goals, overcome challenges, and grow as human beings.

The staff at Canistota School District are heavily collaborative and embrace a team philosophy when working with students. If a student is flagged for behavior that might be out of character for that child, for example, teachers meet with colleagues, consult with the counselor, and reach out to parents if needed. Our environment, as one that provides for the emotional, physical, and mental safety of our students is vital in allowing students to take risks, academically, and to be able to grow, intellectually. If and when it is determined that either a student's behavior, academic, or socio-emotional needs require an official intervention in order to move forward, the intervention team meets to assist the teacher in providing assistance. Different scenarios work for different children; we have some students who benefit from 3-5 minutes in the sensory space after recess to decompress before returning to the classroom. Other students do best with behavior charts, for example. The staff at Canistota is open to catering to each child, that child's needs, and focusing on how that child learns best. Being flexible, willing to accommodate for individual needs in our students, and nurturing all of our learners is the foundation of relationship-building.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Canistota School District takes school and community relations seriously. Without positive community and parental communication, we would not have the high degree of support that we do. Our parents feel informed and supported through constant two-way communication. One of the most popular and most widely used mediums that Canistota School employs is Facebook. Our school's Facebook page has 527 followers, and we are able to keep our audience's attention by posting every day and sometimes multiple times each day. We include photos of students participating in their activities, general announcements, updates, and opportunities for parents to engage through questions and comments. In order to maintain the page's functionality, there are four staff members who have access to publishing posts.

Aside from Facebook, the elementary school uses clasdojo heavily for 2-way communication with parents. All elementary teachers update their clasdojo daily; the use of this medium is extremely popular with parents as 100% of our families use this and interact with the teachers through this portal. In addition to clasdojo, teachers use email, text messaging, and phone calls to keep parents up-to-date on their child's progress in class. Teachers invite parents in to the classrooms for a variety of events such as class plays, meals, celebrations, and skits. Our families know that they play an integral part in how successful our students are by supporting the school's and teachers' initiatives.

Canistota School has partnered with the community in a number of ways. The administrative team meets with parents in an advisory setting throughout the year and they employ an open-door policy for parents to air concerns or ways in which they might partner with the school. Most recently, local business leaders

visited the school to serve as impartial judges for specific project based learning activities. Our school actively partners with the local nursing home, in which students visit with elderly patrons once a month to build relationships, play board games, and visit. Interacting with the community in positive ways helps us gain support for our programming as well as establishing the notion that our school is an extension of the community and vice versa. Canistota School seeks out partnership with the community, adding new projects and committees to involve more people every year. The school's focus is one that involves all stakeholders. We have benefited greatly from the amount of community support the school has received through the welcoming, open door nature of everyone that is employed at the school.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The Canistota School District provides an environment of creation, caring, and commitment for all of its staff. The district actively pursues the highest standards of collaboration across a wide variety of disciplines, to ensure that staff members have the right opportunities to be the best that they can be. Canistota School District has established a community of life-long learners necessary for the success of their teachers and students.

Canistota School has regularly scheduled in-services throughout the year that challenge staff. These opportunities for professional development are diverse and encouraged by all administration. The diversity of these professional development sessions range from individual, departmental collaboration, cross-curricular collaboration, outside district collaboration, and renowned influential speakers in a variety of fields. Canistota Administration supports teachers to regularly attend conferences, seminars, and teachers outside of our district during the year to increase knowledge and skills for greater strength in the classroom. The district provides new teachers with qualified mentors and guidance from an administration that keeps young teachers in the profession. Canastota's professional development centers on the daily needs of teachers, as well as long-term data-driven planning, to have successful teachers and students. The administration puts particular emphasis on surveying teachers to figure out what they would benefit most from in these endeavors. With teachers facing different challenges like English language learners, changes in family systems, and student's continual evolving special needs, Canistota School never shies away from the challenge but strives head-long in support and compassion.

Canistota School District is a place where all staff members feel valued. The value placed on teachers as community members, leaders, role-models, and stewards of learning is unmatched. As community members, all teachers have a responsibility to give back to the people who contribute to the economic success of our district. Canistota teachers understand the necessity to communicate to stakeholders and embrace stakeholder passions for students. The administration of Canistota School embodies and provides a specific example for teachers to be leaders and role-models. The administrative team has a wealth of knowledge and experience as former teachers, to support the independent standards-based curriculum that teachers choose in their classrooms. They see value in allowing staff to make professional choices in the delivery of the curriculum and behavioral strategies in their classrooms.

Canistota School District values and supports teachers through rigorous professional development practices scheduled in a timely manner with the long-term and short-term needs of teachers. The Canistota School District demonstrates a great balance of valuing the collective energy of all parties in the education process, in addition to supporting the individual strengths of the classroom teachers' professional decisions

4. School Leadership:

The Canistota School District has a somewhat traditional leadership philosophy which is comparable to many schools. For the most part, it follows how many businesses run with a line-and-staff model. At the top of the leadership model is the superintendent. Directly below the Superintendent is the K-12 principal. Reporting to both administrators is our Dean of Students, counselor, administrative assistant and business manager. Also reporting to the principal are all of the teachers in the building. Lastly, we have paraprofessionals that report mainly to the special education teacher but also to the teachers whose classes they assist in.

One of the nice things about being a small school is that all staff members are able to talk to one another throughout the day. For example, even though the principal is the direct line of authority for the teachers, they are able to talk to the superintendent if the principal is busy at the time. However, the primary role of the superintendent is to make decisions related to school improvement, policy, and relations with the community. The role of the principal is mainly focused on student relations. This includes, but is not limited to, enforcing rules according to policy, going over grades or attendance with students, and contact of parents when necessary. On top of those roles, the principal is also responsible for the oversight of teachers such as evaluations.

At the Canistota School District, the principal has a lot of trust in the teachers. The principal believes that all of the teachers are professionals in their field and need to be trusted as such. That is one reason why most of the leadership provided to teachers revolves around suggestions for classroom management and teaching strategies. Every week the principal will drop in to classrooms to make sure that the best practices are being used. If there is something that catches her eye, she will have a short, informal meeting to discuss what she observed. This is to ensure that classes are providing students with all the resources that they should be exposed to.

Finally, there are also leadership roles amongst the staff. These roles are not official but somewhat accepted amongst all staff members. One of the great things about the staff of Canistota is the range of experience amongst the teachers. There are some teachers who have over thirty years of experience while there are others who are in their first year of teaching. Essentially, the building is split to where one half of the building is elementary and the other side is the middle school/high school side. On each of these sides, there are teachers who have acquired roles as leaders based on how knowledgeable and affable they are.

It takes all of these leadership roles to run the well-oiled machine known as the Canistota School District. If someone were to walk through the school during any given day, they would realize that the Canistota School District consists of employees who genuinely care about every single person in the building. From the superintendent to the paraprofessionals, everybody knows they play a vital role in making sure policies and procedures are followed. When this happens, students and staff members work together to achieve at high levels in all aspects of school.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

"Relationship before content" is the underlying theme that every single teacher at Canistota School District and specifically, Canistota Elementary School, embraces. As a smaller school, teachers find it more manageable to build relationships with students and families, but the manner in which each teacher, paraprofessional, office staff, and administrator continues to focus on this every single day is what sets the school apart from others. School personnel go above and beyond in supporting students and families. All teachers build relationships with students and genuinely care about them. Our teachers are solidly invested in the "whole child". Focusing on what each student needs before academics enter the equation is special to our school district.

When a student is absent, teachers have been known to meet with the student virtually in order to help deliver instruction that was missed. The authentic way in which teachers truly care for their students has had a positive impact on attendance, high test scores, and a general love for learning. There is no secret formula for the success that Canistota School District has had in terms of student achievement. Teachers follow South Dakota content standards, they differentiate, they utilize programming suitable for intervention, and instruct in a way that is engaging for students.

Without authenticity and relationship-building, however, our students would not feel the support that is necessary to feel confidence in one's ability. One must carry that confidence into the area of unknown territory, which sometimes means that students reach a level of frustration that they are not comfortable with. Without the positive relationships that students already have as a baseline foundation with their teachers, they would not be able to meet that learning curve and move past it. This allows students to comfortably move into questioning, making mistakes, using growth mindset to face challenges, and ultimately reach more complex thinking standards. Relationship-building is seen as a vital piece of instruction at Canistota Elementary.