

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Prairie Trail Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1850 SW College Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Ankeny State IA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 50023-7034

County \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (515) 965-9605 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL https://prairietrail.ankenyschools.org E-mail ben.muller@ankenyschools.org

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Eric Pruitt E-mail erick.pruitt@ankenyschools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Ankeny Community School District Tel. (515) 965-9604

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Ryan Weldon  
(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, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

1. 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2016 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: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	49	61	110
1	36	42	78
2	51	51	102
3	39	47	86
4	45	49	94
5	50	51	101
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	270	301	571

\*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):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3.2 % Asian
  - 1.4 % Black or African American
  - 3.7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 87.1 % White
  - 4.4 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 8%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	36
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	46
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	548
(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):

Vietnamese, Portuguese, Gujrati, Bosnian, Tamil, Lingala, Ewe

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %

7 Total number ELL

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

Total number students who qualify: 41

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 10 %  
58 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. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>6</u> Autism                   | <u>7</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>16</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>26</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>18</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>20</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>26</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: 4
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	25
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	93%	94%	95%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2021.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

To foster a lifelong love of learning to prepare every learner to achieve personal success.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

**CONTINUOUS NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

It is the policy of the Ankeny Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact Josie Lewis, Equity Coordinator at 306 SW School Street, Ankeny, IA 50023, 515/965-9600 or [kenneth.morris@ankenyschools.org](mailto:kenneth.morris@ankenyschools.org)

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Prairie Trail Elementary is one of ten elementary schools in the Ankeny Community School District. Built in 2012, Prairie Trail Elementary serves a rapidly-expanding development in one of the nation’s fastest-growing cities. The Prairie Trail development consists of many young, professional families. The school serves as a unifying force in a new, developing neighborhood. Family involvement in the school community contributes to a local character of service and commitment to kids. Parent volunteers are often in classrooms assisting staff and working with students at Prairie Trail Elementary.

Parents and the staff who serve at Prairie Trail Elementary exemplify this community spirit of commitment and service. High expectations and collaboration are core values of the staff at Prairie Trail Elementary. Each staff member is viewed as a leader, whether a teacher, custodian, or teacher’s associate. The school uses a strategy called the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to meet the needs of all students. The staff frequently meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), examining data to ensure students make expected growth. The school also provides supplemental instruction through differentiated groups, targeted reading support, Special Education, and Ankeny Extended Learning (AELP).

The initiative demonstrated by the staff is grounded in Prairie Trail Elementary’s instructional framework, the Gradual Release of Responsibility. Students engage with small “bursts” of instruction centered on a core standard and then apply the standard to relevant and authentic experiences through this framework. This structure shifts cognitive demands on students while teachers conduct frequent check-ins through small group instruction, informal and formal observations, and formative assessment. Lessons conclude by revisiting the standard and allowing students to share learning with peers.

Instruction is only one piece of what makes Prairie Trail Elementary special. In addition to high-quality instructional services, mental health support and learning is critical to student success, especially as students return to school in this unprecedented time. To customize social-emotional support for students, staff administer the Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS) three times per year. Then, they utilize the data from this tool to meet the social-emotional needs of the students. In addition, general education teachers provide social-emotional learning, and the school guidance counselors and social workers support this learning with supplemental instruction as needed.

Building on mental health services and establishing leadership and service as core values for the whole school, Prairie Trail Elementary implemented the Leader In Me program, a framework that focuses on the Seven Habits of Highly Successful Students. These habits are explicitly taught and practiced within the school day. For example, the staff uses common vocabulary, such as “what you can control” and “being proactive,” when working with students. This program also focuses on student leadership opportunities. For example, students plan and execute Habit-focused assemblies, co-facilitate the “Hawk-hero” program to acknowledge positive student behaviors, and are working to establish a Student Lighthouse Team to add student voice to the work of whole school improvement.

The partnership of parents, staff, and students to create a school built upon service and leadership led to Prairie Trail Elementary receiving an “Exceptional” performance rating by the Iowa Department of Education, the highest grade given to an attendance center in 2020-2021.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

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

The MTSS process, which consists of three tiers of instruction, is the foundation for all teaching and learning at Prairie Trail Elementary. The first tier is core instruction for all students. At Prairie Trail, tier one instruction is accessible, rigorous, engaging, and driven by the Iowa Core Standards curriculum. Teachers support this curriculum with board-approved resources, which districtwide stakeholders vet during an in-depth review. Tier two of instruction is the first layer of supplemental support. This support looks like a different, small group targeted instruction centered around specific strategies to assist students in accessing the content. Finally, tier three instruction continues to increase the intensity and time of instruction for a group of students who have shown evidence that the support they will need to be successful will need to look different.

Teachers collaborate in PLCs using “backward mapping” to plan for instruction. This process begins with teachers setting learning goals based on the Iowa Core Standards. Next, they reference district-created performance scales and report card statements to unpack the desired learning outcomes further. Then, with the outcomes in mind, teachers strategically apportion these standards into smaller, more manageable lessons to gain evidence of student mastery of the learning goals. In parallel to this work, teachers often use summative data from statewide assessments and data obtained from previous instruction to plan for differentiated learning throughout the process.

Teachers also gather formative data through observations, questioning, discussion, and performance tasks to differentiate small group instruction and determine core instructional effectiveness. In addition, PLCs use the data to identify students needing more support in achieving the standard and students requiring differentiated enrichment opportunities beyond core instruction.

Prairie Trail staff use a workshop model to deliver literacy and math instruction. In this approach, teachers provide engaging, standards-based, explicit instruction to all students during a mini-lesson. Then, students apply the standards-aligned skill to authentic tasks during an application period while teachers provide intervention, confer one-on-one, and meet with strategy-based small groups of students. Teachers purposely select students to share their learning with peers after the workshop to leverage peer understanding and gain knowledge of individual student comprehension.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Prairie Trail Elementary places a strong emphasis on protecting and maximizing students’ time independently engaged in reading and writing to build stamina. Prairie Trail Elementary’s literacy core instruction aligns with the Iowa Core Standards. Beyond these core standards, however, Prairie Trail Elementary emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness due to the research presented in the Science of Reading and local student data that supports this strategy. It includes explicit whole group instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, speaking, and listening. Students practice these skills through a scaffolded approach and apply them to authentic tasks during reading and writing workshops. In the reading workshop, such tasks may include reading and responding to text, collaborative inquiry projects, and book clubs. In the writing workshop, students practice writing in a variety of genres. Students often participate in a small group or conference with their teacher during this time.

Teachers administer statewide (FastBridge) literacy assessments to all students three times a year. FastBridge assesses an understanding of foundational reading skills in kindergarten and first grade, and in second through fifth grade, they assess words read correctly in one minute. The use of this data is two-fold. First, teachers look holistically at the number of students who meet or surpass grade-level normed benchmarks. For example, if 80 percent of students meet the benchmark, the teacher can expect tier one

instruction to meet most student needs successfully. However, if less than 80 percent of students meet the benchmark, teachers add a classwide intervention to core instruction to close the academic gap most efficiently. For instance, a teacher may implement a daily fluency routine with all students instead of meeting with multiple groups of students who demonstrate a need for additional support with the same skill. After examining this assessment, students who did not score at the benchmark are engaged in an intervention to decrease the instructional gap.

Teachers also use summative data to identify areas where students may need additional support. After the summative data is collected, teachers administer diagnostic assessments, such as a phonemic awareness profile, phonics screener, or reading records, to determine a student's area of need. Then, in alignment with the identified area of need, the general education teacher will provide an additional targeted intervention, referred to as tier two instruction in the MTSS process. Critical partners, including the special education staff, literacy leader, AELP teacher, principal, school administration manager (SAM), or instructional coach, are part of the decision-making team to determine the appropriate instructional package needed for the student. The literacy leader or AELP teacher may also provide tier two instruction, matching it to the general education intervention for students who meet predetermined criteria.

Consistent with the Science of Reading, the literacy leader and instructional coach work alongside teachers to strengthen daily routines, including orthographic (sound-letter) mapping and phonemic wordlists. In addition, teachers create multisensory opportunities to increase the likelihood of students permanently storing words and improving their sight vocabulary.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Prairie Trail's math curriculum also aligns with the Iowa Core Standards. As with literacy, Prairie Trail students engage in a daily workshop model. However, whereas literacy concepts are taught explicitly at the beginning of the workshop, mathematical concepts are routinely introduced through student inquiry. For instance, a Prairie Trail teacher may use a number sense routine, such as a number talk, to prompt students to interact flexibly with mathematical concepts and deepen their conceptual understanding. Then, the teacher might ask those students to independently and at their own pace apply that learning to cognitively-demanding tasks, such as a counting collection, story problem, performance task, or game tied to a learning goal or standards. During the workshop, students have frequent opportunities to work in partnerships or collaborative groups to share and justify their thinking and meet with their teacher in a small group or one-on-one conference.

Prairie Trail administers statewide math screeners to all students three times a year. FastBridge assesses an understanding of foundational math skills in kindergarten and first grade, while in second through fifth grade, they assess comprehensive student understanding and application of grade-level standards. Teachers use this data to inform task selection and guide instruction pacing. In addition, the screening data determine what diagnostic assessment to administer.

Prairie Trail administers diagnostics, such as fact fluency interviews, the number development assessment, or the numeracy project assessments, individually to students to identify their gaps in learning. Using this data, the teacher forms small groups with similar needs and monitors progress towards a goal.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a Heartland Area Education Agency (Heartland AEA) math consultant led the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) in learning about the National Council of Teaching Mathematics (NCTM) eight effective mathematical teaching practices. This past summer, the ILT revisited this work to create a long-term vision grounded in research-based, pedagogical practices ahead of a three-year curriculum adoption process.

In the fall of 2021, staff engaged in professional learning centered on the eight effective Math teaching practices. Teachers focused on one teaching practice at a time, followed by application opportunities with students. Each time the staff resumed professional learning together, they reflected with peers and gathered feedback on how to improve their instruction using their collective expertise to grow the team. Each teaching practice followed this learning cycle throughout the school year. Teachers grew to understand the

necessary balance between conceptual knowledge, application, and procedural skills within each practice and over time. They became more comfortable, allowing students to engage in productive struggle, where students may initially struggle with the task, looking for ways to solve using previous knowledge, and looking for opportunities to advance student thinking with intentional questioning. Prairie Trail Elementary staff plan to continue to improve math instruction by taking a deeper dive into student mathematical practices in the fall of 2022.

#### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The science curriculum aligns with Iowa's science standards, which correlate to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). These standards include physical science, life science, earth and space science, and engineering. Students engage in deep learning of concepts that cut across domains and scaffold year-to-year. The web-based resource, Discovery Science, is used to support instruction.

Teachers utilize performance scales and a pacing guide created by the district's Curriculum Leadership Team (CLT) to direct instruction. The performance scales identify desired outcomes of meeting a standard. The pacing guide differentiates the focus standards, where teachers spend most time instructing and reporting from the foundational and introductory standards. Using these two tools is extremely important to maintain consistency across all district elementary schools as students transition between online to in-person learning modes during the pandemic.

Classrooms use a project-based learning approach in which students engage in an in-depth investigation to answer a driving question tied to the standards. This is consistent with the building's MTSS process in placing the cognitive demand on the student. In this approach, students record their prior knowledge about a topic and then collaborate with peers to group ideas under student-created headings. These ideas are synthesized into a classwide concept web and used to formulate curiosity and questions about a topic. Students then explore the topic through field experiences, experiments, books, online resources, and interviews with experts to answer their questions. Teachers gather data through conferring with students and anecdotal notes. Students choose to represent their learning, stating their claims and evidence, through various performance tasks. These tasks could take the form of a model, essay, poster, experiment, or speech.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The social studies curriculum aligns with the Iowa Core Standards, including content and inquiry standards. The content standards begin with a more egocentric perspective in kindergarten and develop into a more worldly perspective by fifth grade. The content standards include behavioral sciences, civics and government, economics, financial literacy, geography, and history, supported through an online resource and many content-specific texts. Teachers use these texts to strengthen content literacy by focusing on critical reading skills and vocabulary development.

Classrooms use project-based learning (PBL), including a driving question: "What services can you provide to your school or community?" Kindergarten and fifth-grade students also partner with the local affiliate of Junior Achievement (JA), a national non-profit organization, to learn about financial literacy, civic engagement, the free enterprise system, and connect their learning in school with the real world. In addition, kindergarten guardians and community members volunteer their time to read stories and lead lessons with students to localize this learning further. Fifth-grade students participate in BizTown, which is a simulated town. This learning experience allows elementary school students to operate banks, manage restaurants, write checks, and vote for mayor. For this process, students create resumes and apply for jobs. School board members and district leadership interview students and suggest a business or civic role for which they are best suited. BizTown is another opportunity for parent volunteers and participation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when students could not physically go to the simulation site, teachers created an on-site opportunity to teach students the same civic engagement and financial literacy skills through a carnival, using items from the PTO-sponsored Fun Night.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade engage daily for 45 minutes during one of five content-specific areas: Art, Physical Education, General Music, Guidance/Social Emotional Learning, and Media Integration. The teachers of these content areas are accountable for grade-level learning standards, providing individual student growth, and offering engagement opportunities to students.

In general music, kindergarten and first-grade students demonstrate musical engagement through singing, moving, and playing instruments. In second through fifth grade, the focus is on rhythmic and tonal literacy. Students in fourth and fifth grade present one vocal music concert each year. In addition, parents of kindergarten and second-grade students attend a music class during Music Spotlight Visits annually. Music field trips occur in the third grade, attending The Nutcracker and a Des Moines Symphony Orchestra performance in the fourth grade.

Fifth-grade students have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and participate in the band. As part of an engaging instrumental music curriculum, students learn instrument mechanics, musical literacy, performance etiquette, and the cultural significance of music worldwide. They also learn social-emotional skills, including collaboration skills required to play in sync and the ability to allow themselves to make honest mistakes and learn from them.

All students receive a comprehensive and scaffolded school counseling program. Instruction focuses on school skills, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, and career readiness during weekly guidance. In addition to core social-emotional learning, students who need more support move to tier two small groups. Examples of groups include school readiness, coping skills, and relationship skills. The social worker and counselors support teachers and families by providing resources to address the social-emotional needs of the whole child.

All students in kindergarten through fifth grade attend a media class. The goal of the media program is to empower students to be responsible citizens who are skilled users of information, demonstrate digital wellness, and develop an appreciation of literature. During class, students focused on using their Chromebook to access the tools needed to continue and further their learning at home during different modes of instruction.

The visual arts program at Prairie Trail Elementary cultivates skills for learning, boosts academic achievement, and enhances traditionally-underserved students' educational experience. As artists, students grow in critical thinking by utilizing the planning process to make informed choices. Students are encouraged to analyze their artwork and the artwork of others, using each other's insight to refine their pieces. Open-mindedness comes into play as the children explore various mediums such as drawing, painting, ceramics, printmaking, fiber arts, sculpture, mixed media, and technology. Students develop their listening, writing, and speaking skills as they apply the vocabularies of art and design to the subject matter. They synergize and produce collaborative works of art as a whole school annually to increase civic engagement

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

In 2019, the ILT began to strengthen the MTSS system to create a more collaborative, efficient, and transparent data-driven system to support the varying needs of all students. The ILT developed a four-step process: 1.) Administer universal screeners to all students three times a year; 2.) Administer diagnostic

assessments to target a student's instructional focus; 3.) Collaborate with all stakeholders to match district-approved interventions to the identified instructional focus; and 4.) Implement the interventions and collect ongoing data with fidelity.

These collaborative conversations, called Screening Reviews, are held every twelve weeks, beginning in the fall. In between Screening Reviews, ongoing data analysis occurs every six weeks in progress monitoring reviews. Then, PLCs analyze the data to determine a student's learning trajectory. The instructional plan continues if a student is trending above the goal line. Still, if the data is trending below the goal line, then PLCs collaborate on the way to intensify or change the intervention.

In 2020, the MTSS process led the ILT to create a digital student workbook, which helps staff gather, organize, and track student progress. This workbook is the point where the MTSS process came to fruition. The workbook provides a historical perspective of a student's intervention, guiding decision-making. It also illustrates the alignment of tiered intervention between the general education setting and critical partners and alignment among support systems throughout the building. Staff discovered the process used for literacy was so beneficial that they replicated it for math and behavior in each grade level. This process creates a cohesive building-wide system for data collection and analysis.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Tailoring instruction to diverse students starts by getting to know the individual student. The staff at Prairie Trail Elementary takes time to learn about student cultures, backgrounds, hobbies, learning styles, and unique traits. As a result, students exceeding grade-level academic expectations have the opportunity to participate in gifted and talented opportunities. The Cognitive Abilities Test, an assessment that measures students' reasoning skills with different verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal questions, is used to determine students who qualify for our Extended Learning Program (AELP). The instruction includes many different strategies, such as differentiating the content from the grade-level core standard, adapting other processes, or differentiating the final product. In collaboration with the classroom teacher, flexible groups receive additional opportunities. The partnership is data-driven and solution-oriented to ensure students are given quality instruction at their academic level. Students are gathered from multiple classrooms, allowing them to interact in a broader range of social groups and enhance their confidence and interactions with others. These groups are based on tiered instruction and extend grade-level science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) educational opportunities.

The Prairie Trail Elementary staff believes high-achieving students learn differently and retain information longer than their peers. Whether they receive extended learning programming or not, differentiated programming through the MTSS process allows these students to go beyond the scope of a regular classroom curriculum. Their instruction focuses on individual strengths, learning skills, content exploration, communication, and creative thinking processes. These opportunities enable students to develop higher-order thinking skills, divergent thinking, and creative problem-solving. By exposing students to a diverse range of opinions, thoughts, and backgrounds, teachers encourage them to be more open-minded as adults in the workplace.

### **3c. Special education:**

Prairie Trail Elementary's mission is to prepare every student for personal success. Currently, the school data identifies students with an Individualized Learning Plan (IEP) as performing lower than their peers. For example, 89 percent of Prairie Trail Elementary's total population scored at benchmark on the statewide winter literacy assessment, and 59 percent of students with an IEP scored at benchmark. On the statewide winter math assessment, 90 percent of the total population scored at benchmark, and 85 percent of students with an IEP scored at benchmark.

The special education team is involved in every step of the MTSS process, from gathering and analyzing data to collaboratively problem-solving during the screening and progress monitoring reviews. As students move from tier two to more intense tier-three instruction, teachers often engage in more in-depth problem-solving conversations during Student Assistance Team (SAT) meetings. A student may also be

recommended for an evaluation by the local AEA to determine if an IEP may best meet the student's needs. Since the AEA utilizes the workbooks on an ongoing basis, they can conduct a more efficient and thorough evaluation.

Students with IEPs receive core and supplemental instruction from the general education teacher and additional supplemental instruction from the special education teacher. This supplemental instruction focuses on all goal areas, including reading, writing, math, behavior, speech, fine motor, and adaptive behavior. Tier three instruction provided by special education teachers utilizes specialized materials and is in addition to tier two instruction. Specialized instruction increases time, frequency, or duration beyond the general education intervention. In addition, individualized instruction aligns with interventions from other critical partners. The special education team uses an adapted version of the MTSS workbook weekly to analyze data and track instructional decision-making.

**3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

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

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

The Prairie Trail Elementary staff believes everyone can be a leader. Therefore, all students are respected and viewed as leaders through a collaborative environment that empowers students to shape their school. As a result, the students are motivated to come to a safe, caring, and positive environment each day, celebrating their strengths and inviting them to take on purposeful leadership roles. Students have opportunities to serve in leadership roles in their classrooms and around the building. Students fill out job applications and interview for building-wide roles. Students also have opportunities to apply and interview for a position on the student leadership team. This team consists of representatives from each grade level. The team’s mission is to “work together as a team to create a positive culture at Prairie Trail.”

Prairie Trail Elementary staff also create a positive environment for students by acknowledging student and staff leadership weekly during a special announcement called Hawk Hero. When a teacher observes a student practicing one of the Leader in Me habits, they receive recognition during this program. In addition, student leaders plan monthly assemblies focusing on one of the Seven Habits of Highly Successful Students. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, assemblies have turned into virtual opportunities available to families. The goal in the coming year is to establish student clubs based on their hobbies and interests.

The Prairie Trail staff works to create a safe and trusting environment for students. This standard comes alive through school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which emphasizes the expectations that leaders are respectful, responsible, and safe. Posters with examples of expected behaviors receive prominent placement throughout the building. These expectations are reinforced school-wide with positive and specific feedback and non-tangible reinforcements such as fist bumps, high fives, and thumbs up. In addition, staff explicitly model and continuously review the expectations for common areas, including the lunchroom, hallway, bathroom, and playground. Before the pandemic, more than 90 percent of students reported feeling safe at school. Even though the pandemic, greater than 80 percent of students continued to report feeling safe at school.

The Prairie Trail Elementary staff ensures each student has at least one trusted adult at school. Teachers believe each child’s educational experience is a partnership with the parent and student, taking it from an expectation to a building-wide commitment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers went beyond their contractual obligations to provide as much normalcy as possible to students. They dropped materials and food on their doorstep and held virtual reading conferences. They scheduled times to call and check in to maintain a positive relationship and let students know they cared. Even during unprecedented circumstances, staff and families collaborated to continue to educate students.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Prairie Trail Elementary focuses on building student, family, and community partnerships to provide an exceptional education for all students. Teachers set up positive relationships with families through introductory letters and a back-to-school night. Teachers reach out to families in the first weeks of school to share positive news and ask families if they have any questions or concerns. Ongoing communication occurs through picture-sharing applications, newsletters, emails, phone calls, and a building Facebook page. Formal communication occurs through report cards and parent-teacher conferences. This commitment to partnering with families resulted in an attendance rate of 99.5 percent for the fall conference this year, demonstrating the high priority placed on family engagement in their child’s education.

Prairie Trail Elementary has many volunteers and visitors that support students and further instill the local commitment to service in our community. They support community outreach opportunities such as helping students prepare meals for Meals from the Heartland, an organization that fights child hunger. Each winter, students are invited to bring canned goods, books, and toys to school to support two local charities. Families transport these items to their destinations. Instead of the typical Valentine’s parties in February, parents help organize classroom friendship parties, focusing on collecting items to be donated to a local youth shelter and

various food pantries.

Over the years, Prairie Trail Elementary staff have organized and led family engagement nights to help families understand and support learning goals at home. One of the family engagement nights focused on reading strategies and allowed families to participate in the One Book, One School initiative. In addition, a community leader partnered with the event to lead learning stations focused on different math games families could play at home to increase number sense. This year, the Student Leadership Team took an active role in helping lead the family engagement night. They organized and led an event to educate families on the Seven Habits of Highly Successful Students.

Family engagement coupled with philanthropy is seen through Prairie Trail Elementary's active PTO. They aim to foster a sense of community, partner with the school to fund key initiatives, and create an engaging academic environment for the students and staff at Prairie Trail Elementary. In this endeavor, they organize family events such as restaurant nights, spirit nights, and school carnivals. They also coordinate an annual fun run called the Prairie Dog Dash that coincides with the yearly Iowa Healthiest State Initiative walk. This event provides a fundraising opportunity for the school and an inclusive and fun experience for our students, parents, and staff. The funds help families in need, provide books and technology for classrooms, and further benefit the service projects in which the school participates. The PTO engages families in opportunities for involvement through a monthly online newsletter and monthly meetings.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Humility, vulnerability, and trust are foundational components of the professional culture at Prairie Trail Elementary. Teachers possess a growth mindset and believe they can learn from one another's ideas and experiences. This mindset is evident within PLCs, directing their plans and professional learning. In addition, the staff works to build capacity within PLCs, so they can lead their data reviews using MTSS workbooks.

Building-level professional learning has taken on many different forms in the last three years. In the spring and fall of 2019, a group of Prairie Trail Elementary teachers attended a national literacy conference and visited model schools associated with a teaching college to bring back new learning and build capacity with the rest of the staff. This group of teachers collaboratively planned differentiated instruction based on their experience and led professional learning with staff on conferring and small group instruction within the literacy workshop model.

In the spring of 2020, to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff planned for events with no road map or visible endpoint. Previous learning on how to effectively implement new literacy strategies quickly changed to learning how to install Zoom or drop digital instructional materials into an online database. Well-thought-out professional development sessions transitioned into a series of short, on-demand screencasts of "how-tos." There was a lot of trial and error, and vulnerability was high. Within a couple of weeks, teachers taught each other how to record and post learning, read aloud to a virtual audience, and run an engaging morning meeting via Zoom. PLCs continued through video calls, and teachers continued to innovate. Once again, the staff proved their resiliency and ingenuity.

In the summer of 2020, staff proactively explored online tools that provided asynchronous learning to students in a virtual setting. Kindergarten and first-grade teachers collaborated on a website template, while second through fifth-grade teachers collaborated on a Google Slides and Google Classroom template. Staff having a consistent platform for lower and upper elementary increased students' and families' success in navigating learning. The multiple modes of learning also created natural opportunities for professional learning.

### **4. School Leadership:**

The principal strongly believes the classroom teacher has the most significant impact on student learning. Grounded and guided by best practice, the principal provides training and resources for staff to meet students' changing and ongoing needs. The goal is to create an environment in which staff are empowered to

lead whole school improvement through their own growth and regular examination of data. This is founded on a basis of vulnerability and humility. One example of this culture is in teachers' willingness to be vulnerable when they are unsure of their next step during six-week data reviews. Because of the culture established by building leadership, it allows colleagues to voice this uncertainty, providing opportunity for collaboration on how to best meet the needs of all students.

Collaboration with all stakeholders is central to the principal's leadership style. At all times, when focus on student needs, the team consistently evaluates the skills and resources a teacher will need to move student performance forward.

The principal guides the ILT with this same focus on collaboration and vulnerability. This team consists of, general and special education teachers, the instructional coach, and the SAM (School Administrative Manager). Their mission is to learn together to provide quality professional development to the staff. The ILT meets regularly to review new learning, collect feedback from colleagues, and identify the next steps for learning.

There are several opportunities for teachers to exhibit leadership characteristics. Ankeny Schools has a District Leadership Team consisting of three representatives from Prairie Trail Elementary. They learn best practices in teaching and learning and develop a method to bring this learning back to the building ILT. Often, they then facilitate the professional learning with their colleagues on these best practices. Teachers can be teacher leaders by participating in the Mentor and Mentee program, along with the instructional coach, to provide timely and frequent feedback to the new teachers, investing in their growth both in the building and within the district. Prairie Trail Elementary has two representatives on the district's Curriculum Leadership Team, whose mission is to identify priority standards, adopt resources, and create an implementation plan to support these standards. This benefits the entire school in implementing new curriculum by ensuring the new standards are implemented with fidelity.

During the 2020-2021 school year, the principal, SAM, instructional coach, and other staff ensured students received high-quality instruction through three different instructional modes (Hybrid, Virtual and Traditional) by establishing a team mentality amongst teachers. There were many examples of team members helping each other teach in an unfamiliar way. One success story involves a veteran teacher who put her hands in the air after one week of virtual instruction and stated, "I just did something I never thought I could do: teach 100 percent virtually." The staff synergized and shared knowledge and expertise to create this supportive environment established by the building leadership.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

It is essential to the Prairie Trail staff for students to feel safe and welcomed, establishing a building culture that embraces diversity. This belief is evident in the strong relationships the staff has with families. As the community continues to grow, there is a celebration of the fact that the student population will become more diverse. Currently, Prairie Trail Elementary has a small percentage of racial and income diversity, and students who qualify for language services attend an alternate attendance center. However, the learning staff engaged in to strengthen the MTSS process and create a digital student work book established a foundation for the building to support all students in achieving success. Next year, as language services transition to all elementary buildings in the district, Prairie Trail Elementary is well-positioned to welcome and support these students due to this work.

Teachers learn about diverse backgrounds and how this impacts their learning. They collaborate with an English Language Learner instructor to learn instructional strategies to meet the needs of these learners. Classrooms highlight cultural celebrations to build awareness and appreciation for all students. The school and community's commitment to service coupled with the Leader in Me learning, brings together the importance of respect and relationships for students. One of the paradigms of habit Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood is that individuals can have a greater impact when there is a basis of trust and respect. It is common practice on Prairie Trail Elementary's playground to hear students addressing disagreements by working to understand the other's perspective to come to a solution.

The students' learning partnered with the staff and community's commitment to service came to life when a new family moved to the area this past year. The family had significant needs upon arriving and the school community wrapped around to support them. The social worker connected the family with local resources, organized a collection for furniture and other household needs provided by the PTO, and the school community provided clothes and bedding to welcome this family and make them truly feel at home.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The most instrumental practice for Prairie Trail Elementary's success is our commitment to collaboratively create individual plans for students to increase learning . After each assessment period, critical partners examine core instruction to ensure they meet the majority of the students' needs. Then, following a data review, the staff develops an instructional plan addressing necessary changes if core instruction needs to improve. Often, this plan is accomplished through a coaching cycle where the instructional coach teams with the classroom teacher to establish an instructional routine or feedback on instructional moves that will cause growth for their students.

If the core instruction meets the needs of the majority of the students, then the focus, both in the classroom and during teacher planning, is on those students who are not achieving benchmark status. Students who are not at benchmark receive a diagnostic measure to determine the gap in learning. Next, the PLC determines an instructional focus and the supplemental strategy and resources to lessen the gap. They also identify a critical partner to provide additional instruction. The general education teacher and the critical partner, which is defined as the individual instructor who will be responsible to provide additional targeted instruction in collaboration with the general education to ensure the student's supplemental instruction is aligned to the greatest need and is specific to the child. Finally, the monthly data review examines the plan's effectiveness and determines if it should continue or if adjustments need to be made, such as the instructional focus, time, or intensity.

This process has evolved over the past several years. Prairie Trail Elementary has created a student workbook that organizes the type of student data, which is easily accessible by all staff. This process helps create efficient PLC conversations with a strong focus on the student. The staff is experiencing positive results when frequent progress checks occur, and alignment is a reality.