

U.S. Department of Education
2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Darla Harstad

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

Official School Name Woodland Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1410 McKay Avenue South Suite 101

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

City Alexandria State MN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 56308-5250

County Douglas County

Telephone (320) 762-3300 Fax (320) 762-3301

Web site/URL <http://www.alexandria.k12.mn.us/do> E-mail djharstad@alexandria.k12.mn.us
main/762

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*Mrs. Julie Critz E-mail jcritz@alexandria.k12.mn.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Alexandria Public School District Tel. (320) 762-2141

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2011 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
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.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	33	37	70
1	32	38	70
2	32	35	67
3	45	29	74
4	46	34	80
5	46	35	81
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	234	208	442

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 93 % White
 - 2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2015 – 2016 school year: 30%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	96
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	36
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	132
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	433
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.305
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	30

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
2 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41 %
Total number students who qualify: 167
8. Students receiving special education services: 18 %
75 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.

- 6 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 10 Emotional Disturbance
- 1 Hearing Impairment
- 2 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 2 Orthopedic Impairment
- 8 Other Health Impaired
- 16 Specific Learning Disability
- 32 Speech or Language Impairment
- 1 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 18 Developmentally Delayed

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	19
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	18
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 25:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	94%	95%	95%	95%	95%
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 2016.

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 X
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 school mission statement is, Fostering relationships that inspire engagement and growth of the whole child.
16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

PART III – SUMMARY

The National Blue Ribbon Program celebrates schools across the country for providing an ideal environment to help all students reach their full potential academically, physically, socially, and emotionally. This accomplishment requires hard work and collaboration of students, families, educators, and community members. Woodland Elementary School's passion and success in these areas make it an ideal candidate for this honor.

The Woodland community serves approximately 450 students in grades K-5. Being the newest of six elementary schools in the Alexandria area, built in 2009, Woodland Elementary is situated on a 48-acre site designed to provide a flexible learning environment. This setting provides unique outdoor experiences such as a school garden, nature trails for snowshoeing and walking, an outdoor classroom, and large open playground areas. Besides using the outdoor amenities during the day we use them to increase participation of community members and families in special events (i.e. "Winter Wonderland"- sledding/snowshoeing, family picnic, planting the garden, Woodland "Fun-Run").

Woodland continues to serve the highest number of Alexandria families who qualify for free and reduced meals. Many of our families lack the necessary resources to access services and supplies so our social workers help coordinate support for students in need. For example, our social workers have lined up families with resources such as mental health support, winter clothing, the Backpack Attack (weekend food program), snacks, school supplies, etc. Regardless of income level, new families receive a welcoming phone call from our social worker to check in on success of the transition period and to answer questions.

Schoolwide, our students adhere to a Code of Conduct which establishes a safe, comfortable learning environment. Students, staff, parents, and community members dedicate themselves to the following expectations: Respect, Honesty, Kindness, Responsibility, and Fairness. As identified by Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) research, these expectations are explicitly taught and practiced. Common language is used by all staff and students to foster consistency of expectations across settings.

In addition to behavior expectations, character skills are developed in the classrooms through resources such as Responsive Classroom, ENVOY nonverbal management, Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) and Zones of Regulation. Monthly character skills are taught in the classroom and reinforced through weekly grade level celebrations. At the weekly gatherings we celebrate students who have demonstrated "bucket filling" behaviors based on the book *Have you Filled a Bucket Today?* by Carol McCloud. Student's receive bucket slips when they demonstrate an exceptional example of following the Code of Conduct. Slips are drawn weekly for recognition and prizes. Monthly all school assemblies bring the entire student body together to discuss a new social or character skill, many times including students in the presentation to teach the skill. Students who need additional skill development meet with a social worker through the Challenge program.

Academically, Woodland staff are committed to providing world-class learning opportunities embracing a personalized and responsive approach. Woodland implements Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) across three tiers to meet the needs of diverse learners ranging from enrichment to most-at risk. Data are used on a consistent basis by teams to drive decisions as we seek to continually improve at both ends of the spectrum. Teaching staff are highly trained in the balanced literacy framework to differentiate reading and writing instruction. The Everyday Math curriculum combined with AVMR/SNAP teaches math skills to prepare students for real world math situations. Science specialists deliver instruction based on the scientific method. In addition to the core curriculum, Woodland fosters the success of the whole child through physical education, art, music, and media opportunities.

Curriculum is enhanced through interactive boards and presentation systems in the classroom. Woodland students also have access to technology through a computer lab, iPads, and a 1:1 ratio of Chromebooks in grades 2-5. Some digital skills such as coding are developed in our Makerspace which allows students to learn through exploration. This access to technology prepares students to be college and career ready for an ever increasing digital world.

We work to develop independence and allow choice in as many ways as possible. One such example is the use of Genius Hour where students select an area of interest and develop a product or presentation that is communicated with others, often times globally.

In summary, Woodland Elementary School demonstrates exemplary use of curriculum, programs, initiatives, and supports to help students reach their full potential. We focus on personalizing our instruction, being responsive to our students and families, and comprehensive in our offerings. This is what makes Woodland an excellent candidate for the National Blue Ribbon Award.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Our literacy content corresponds to the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards of key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, and range of reading and level of text complexity. These begin at the kindergarten level and progress in difficulty each year. Lucy Calkins reading and writing units of study provide a key resource for aligning these standards in a responsive, personalized manner. Our literacy curriculum includes strategies that require students to reread, ask questions and transfer specific skills to their independent reading. Kindergarten and 1st grade teachers put the greatest emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics with 2nd and 3rd grade developing strong skills on fluency. Comprehension is interwoven through all grades with an increasing complexity. Spelling words are a combination of high frequency words and words that follow a particular rule. The weekly lists are personalized by using student performance on these sets of words to develop individual lists.

Woodland teachers instruct all students in reading and writing through the balanced literacy approach. Teachers begin with a whole group mini-lesson and then move into small groups or work with individuals to further guide students at their level. Teachers use pre and post reading and writing assessments to assess growth and to identify misconceptions and areas of need prior to instruction. These assessments are used to form small groups and tailor mini-lessons for the whole class. With this model, teachers and students are able to address standards at, above, and below grade-level in order to be responsive to students' needs. Students self-assess themselves against lesson objectives by using student friendly rubrics which address the standards.

Our teachers are creative in enhancing students mathematical knowledge through engaging students in their learning from whole group to small group lessons, math centers, games, hands-on activities, and online digital options. The strands in the Minnesota State Standards that we cover in grades K-5 include numbers and operation, algebra, and geometry and measurement. Data analysis and probability begins in 3rd grade. Teachers are addressing the versatile understanding of numbers and how to enhance students' understanding of number sense rather than teaching rote operations for computation. To do this we teach mathematical thinking starting with forward and backward number sequences, numeral identification, structuring numbers to 20 and beginning addition and subtraction in Kindergarten. In 1st grade, students continue these skills and begin learning place value, multiplication and division. Students in 2nd-5th grade continue developing their mathematical sense of place value and number operations. We have adopted the Everyday Math Curriculum because of its emphasis on mental math and spiraling sequence of concepts. The growth mindset culture and application of math concepts to real-life help students develop a positive attitude towards math. We have a math interventionist who works closely with classroom teachers to identify students and standards that require remediation as well as students who benefit from enrichment opportunities after demonstrating mastery of the standards.

The social studies units were written with the Understanding by Design framework. The units in Kindergarten-3rd grade focus on the Minnesota State Standard strands of citizenship and government and economics with an introduction to geography and history. A specific focus in 4th grade centers on geography of the United States and 5th grade digs into the history of America up to 1800. We know learning is cross-curricular which helps reinforce learning; therefore, there is an integration of social studies concepts into literacy. This is also where many teachers tie in civic learning. Through units of study, read alouds and book clubs, teachers embed civic learning standards such as understanding that the United States is shaped by historical figures, places and events. For example, fourth graders study the American Revolution in a robust, interactive reading unit. Another example of addressing the civic learning standards is when our second graders write a letter in response to a concern or a want in an effort to shape school policy. This engages students in being an "informed and engaged citizen" and "taking action to solve problems and shape public policy."

Our hands-on science model targets student understanding of the scientific process. UbD designed lessons are driven by student data and include opportunities for research, observation, experiments and teamwork.

The content aligns to the Minnesota Standards including the nature of science and engineering, physical science, earth science, and life science. We focus on teaching students to ‘think like a scientist’ through inquiry and problem based activities. Our science specialist provides experiential opportunities through labs, using our outdoor setting, and embedding STEM based activities. Volunteers from the community engage with students during the science fair, present hands-on learning at a local water festival, and help our students as we plant our school garden.

In all core areas, Woodland staff engage students in each lesson by relaying the learning objective/target so that students are aware of what they will be learning and what they should be able to do by the end of the lesson. Following the lesson, students engage once again with that learning target by reflecting on their level of understanding. The most powerful learning comes when students are engaged, accountable, and responsive to their own learning.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Woodland, we highly value the development and success of our students across all curriculum areas. This is why our school operates on a six day cycle to facilitate scheduling of classes in other curriculum areas, such as art, physical education, music, and technology.

Art is provided for students in grades 1-5 for 60 minutes per cycle. Woodland students receive a holistic art education that incorporates art history, art production, aesthetics, and art criticism through Discipline Based Art Education (D.B.A.E.). This approach easily integrates strands from across the curriculum to increase rigor and depth of concepts. In each class, we focus on an essential question based on “The Studio Habits of Mind.” During the school year, we have one art show that features two pieces of artwork from each student, one of which is framed. It is important that each student has a chance to shine, and artwork is often displayed throughout the school. At Woodland Elementary, a variety of mediums are used including clay, fiber art, painting, printmaking, drawing, metal, and sculpture materials.

Students receive Physical Education in grades 1-5 for 30 minutes, three times per cycle and Kindergarten, 30 minutes, four times per cycle week. The goal of our physical education program is to provide students a variety of experiences with games or activities to increase their enjoyment of movement, along with understanding that movement is beneficial to a healthy body and emphasizing the importance of lifelong fitness activities. We follow the National Physical Education Standards to guide our curriculum. Students participate in cardiovascular activities, cooperative skills, manipulative skills, movement patterns and fitness skills throughout the year. We believe that our program promotes academic learning, builds self esteem, develops cooperation, teamwork and sportsmanship. It promotes a physically active lifestyle and is an integral part of the education of the whole child.

Music is taught to students in grades K-5 for 30 minutes, three times per cycle week. The key ideas and skills we want students to develop include reading and writing music, performing and presenting music, creating and making music and responding to and critiquing musical performances. Students participate in music classes through singing, moving, playing instruments and listening. Musical experiences are provided from a variety of historical periods and cultural backgrounds. Students are also given the opportunity to participate in a public performance at least one time each year. We use Quaver’s Marvelous World of Music online curriculum which aligns with Minnesota State Academic standards in music. This curriculum is highly engaging for students, standards based, and puts emphasis on music literacy. We use district grade level assessments based on standards to measure student progress. Students are exposed to the use of technology in music through the use of iPads and chromebooks. These resources are used to allow student opportunities to create and study music in new ways. Our goal is to create students who are aware of the music around them and are able to use music throughout their lives.

K-1 students have technology learning opportunities through online programs that support basic skills being taught in the classroom. Students in grades 2-3 receive beginning keyboarding skills twice a week for 30 minutes and also have access to Chromebooks in the classroom. Students in grades 4-5 receive instruction from our media specialist one time per cycle week for 60 minutes. Instruction from the specialist is aligned to the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards. The 4th and 5th graders receive

a heavy emphasis on Standard 2 - Social, Ethical and Human Issues through the Common Sense Media curriculum focusing on digital citizenship. Another key skill in our instruction includes the ability to assess websites for validity and accuracy.

A character skill program was developed by educators to focus on a monthly skill through both classroom and whole school activities. Each skill area has a correlating text that teachers use to illustrate application of the skill and to prompt discussion. The character skills include: Awareness of Self & Others, Character Traits, Understanding and Dealing with Emotions, Relationships, Advocacy of Self & Others, Problem Solving, Bullying, and Cyberbullying.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Woodland Elementary School embraces the MTSS model, which includes implementing a variety of instructional methods, assessments, interventions, and data-based problem solving across three tiers. Student needs are met at varying levels of intensity in both academic and social/emotional/behavioral areas.

In order to meet the diverse academic needs of students, differentiated instruction takes place in the Tier 1 core curriculum, which includes balanced literacy with guided reading and strategy groups, reading and math intervention times, and writing instruction. In all curriculum areas, Thinking Maps are used to visually represent student thinking in eight key areas of cognitive processing. Technology provides the opportunity to individualize learning using programs such as IXL, RazKids, and Reading Eggs. Since Woodland is high performing in the area of math, a learning resource teacher leads daily math enrichment groups. Qualifying students participate in gifted/talented programs such as Math Masters, our High Potential Program, and/or Junior Great Books.

Screening data using STAR reading and STAR math are collected three times a year for all students to determine those needing enrichment as well as those at-risk of not meeting grade-level expectations. The Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment system further identifies each student's instructional reading level for guided reading groups. Likewise the Add+Vantage Math Recovery (AVMR) assessments measure basic math concepts to group students based on areas of need. In addition to academic curriculum and assessment, students are taught school-wide behavioral expectations using the Code of Conduct and data are collected on each student using a report card rubric rating three times per year. The Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) work within Tier 1 to analyze student data frequently and identify possible reasons for lack of progress. They select interventions for whole class or small group and monitor growth after the intervention is implemented.

For students who need more than core instruction, Tier 2 includes learning resource teachers, paraprofessionals, and an at-risk social worker for scheduled intervention time. The Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) is used as a diagnostic assessment for reading and math, while the Social, Academic, and Emotional Risk Screener (SABERS) is used to identify student behavioral goals. The Student Intervention Team (SIT) meets weekly to use these data to problem solve, plan, initiate, and monitor interventions. For instance, a 2nd grade student recently began both a small group targeted reading intervention (PRESS--Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites) with a learning resource teacher for phonics as well as a work skills intervention with the social worker using the Zones of Regulation. If the student does not progress adequately, other alternative reading interventions include Leveled Literacy Intervention, Minnesota Reading Corp, or Orton Gillingham. The social worker might increase intensity of services by adding a Daily Behavior Rating Scale (DBR) for the student to receive explicit feedback on a work skills goal. These Tier 2 academic and behavioral interventions are used to ensure high levels of learning and achievement for students performing below grade-level; however, for a few students even more support is required.

Tier 3 at Woodland includes more intensive, frequent, and targeted programming that is defined by the SIT. For example, if the second grade student continues to have minimal progress in Tier 2 reading and behavior supports, further analysis may be necessary, such as a "Can't Do vs. Won't Do" assessment to help determine if there is a function to the behavior. In this case the student may be escaping challenging work and need an increase of social work support including daily 1:1 skills and an incentive program for best

effort. Additional academic interventions at this intensive level include those with a strong research base, such as Barton, Saxon Math, Edmark, and Incremental Rehearsal. At the very highest level of support, a possible referral to the Child Study Team may result if minimal progress is made and a disability is suspected. Special Education staff members may initiate a comprehensive evaluation to determine eligibility and needs. Once students receive special education services, the Woodland special education team continually works on dynamic groupings, goal setting, research-based curriculum/programming, progress monitoring, and problem solving to help these students succeed.

Through the use of MTSS, Woodland meets the diverse needs of students in all group by implementing a variety of instructional methods, assessments, and interventions across three tiers of layered support. Most needs are met in the strong core curriculum; however, programs, interventions, and services are also used for enrichment, targeting skills, and intense remediation across academic and social/emotional/behavioral areas.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Woodland Elementary School has a strong and unique culture supporting the whole child academically and socially/emotionally. Our school academically engages and motivates students using the growth mindset philosophy, meaning “anything is possible through hard work.” Teachers promote this mindset by modeling how making mistakes is a pathway to learning. Visitors walking through Woodland will see this mindset portrayed; for example, 4th graders created posters representing the growth mindset from famous quotes: “I have not failed, I just found 10,000 ways that don't work” -Thomas Edison. A culture of growth mindset creates an environment where all staff and students persevere through challenges and encourage one another. We feel safe to potentially make mistakes through the process of growing and learning.

Within Woodland classrooms teachers also work to develop the whole child through activities such as morning meetings, classroom buddies (i.e. where an older grade pairs with a younger grade) and community outreach projects. These activities build cooperative learning and teamwork skills where each student feels valued and respected. Learning about contributing to the greater good builds a positive school climate reflected in respectful peer interactions. When asked to describe the culture at Woodland, students use words like “helping,” “fun,” “team,” “bright,” and “positive mindset.”

Likewise, leadership focuses time and resources on creating a positive and encouraging working environment for all staff by valuing input on decision making, including not only teachers, but paraprofessionals, office, maintenance and food service staff as well. Collaboratively we created Woodland’s mission statement and behavior expectations to ensure everyone’s voice was heard. Passion project teams are another way to further incorporate a personal touch to our work environment. Team members select the focus area they are most passionate about and work together creating activities to involve students and staff. Activities include staff luncheons, school spirit days, and staff wellness activities among others. Staff are acknowledged for their hard work and dedication through a standing ovation program and staff “shoutouts.”

Staff and students at Woodland enjoy coming to learn and work each day due to a positive school culture. Our environment emphasizes respect, teamwork, and growth mindset to encourage and recognize hard work. Woodland’s strong and unique culture results in academic and social/emotional growth.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Establishing strong relationships with families is an important value at Woodland Elementary School. We encourage families to take a key role in their child’s educational team through offering a range of engagement activities and providing frequent and clear communication. This, in turn, increases home practice of skills learned and student success. In the fall, we welcome families to an open house that sets the stage for an exciting year and introduces the year’s school-wide theme. During the year, parents are informed of student academic performance through conferences with growth oriented goal setting, student work being sent home and personal contacts made with the teacher through phone calls, text messaging and emails. Communication is also made with a monthly newsletter.

Our Parent Advisory Council (PAC) provides opportunities for parents to get involved. Some of our family events include Woodland Winter Wonderland, Book Bingo, Family Math Night, Family Literacy Night, Morning Muffins with Mom and Dad, Painting with Parents, and music or theatrical performances. Last year our PAC held a fundraiser to purchase snowshoes to be used on our outdoor trail. Another PAC sponsored event is our Cupi-gram sales during which parents can purchase Valentine’s Day gifts with profits going into a Caring Kids fund. This fund is used to support students with school supply or clothing needs for families who are not financially able. Our staff also help students in need through use of their own money, grants, and community funding. Examples include students being sent home with a backpack of food for the weekend through a United Way program and holiday gifts being purchased and delivered to Woodland families through an Angel Tree event.

Additional involvement with the community is essential for school improvement and success. Student results, information on daily happenings, and celebrations are shared with community members through our local newspaper, the district website, brochures, and a school Twitter account. Community members volunteer in programs like Junior Achievement, Lunch Buddies, tutoring, reading to students, Junior Great Books, Readers Theatre, and working in the school garden. Students from the high school developed the details including instructional lessons to begin an organic recycling program at our school. Community organizations also allow teachers the opportunity to make purchases to practice innovative ideas, such as through the Alexandria Education Foundation Grant. This involvement between Woodland and the community supports the success of students, encourages cross age relationships, and builds positive experiences for the whole community.

3. Professional Development:

Woodland Elementary staff are committed to ongoing student growth. We begin the year by analyzing data to develop building goals in reading, math and behavior. Staff development plans are then created to ensure staff members have the necessary training and support to help reach those goals. We believe effective professional development needs to be sustained over time, grounded in research, supported through adequate training and resources, and differentiated for staff members.

Professional development is provided both at the district and building level on designated days in the calendar including full days, late starts and summer workshops. We also include professional development snippets into our monthly staff meetings. Our school believes in the importance of developing capacity from within so many of our initiatives and content areas have internally trained experts to guide the learning of others. This gives us the ability to lead staff learning through instructional coaches who provide individualized development to sustain improvement beyond the professional development days. Teachers reflect on observation data shared by coaches and/or administration and self-assess their performance based on Charlotte Danielson's model "A Framework for Teaching, Enhancing Professional Practice."

Our Building Leadership Team designs the agenda for our professional development days from teacher input and student data in relation to our building goals. We look to provide professional growth through a variety of methods including book studies, unconference learning (self-directed learning), differentiated menus, online opportunities, and workshop style settings. After new learning, we schedule work time to start the implementation of the information. We continue to focus our efforts on a differentiated approach for the varying levels of staff experiences and expertise.

New teachers receive training and support on effective classroom strategies and district curriculum through our New Teacher Induction Program. The program embraces the three key foundations of administrative support, professional development and mentoring. Participation in this program continues through the teacher's entire probationary period with monthly seminars, coaching observations, reflective practice and close collaboration with trained mentors.

Teachers have been trained in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and meet weekly to discuss student data and determine next steps in response to the four corollary questions by Richard Dufour. Training is invested in all staff including teachers, Learning Resource Teachers (LRTs) and paraprofessionals to make sure that staff are highly trained in practices to support students. For example, this year our paraprofessionals have received training on MTSS, Google, Understanding Students in Poverty, PRESS, Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT), and Hidden Biases.

4. School Leadership:

Woodland Elementary has maintained a value on teamwork and collaboration. The following quote from Henry Ford describes it well, "Teamwork: Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; Working together is success." We have a building leadership team model that ensures staff members are represented and informed regarding decisions specifically relating to school improvement goals, staff development action planning, and general site functions. Six staff members hold elected positions for three

years. The building principal is also a part of this team.

The Building Leadership Team (BLT) receives ongoing training to develop leadership skills. Our philosophy is to spend the majority of our time helping to establish a direction, motivate others and promote changes versus spending most of our time in management type activities that focus more on organizing, budgeting and controlling. The BLT works to provide assurance that all students are served fairly and given the best possible support to enhance growth. We do what we can to ensure students do not fall through the cracks by making careful decisions on resources and interventions that best support student needs.

Stakeholder meetings are held throughout the year to allow all staff members that work with a particular child to use current data to make decisions regarding their ongoing support services. We collaborate based on this data to provide appropriate interventions and supports to help all students to grow.

Other student support teams that require leadership from multiple staff members include our Student Intervention Team, our Special Education Team, Student Attendance Team, Professional Learning Teams, and the Behavior Support Team. There are several district based teams that require representation from our building ranging from calendar development to curriculum and assessment. Our building also has Passion Project Teams which allow staff to select an area of passion to focus on to enhance the school experience for both students and staff including Schoolwide Events, Wellness, Behavior, Family Engagement, Student Outreach, Teacher Socials, and School Environment. These leadership roles allow teachers to engage themselves professionally in teams in which they are passionate. Teachers enter these teams with one goal in mind- enhancing each student's education in order for all students to reach their full potential.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Responding to individual student reading needs within an MTSS framework is the single practice that is the most influential to the success of all learners at Woodland Elementary School. In addition to our strong Tier 1 differentiated reading instruction, Woodland uses multiple sources of data to make timely decisions on which students require Tier 2 or 3 reading interventions and what type of intervention they need.

Identifying students in need of further assessment of reading skills occurs during three yearly benchmark periods. Those students falling at or below the 40th percentile on the STAR reading screener, already in intervention, and/or flagged by the teacher are administered a brief diagnostic assessment to determine if the student falls below expected targets. Performance on timed reading passages is used to categorize students into one of four quadrants based on accuracy and fluency to match specific needs with targeted interventions. For instance, students in Quadrant 1, who are fluent and accurate (but lack comprehension), may receive small group intervention using a program called Comprehension Toolkit. Students in Quadrant 2, who read accurately (but lack fluency), may receive intervention through Minnesota Reading Corp or other research-based fluency interventions, such as duet reading or repeated reading. Students in Quadrant 4, who read fluently (but with less accuracy), receive a pencil tap intervention which is proven to increase student self-monitoring. Students who fall in Quadrant 3 often lack basic skills as they are low in both accuracy and fluency so additional diagnostic assessment (e.g., PRESS) is used to determine exactly what phonemic or phonics skills are missing and prescribe targeted research-based interventions.

All of these data are then used by teams (teachers, psychologist, principal, literacy coaches, and interventionists) to schedule students for interventions. The most urgent students who require Tier 3 support might receive daily targeted 1:1 intervention by a reading specialist with weekly progress monitoring, attendance, fidelity checks, and ongoing problem solving. This effective system differentiates those students whose progress monitoring graphs indicate adequate growth versus those who need further problem solving or may have an educational disability. For instance, out of two Woodland fourth graders receiving the same Tier 3 reading fluency intervention, one doubled the expected rate of progress on his words read correct per minute to close the gap from peers, while another student was referred for an evaluation due to minimal progress. Woodland staff are enthusiastic about this model and are continuously refining it to remediate skills and increase long-term reading success. We value and act on the belief that all students have the potential to succeed regardless of individual circumstances.