U.S. Department of Education
2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal <u>Dr. Debra Follman</u>
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name <u>Sweetwater Elementary School</u>
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address <u>1304 2nd Avenue NE</u>
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City <u>Devils Lake</u>   State <u>ND</u>   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) <u>58301-1821</u>

County <u>Ramsey County</u>

Telephone <u>(701) 662-7630</u>   Fax <u>(701) 662-7637</u>

Web site/URL <u>http://www.devils-lake.k12.nd.us/sw</u>   E-mail <u>Deb.Follman@dlschools.org</u>

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* <u>Mr. Matthew Bakke</u>   E-mail <u>Matt.Bakke@dlschools.org</u>
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name <u>Devils Lake 1</u>   Tel. <u>(701) 662-7640</u>

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 <u>Mrs. LeeAnn Johnston</u>
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.

2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.

4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.

5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.

6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.

7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

                                            5 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

   [ ] Urban (city or town)
   [ ] Suburban
   [X] Rural

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	40	28	68
2	39	29	68
3	31	32	63
4	27	31	58
5	0	0	0
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	137	120	257

*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):

32 % American Indian or Alaska Native
1 % Asian
2 % Black or African American
1 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
64 % White
0 % Two or more races
100 % Total

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 13%

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.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred *to* the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	19
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	15
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	34
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	257
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Spanish, Vietnamese

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

2 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 48 %

Total number students who qualify: 124

8. Students receiving special education services: <u>19</u> %

     <u>48</u> Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>3</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>12</u> Developmental Delay	<u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>16</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>4</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9.   Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: <u>23</u>

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school 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   <u>21:1</u>

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

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2019.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes <u>X</u>   No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.   <u>2014</u>

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

The mission of Sweetwater Elementary School to foster relationships and to promote academic, social-emotional, and physical growth with every student every day.

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

Empowering all students to be engaged in a safe, caring and innovative environment with collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking to inspire life-long learning and make a positive impact in an ever-changing world is the vision of Sweetwater Elementary. The school's motto is to be committed to learning in a positive and caring environment.

A systems approach has been used to make a direct impact on the equity and improvement for all students at Sweetwater School. The goal is to improve these systems to ensure that every classroom has an effective teacher who delivers solid core instruction and that all students have the resources and supports they need to be successful academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. Through the AdvancEd/Cognia School Accreditation, a strategy map with goals is established each year. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) has served as the framework for educators to develop lessons reflecting the ND State Standards and pacing guides for instruction. Formative and summative assessments are used to review data regularly and interventions are designed to meet the specific needs of students. Pathways have been developed through the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for reading, math and behavior for a 3-tiered approach to achievement. Professional development is aligned to school and district goals, supports the implementation of researched-based best practices and is collectively determined by teachers and administrators.

Sweetwater Elementary has a first grade through fourth grade enrollment of 257 students. The community has an economy that includes agriculture and light industry. With an enrollment of 1,722 students, the school district encompasses 472 square miles and has three elementary schools, one middle school and a high school. The attendance area of Sweetwater serves students living in low to middle income housing, income-based apartments, rental homes and private homes surrounding the school. Enrollment also includes rural students from the outlying areas, including the Spirit Lake Indian Reservation. The lake has posed a challenge due to the flooding of the closed basin lake. Many acres of farmland have remained flooded and homes inundated with water, posing stresses on the economy and livelihood of the residents. The farming economy has been on a downward trend over the past few years, creating additional hardships on family-owned farms and businesses such as farm equipment sales, grain businesses, seed and chemical companies, and hardware/tool stores.

The core values have become focused on the culture of the school and are critical to the success of students and staff. All staff are champions for students and focusing on the long term rather than the short term retains the motivation. Expecting excellence of one another, most importantly students, regardless of race, socio-economic class, ethnicity, or perceived ability is held to the highest standard. Ensuring a positive voice about the school has culturized the school community and has yielded success for students and the community's perception of the school. Status quo, nor is average, acceptable at Sweetwater Elementary as students deserve the very best every day.

The school district was awarded a North Dakota Comprehensive Striving Readers grant for $1.4 million in 2018 to provide comprehensive literacy instruction. A Literacy Plan was developed to increase capacity for leadership and sustainability, instruction and intervention, standards alignment, assessment and evaluation, professional development and family/community engagement. Focused and systematic classroom instruction and interventions for language arts, based on continual progress monitoring that match specific needs, are provided for all students.

Differentiated instruction occurs within the reading and math blocks to meet the many needs of students. Content, process, products or the learning environment may be tailored and flexible grouping maximizes the achievement of all learners. Formal and informal assessments have become the impetus for instruction and practice. Assessment data is reviewed regularly through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to assist with instructional decisions. The Instructional Coach provides professional development and guidance with standards and assessment data to guide focus topics.

Problem-based learning has been assimilated into classrooms with Genius Hour (Juliani, 2015) as a highlight of the week for students. Pacing guides have been created for Genius Hour, as well as all curricular

areas. Increased student engagement has been a goal with research and learning so students are committed to learning, rather than just compliant. Whole Brain Teaching was implemented for increasing engagement and the use of AdvancEd-Cognia School Accreditation's "Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool" (ELEOT) is used for feedback and goal setting amongst staff. A study of "The Minds of Boys" was conducted to develop common understanding about meeting the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs of elementary boys with the increased rigor and learning expectations in education.

Social-emotional learning is viewed as an important component of the curriculum. Daily lessons are conducted with Second Step, a SEL curriculum. It provides a holistic approach to create a more empathetic society with tools to enable professionals, families, and the community to take an active role in the social-emotional growth and safety of children.

Building family and community efficacy has empowered the school to provide additional learning opportunities for students. A strong focus has been placed on building and creating relationships with parents. Through the use of SeeSaw, a family communication platform, more parents have been engaged in their child's classroom activities and a stronger home-school community has been established. Partnerships external to the school have also been enhanced as the strengths and talents that exist in the community have a strong influence on student learning and development.

The Blue Ribbon School Award for Sweetwater School in 2014 provided a sense of pride and renewed energy for the school, the district, and the community. Community members and organizations respond to requests for committee membership, feedback and support. The Regional Education Association partners with Sweetwater staff to provide modeling and mentoring for other school districts' educators through Instructional Rounds each year. Schools from districts around the state request observations at Sweetwater to view quality education and programs in action. What is most reported is how the education of students and the high levels of achievement are being accomplished through a team effort, which is exemplified by the staff on a daily basis.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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

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

Sweetwater Elementary School utilizes the North Dakota State Standards to drive instruction in all curricular areas. All teachers differentiate instruction within all academic areas for all learners. This differentiated instruction is proactive; is qualitative; provides multiple approaches to content, process, and product; is student-centered; is a blend of whole class, group, and individual instruction; and is ever-changing. The teachers utilize assessment results, teacher observation, and other ongoing assessment strategies to design instruction that meets the needs of each learner with regard to academic level, content, product, and process. Differentiated instruction allows the learners to maximize their capacity as learners, become highly active in their learning process, be motivated about their learning, and provides interest to the learning topic. Through the use of PLCs on a weekly basis, formative and summative assessment data is reviewed to determine programming needs and specific student needs. Additional instruction and practice is also provided in the 21st Century Before and After School Programming (ESP). Teachers and paraprofessionals work with students in whole and small groups to provide targeted instruction and guided practice for increased academic proficiency in the specific areas of need. Information regarding improvements and further needs are continually communicated between classroom teachers, Title I Teachers, the instructional coach, paras and the ESP Program teachers. There is a strong collaborative emphasis that permeates throughout the school.

Student engagement is a strong component of all instruction and classrooms. It is also a focal point for observations/feedback by the instructional coach, counselor, and principal. Social-emotional learning is incorporated, reflecting ND Standards, so that students and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Technology is used to support instruction through interactive SMART boards, Ipads, and computers. Through donations by community organizations and businesses, the school has acquired various technology devices which are used in every classroom, including special education resource room, Title I, music, speech/language and counseling. Differentiating through technology has increased the ability to provide a multitude of strategies and instructional techniques. Websites are listed on the school homepage so that families have access for skill development. The staff provides training for families during Technology Night each year so that they can better understand the purpose of technology and how it can help their child succeed academically and globally.

1b. Reading/English language arts

The Sweetwater Elementary School ELA program is based on evidence-based research. The 90-minute reading block consists of whole group, small group, and individual instruction. Whole-group instruction is a 10-15 minute explicit lesson with a focus on comprehension and word study. Comprehension strategies are taught using a Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional approach (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Students participate in a variety of activities to engage in the comprehension focus such as turn and talks, written response and verbal response. Teachers determine the scope and sequence of the comprehension strategies used through a combination of an evidenced-based ELA program (Benchmark Advance), the state standards, and the use of formative assessments to determine student proficiency. The word study focus lesson consists of identifying spelling patterns while engaging in a variety of word study practices that foster decoding and encoding strategies, such as identifying context clues, and syllabication.

Teachers instruct students in a small group during guided reading. The goal of guided reading is to build independent, fluent readers who can read with prosody and comprehension (Richardson, 2016). Teachers have had extensive training on the Jan Richardson model of guided reading. Students are assessed with the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System to find the independent, instructional and frustrational reading levels. Teachers use this assessment to understand student behaviors in reading accuracy, fluency,

and comprehension. Guided reading lessons are 15-20 minutes three to five days a week depending on the student's instructional needs.

Teachers deliver differentiated instruction to the broad range of learners in the classroom. Teachers select text that provides students with a few challenges, as well as enough support to read with a high degree of accuracy (90% or greater). Teachers prepare students for the books by providing information about the story's topic. This introduction is designed to scaffold for the students as well as provide opportunities for problem-solving. By using small groups, the teacher is able to listen to each student and prompt, and/or reinforce strategic actions for students to become successful. The teacher uses questions that require students to analyze information, evaluate conclusions, or make inferences in discussion of the text with guiding the discussion toward improving comprehension as the goal. During the 90 minute reading block, students have an opportunity to practice independently or with a small group while the teacher is conducting guided reading. This independent practice allows for a continuous review of the reading curriculum. Students use technology or leveled books to practice reading at their independent level. Teachers encourage engagement at this time by holding conferences with the students or assigning a written response that correlates with comprehension strategies previously taught. Students practice and apply skills taught during whole-group word study and fluency routines are established so increase fluency and automaticity. This component of the reading block has provided teachers the opportunity to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all students by reviewing skills that have not been mastered, allowing students to gain confidence in reading, and promoting the lifelong skill of a love of reading. Formative and summative assessments are used on a regular basis to determine proficiency and assist with determining Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention instruction through the Title I Program. Progress monitoring through the use FastBridge Assessments and Renaissance STAR are also conducted on a regular basis for specific skill needs.

1c. Mathematics

Sweetwater Elementary utilizes a 60-minute math block with an additional 20 minute block of time to differentiate for students. Within the 60-minute math block, teachers provide instruction on math skills with a research, evidence-based math program, Engage NY/Eureka Math, which correlates with the North Dakota State Standards. The study of Mathematical Mindsets (Boaler, 2016) has assisted teachers in understanding the brain and mathematical learning, in addition to the power of mistakes and struggle so that conceptual mistakes are "celebrated" to develop deeper understanding. A framework has been established to provide rich mathematics tasks, develop groups and assess based on a growth mindset. Teachers provide many opportunities for problem-centered experiences with math in "real world" contexts for learning skills and concepts. The reading and writing connection are deeply entrenched in teaching and learning math as it supports mathematical reasoning and problem-solving and helps students internalize the processes. It also demonstrates evidence and logical conclusions, justification of answers and processes, and the use of facts to explain thinking. An oral communication component strengthens learning pathways and aids in retention.

The 60-minute math block begins with whole group instruction to provide an overview of the target skill. Teachers model an application problem or problems with the use of the SmartBoard while students follow the steps or process along with the teacher using individual dry erase boards (an engagement strategy). Teachers use high-level questioning to promote analytical, critical and creative thinking and discussion. They talk and move around the classroom as they actively engage in the learning with students. Students participate in a variety of activities to engage in the mathematical process such as turn and talks, written response, verbal response, the use of manipulatives, cooperative learning, and technology. Problems are solved using visual models and manipulatives. Students work independently or with a small group after the whole group instruction. Teachers differentiate their instruction on an individual or small group basis to meet the needs of all learners. Students that require reteaching work with the classroom teacher. The teacher works through a set of problems similar to the application problem that was presented during whole group instruction. Students who were successful with the application problem during whole group instruction work independently on the problem set. Teachers monitor students and evaluate students' skill acquisition daily through formative assessments (exit tickets). Student's placement in the small group instruction is fluid and changes often. Summative assessments are used to determine proficiency and assist with determining Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention instruction through the Title I Program. Progress monitoring through the use

FastBridge Assessments and Renaissance STAR MATH, are conducted on a regular basis for specific skill needs.

1d. Science

Science is a curricular area that is often integrated into other curricular areas, especially ELA and mathematics. Through hands-on science activities, reading and writing research, and technology, students are provided opportunities with the goal of developing students' problem-solving skills, critical thinking, creative and innovative reasoning and a love of learning for success in the ever-changing world of tomorrow. Genius Hour (Juliani, 2015) study and projects are often connected to science as students choose their topics and are intrigued by how and why things work. Fourth grade students receive specialized instruction through an endorsed science teacher every week. This instruction provides additional resources and a higher knowledge base for science standard acquisition. The school utilizes the White Horse (Sully's) Hill National Game Preserve on a regular basis to enhance science instruction. The Game Preserve provides trainers from the ND Game and Fish Department to assist the classroom teachers in providing lessons that meet the ND State Standards in Science, Math, and Reading. There are classrooms at the Preserve that are used frequently during the day to provide lessons, instruction, and hands-on learning in a "natural environment". Science is also an important learning curricular activity in the 21st Century ESP Program and summer program at Sweetwater Elementary. GEMS Kits, which provide a hands-on inquiry approach to a curriculum for life, earth, and physical science are utilized. STEM materials, specifically STEMfinity, are also used for the summer school programming. Technology and science are necessary partners for instruction; therefore, Sweetwater School incorporates a high degree of technology within science instruction. Assessment strategies include exit tickets, oral and written reports, performance tasks, portfolios, and investigative projects. Scales/rubrics are used to describe the levels of performance relative to the learning goals set. Because of the integration of technology with science, Sweetwater School was awarded a Program in Excellence Award by the International Technology Education Association.

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

Social studies instruction reflects the ND State Standards and learning is provided through specific lessons and also an interdisciplinary approach. The core program is standards-based and includes a wide array of history and geography materials that develop active inquiry skills among elementary students. Many additional resources such as technology, a variety of books, magazines, newspapers, and technology enhance teaching and learning of social studies. Providing engaging and interactive lessons are at the core of instruction so that students are challenged to think about the events that have made our world the way it is. Teachers use an inquiry-based approach to engage students in collaborative civic spaces. Units are planned so that students develop questions and plan inquiries, apply disciplinary concepts and tools, evaluate sources and use evidence, and communicate conclusions. Current events are incorporated and artifacts enhance lessons to make them exciting and memorable. Word walls, reading, and writing are necessary components to the social studies learning experiences. Technology is utilized for research, retention, motivation, and interactive activities bring the world alive in the study of history, geography, economics, conservation, government, and citizenship. Virtual field trips are incorporated as well as real life field trips for the study of North Dakota. Native American studies and culture is an essential component of the curriculum with respect to families from the nearby reservation who attend school at Sweetwater. Native American Dance, beading and drumming are included in the educational program. Individual and small group projects are a regular component in social studies and family engagement is emphasized with visits to the classroom and/or at home activities. Every year students hold a Living Wax Museum based on people that have had an impact on the world with presentations to families and other students. Assessment strategies include exit tickets, oral and written reports, performance tasks, portfolios, and investigative projects. Scales/rubrics are used to describe the levels of performance relative to the learning goals set.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. **Other Curriculum Areas**:

Sweetwater Elementary has a full-time counselor who provides weekly guidance lessons in all classrooms. Lessons reflect the American School Counseling Association standards and the social/emotional development and needs of students. A Social Emotional Learning Program (SEL), Second Step, a research-based, teacher-informed, and classroom-tested curriculum to promote the social-emotional development, safety, and well-being of children was adopted two years ago. Classroom teachers provide SEL lessons on a daily basis and the counselor provides enrichment and additional lessons in the classrooms. For the past four years, Sweetwater has worked to become a trauma-informed/sensitive school through professional development and school-based book studies.

The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) checklist is used for students and plans are developed to provide increased access to behavioral and mental health services, community collaboration, an increased feeling of physical, social, and emotional safety among students, and culturally responsive discipline policies and practices that increase school connectedness. Interventions to build resilience in students who are growing up with adverse experiences such as the ACE identifies and trauma stemming from poverty or from the chronic stress of other factors is the continual goal.

The FastBridge Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS) is also used for all students to assist in identifying those who are at-risk for academic, social, and/or emotional behaviors. Results suggest the domains within which the student is experiencing concerns and plans for support, instruction and/or intervention are developed to teach problem-solving and social skills. A Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework is used to determine behavior pathways for providing all students with the best opportunities to succeed academically, social, emotionally and behaviorally in school. The school counselor uses a multitude of resources for small group and individual guidance/counseling that match needs. A Career Fair for elementary students brings community volunteers, professionals and the school community together for helping students learn about many different types of careers. A Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Grant is secured each year to provide nutritional snacks each day for all students.

All students participate in daily physical education classes with a licensed physical education teacher, who uses the ND Physical Education Standards. Physical activity is also emphasized with the "Walking Works" project each morning in the extended school day program. The school promotes healthy lifestyle activities through the year by hosting a spring marathon for students and families, a Health Fair, and classroom workshops provided by community fitness instructors, martial arts coaches, mental health professionals and licensed dietitians. Family Fun Nights have also been held with focus topics to reinforce healthy lifestyles.

Music class is held every day for all students with music instruction reflecting the Music ND Standards and taught by a licensed music education teacher. Art is taught in the classroom by classroom teachers using the ND Arts Standards. The arts are enhanced through the 21st Century Before and After School ESP Program as well as the summer program held at Sweetwater. The Artist in Residence Program, partially funded by the Lake Region Arts Council and the North Dakota Council on the Arts, is hosted at the school each year with a variety of state-wide artists teaching dance, visual arts, music, drama, and cultural awareness through these residences. An Art Club, offered as an After-School Academy is taught by the high school and/or middle school art teacher. All third and fourth grade students have a unit with recorders as a pre-band instrument experience and fourth graders can begin participating in the district strings program. There are string instruments available on loan for those families that may not be able to afford an instrument. A Ukulele Academy is also an option for grade 3 & 4 students as an after school program. Students are provided a ukulele and perform at the spring music program. Drama programs are provided in the After School and Summer ESP Programs with high participation.

Technology has become an essential instructional tool used daily by teachers, support staff, and students to enhance learning and instruction. All classrooms are equipped with a SMART Board and every classroom is well-equipped with iPads or Chromebooks. There are also Chromebook carts available for each grade level. Technology is highly used within Genius Hour for research and presentation at all grades, creating a purpose. A variety of licenses for many different curricular areas are purchased each year with a concise plan of how they are used in the classroom per grade level. Additional technology devices such as Osmos,

LegoRobotics, Sphero Balls, and Virtual Reality Goggles, are used in classrooms. Google Classroom is used by grade 2-4 students so they become proficient in all of the components associated with G-Suite for Education. A technology coach teaches keyboard and instructional lessons reflecting ND Technology Standards to all students on a weekly basis. The coach also partners with classroom teachers to provide additional technology based experiences to students that enhance lessons and instruction. A smart lab has been established with many different technology-based activities and materials for use during the regular school day and extended day/year programs also.

3. **Academic Supports**:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Sweetwater uses a variety of formative, summative, and norm-referenced assessments to guide instruction and determine mastery. An assessment plan is developed for the entire year. In the fall, winter, and spring, all students are assessed with FastBridge, a Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST). This computer-adaptive assessment for reading and math allows teachers to make data-based decisions on instructional needs of students. Teachers analyze the data, along with the interventionists, special education teachers, and the instructional coach. Students not making adequate progress in the core curriculum receive direct, targeted, evidence-based small-group interventions in the area of reading and math. Students are progress monitored using Curriculum-Based Measures (CBM) to track progress with interventions and teachers make adjustments as needed. All students are accessed with the Star Renaissance Assessment in the winter as an interim assessment for reading and math. Teachers determine students' instructional reading level using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment. Students below benchmark reading level receive small group instruction at their instructional reading level daily. Common assessments are used for reading, writing, and math to learn of students' academic achievement at the conclusion of each trimester. Data from diverse sources guide each step of planning and implementing initiatives for high academic performance.

Weekly professional learning communities meet to analyze data from assessments. The PLCs include all staff members, including Title I Teachers and Special Education Teachers. Strategies for differentiating instruction and providing interventions are reviewed to focus on the needs of individual learners. The staff also determines which at risk students will participate in the extended-day learning programs (before school, after school, and summer school) to further develop a program for each child to meet their individual needs.

The MTSS committee meets weekly to review individual and small group data for Tier II and III interventions. A realm of interventions are determined to meet the specific needs of students that encompass academic, social-emotional, physical, behavioral, and basic needs of the students. The school works closely with community agencies, families, and other organizations to provide all of the structures needed for students to be successful.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Teachers provide differentiated instruction to all students; therefore students who are performing above grade level are provided experiences and tasks that will improve their learning at their level. Teachers use formative assessments continually to identify students' strengths and areas of need so they can meet students where they are and help them move forward. The focus in classrooms is problem solving regarding issues and concepts rather than "the book" or the chapter. This encourages all students to explore big ideas and expand their understanding of key concepts. Teachers offer students choice in their reading and writing experiences and in the tasks and projects they complete. By negotiating with students, teachers create motivating assignments that meet students' diverse needs and varied interests. The integration of technology in the classroom provides a bridge from academics to the real world. The flexibility of the Internet provides rich and varied learning options for the advanced students to enhance their learning experiences. Working with peers is important for advanced students such as pairs, groups, and across classes. Learning in groups enables students to engage in meaningful discussions and to observe and learn from one another.

For ELA, guided reading with books at the student's instructional level is the format. A range of texts and

trade books are utilized from many different authors and publishers, rather than just using a basal. Students use their creativity to express their learning such as collages, videos, poems, music, and slideshows. Writing instruction follows a writing workshop model, where mini lessons are conducted every day and students are all in different stages of writing – pre-write, drafting, editing, and publishing. Math instruction is provided in a guided math format, with specific standards as the learning goal, yet students who are above grade level are challenged with the "next" step in the mathematical process. Math learning centers are differentiated to provide additional practice in the specific skills that the students are learning for mastery. Inquiry-based learning for science and social studies provides autonomy to teachers and students. Weekly Genius Hour allows students to find their passions and then develop it for a purpose. The goal of differentiating throughout the curriculum is beyond acquiring skills and knowledge of the standards at a specific grade level, but to develop students as thinkers, learners and innovators.

3c. Special education

Teachers use differentiated instruction to give every student multiple paths to learning. Students who have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans are provided with instruction that is personalized to meet the goals and objectives in the plans with support from special education programming. Academic and/or related services can be provided to students in the general education classroom with support from a paraprofessional or the special education teacher. For some students, academic and/or related services are provided to students in the resource room. Pre-teaching and support are provided to the student to utilize background knowledge. Students requiring explicit skill development are taught through a supplanted or alternate program to increase foundational knowledge and skills that will transfer to the general education curriculum and classroom.

Students receiving services through special education participate in formative, summative, and norm-referenced assessments to guide instruction and determine mastery. Functional behavior assessments and sensory screenings are used to assist with understanding and implementing a variety of tools to address student social emotional needs. Classroom teachers, special education teachers, the counselor, and the behavior specialist collaborate regularly to analyze the data to determine the academic and behavioral interventions. Progress monitoring is conducted to track progress and strategies for differentiating instruction and providing interventions are reviewed with focus on the needs of individual learners. The staff also determines which at risk students will participate in the 21st Century ESP Programs to further develop a program for each child to meet their individual needs.

A sensory room was established at Sweetwater three years ago to provide a safe place where students can go to either calm down or reset for return to the classroom. The Zones of Regulation are used in the sensory room and a range of activities, small and large motor are available. A sensory hallway has been included on the plan for next year to provide additional opportunities for stimulation and engagement of the senses.

The behavior specialist, a new position last year, works collaboratively with teachers to plan and develop interventions to meet the increasing behavior needs in the school. Developing and strengthening the team approach among the staff has been the key to meet the needs of students who benefit and require services. Teachers, paraprofessionals, the counselor, the behavior specialist, the speech therapist, the instructional coach, the principal, the secretary, and parents have unique roles that lead to success for students who receive special education services.

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

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

A positive school environment is one of the most critical elements of effective teaching and learning. In addition to the school leader promoting a positive school climate, this school has a highly qualified staff that leads by example with motivation that models a climate where learning and achievement can take root and grow. People coming into Sweetwater for the first time often comment on the warmth radiating from staff and students in the first few minutes.

Positive and healthy relationships between teachers, students, and families begin before the first day of school with teachers making phone calls and sending notes to students. This relationship building continues throughout the year. An atmosphere where all students understand, respect, and empathize with one another is achieved through the Social Emotional Learning Program, Second Step, which includes Morning Meetings. Behavior expectations called Firebird Pride have been established for school-wide use with Be Safe, Re Respectful, and Be Responsible as the overarching goals. The expectations are taught and re-taught as needed to classes and individuals as needed. A Behavior Pathways Flowchart has also been developed to assist with behavior interventions.

All staff provide verbal, written, and physical positive reinforcement throughout the day. The Super Star Program recognizes students who demonstrate respect, choose appropriate behaviors, make concentrated efforts, and/or academic progress. The Principal's Award recognizes two students from every classroom each quarter. Teachers nominate students and a school-wide assembly is held to announce the awards. The Good News Call of the Day involves the principal making a call to a parent to celebrate a student's accomplishment or because this student contributes to the positive environment. Celebrations are frequent as recognition and acknowledging effort and improvement are important. Staff is celebrated also to recognize efforts, promote staff adventure, and create a feeling of value and appreciation.

Student engagement/active learning strategies are regularly implemented in all classrooms at Sweetwater so that students are more than passive participants in the learning process. All staff have studied the positive effects of student engagement through book studies with The Highly Engaged Classroom (Marzano & Pickering, 2011) and Whole Brain Teaching (Biffle, 2013). The shared belief is that engaged students want to be in school and are more likely to achieve academically. Cooperative learning, group work, turn and talk strategies and think-pair-share are some of the strategies for active learning. Movement is frequent in the classroom and pace is monitored as these two factors help heighten students' energy levels, important for student engagement. The teachers work towards a positive demeanor through enthusiasm and humor; therefore, classrooms are not silent places of learning. Exciting and exhilarating are words to describe classrooms at Sweetwater Elementary.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

A priority for Sweetwater Elementary is family and community engagement as it is an important component for increasing student achievement. The staff has put forth great efforts to assure there is a welcoming environment for parents and visitors. Student ambassadors are the face of the school and serve as representatives by welcoming students in the morning as they exit their ride. They are at the door to greet students, parents, and visitors as they enter the building on a daily basis and for special events. The ambassadors also act as guides in the building for visitors.

Promoting effective two-way communication with families has also been a goal and data is reviewed regularly regarding communication through SeeSaw, an information management system. Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with parents and families is discussed frequently in staff meetings and PLCs to assist in identifying strategies.

Family/Community Fun Nights are conducted with the goal of education and relationship building with adults and children. Topics of healthy eating, physical activity, safety, culture, reading, STEAM activities,

and project-based learning have been explored by partnering with agencies such as the police department, fire department, NDSU extension office, ND Game and Fish, Lake Region State College, Devils Lake High School, Native American Elders, and Ramsey County Social Services.

Community volunteers come to the school to volunteer each morning in a special reading program for students. The Parent Teacher Organization is very active at Sweetwater and hosts many events to enhance teaching and learning. Community Celebrity Readers are invited into every classroom during Reading Month. Grandparents, college students, and high school students are regular volunteers in the classrooms providing additional tutoring and assistance in learning. Interns and student teachers from Lake Region State College and Mayville State College request experiences at Sweetwater School every year. Parents and community members are active in decision making with participation on curriculum committees, interviewing for teachers, grant work and planning special events. Surveys are used every quarter for input and feedback about the school organization and activities. Keeping families and community informed is accomplished through weekly newsletters shared through email and other technology-based tools such as SeeSaw, Facebook, Twitter, and Google Classroom. Parent-Teacher Conferences are well attended two times per year and teachers share progress information through standards-based report cards every trimester.

Community Service is an expectation of all students and staff at Sweetwater Elementary School. Activities include ringing the bell for the Salvation Army, conducting food drives, visiting nursing homes, reading to preschoolers at daycares, putting together activity bags for children in the local hospital, organizing fundraisers for community members facing medical crises and collecting items to donate to community shelter and Veteran's groups.

The principal and instructional coach present at community organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and Chamber of Commerce every year. Businesses such as the North Dakota Telephone Company and Midcontinent Cable have provided financial assistance with projects in the school and playground. Creating opportunities to become involved in the community and learning about cultural differences enables exposure to a variety of experiences for students. It teaches students altruism, empathy, charity, and a feeling of belonging. Pride is cultivated through being positive representatives of the school and the presence in the community also serves as an excellent bridge for building relationships among all stakeholders in the Lake Region.

3. **Creating Professional Culture:**

Professional development is a key component for assuring quality instruction by knowledgeable and effective educators for all students in the district. Student and teacher needs, along with district goals and objectives, determine the professional development priorities to guide 21st Century learning. Ongoing analysis of the school's summative and formative assessments, evaluation of professional development opportunities, the accreditation process, and ongoing communication with educators also contribute to the professional development plan. Teachers and support staff participate in numerous professional development activities that include workshops, book studies, and online learning. New strategies learned through professional development are implemented and teachers collaborate on a regular basis to determine effectiveness. They are supported through an instructional coach to meet school and individual professional goals. Instructional rounds, peer-mentoring, and PLCs also provide information regarding further needs for professional development and support for teachers and support staff. PLCs, held weekly, contribute to the cultures of time, feeling, focus and persistence aimed at ensuring that every child will succeed. The Marzano Principal and Teacher Evaluation process is grounded on a growth model so helping teachers improve with job-embedded professional development that is directly related to their instructional growth is key. The impact is the positive effect on student achievement as building and sustaining instructional capacity occurs. The Instructional Coach provides targeted "on-the-spot" professional development to teachers, paraprofessionals, tutors, and volunteers based on specific needs. Another component of professional development is the development and support of teacher leaders. Teachers assume essential roles in improving instruction and driving improvements. Distributing the leadership responsibilities to teacher leaders creates and supports the necessary collaboration needed to effectively teach all students.

Sweetwater School has a collective commitment to student achievement accomplished through the

distribution of leadership among staff members to create a successful learning community. Through a school-based Leadership Team, the systems to develop and monitor student and staff learning transpire. Promoting an environment of trust and mutual respect so that staff can take risks and feel supported in efforts to accomplish the school's mission is the goal. Building capacity for leadership is necessary for success; therefore all staff are encouraged and empowered to be leaders in different aspects through school, district and state-wide committees. The experiences serve as professional development that positively impacts the school environment, teaching, and learning.

4. **School Leadership:**

The leadership philosophy at Sweetwater School is based on the premise of "students first." Every activity that occurs is focused on the betterment of students that are served. The mission to create a society of learners where students are challenged by teachers as well as their peers is forefront. Having a growth mindset is promoted so that students and staff thrive on challenges and see failure as a springboard for growth and to stretch existing abilities. "Not yet" is a common phrase used to help build this mindset. The leader at Sweetwater models and promotes the conviction that human qualities like intelligence and creativity can be cultivated through effort and deliberate practice.

The principal uses a shared leadership model where there is meaningful involvement of others to put forth collective energy for continuous growth of teaching and learning. The School-Wide Leadership Team helps to maintain a cohesive school vision and strategy focused on student achievement. The team utilizes and models components of relational trust (competence, integrity, respect, and personal regard for others) as they assume responsibility for school-wide instructional initiatives. Embracing differences among the group and collaborating to build a strong cohesive team is upheld. The principal leads by example in all actions, communications, and expectations for leadership. The shared leadership establishes a sense of community and pride within and around the school as it promotes growth among all members of the stakeholders, including teachers, support staff, students, parents, businesses, and all taxpayers within the district. Assuring that the entire community is involved in various aspects with the education of the students creates a team effort, which has been highly beneficial for student achievement. Every staff member, from the instructional coach, to the librarian, to the resource room teachers, assumes a leadership role of some kind, with student achievement as the focus. The principal sets high expectations and standards for the academic, social, emotional and physical development of all students. All staff members embrace the goals for high expectations and demonstrate it personally.

The principal and school leaders have actively committed themselves to engaging parents, families, and the community to build relationships that support students and achievement. The leadership structure at Sweetwater has been a constant evolution of researched-based best practices to build a school committed to excellence and high achievement of all students.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice that has been most instrumental to the success of Sweetwater School has been to embrace, plan, and take action in the Marzano's High Reliability School Structure. The efforts for Level I: to assure that a safe and orderly environment that supports cooperation and collaboration has made a tremendous impact. This level has been foundational to the well-being and progress of pursuing the highest quality of education possible. Surveys were used with teachers, staff, students and parents to determine what was working well in the school and identify areas in need of focused attention. The PLCs were in place with teams working collaboratively. Survey and behavior incident data was used to develop a plan to improve the identified areas of need. Additional data through conversations and observations was included. Data was aggregated and reported on regularly to the staff for revision and additions to the plan. Professional development and action research assisted in the goal of making Sweetwater a place where staff perceived the school environment as safe and orderly; students, parents and the community perceived the school environment as safe and orderly; teachers had formal roles in the decision making process; and teacher teams collaborated regularly to address common issues regarding curriculum, assessment, instruction, and the achievement of all students.

What transpired from this endeavor was a synergy among the staff, students and families that became a key component to success. Effective teamwork has contributed to the success of students and adults at Sweetwater. Every adult in the building works diligently for the academic and social-emotional health of all the students. Building and maintaining relationships is a critical commitment by all. Communication has been a very important element in this process.

The MTSS process provided a framework to establish clear and specific expectations, identify active supervision guidelines, and build a multi-tiered approach to provide interventions for behaviors in our school. A social-emotional curriculum was adopted and is conducted daily in classrooms with the counselor providing additional guidance lessons and small group instruction. Learning about trauma and poverty assisted with implementing additional strategies to support students and maintain a safe and orderly environment.

Through this process, family engagement has increased and Sweetwater Elementary is highly requested for school attendance by families in the community. The reputation is one of high quality education, sincere caring about students, and a collegiality that shows a collective effort for a commitment to constant improvement and student performance. Acknowledging and celebrating the successes of students and staff as individuals, class-wide and school-wide occurs frequently as efforts and improvements are continuous. Telling the stories of success is also important for our culture and continued growth as the positive energy that derives helps the school community to remain invigorated and bring an optimistic voice to every conversation and interaction about Sweetwater Elementary School.