

U.S. Department of Education
2023 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 Mr. Cole Klein
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 203 West Jacker Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Houghton State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 49931-2265

County Houghton County

Telephone (906) 482-0456 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://hpts.us E-mail cklein@hpts.us

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

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Anders Hill E-mail ahill@hpts.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Houghton-Portage Township Schools Tel. (906) 482-0450

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Amanda Massaway
(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.

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

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

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

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

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

- ☐ Urban (city or town)
☐ Suburban
☒ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	120
1	103
2	105
3	98
4	105
5	117
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	648

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0.5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 6 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.5 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90.5 % White
 - 0.5 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 8%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	33
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	52
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	624
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.08
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Arabic, Chinese, Fante, Russian, Japanese, Korean, Malayalam, Pashto, Portuguese, Spanish, Turkish, Uyghur

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
28 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 36 %

Total number students who qualify: 234

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 10 %
Total number of students served 64

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>6</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>6</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>1</u> Developmental Delay	<u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>33</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 2 %
Total number of students served: 10

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 1

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	29
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	13
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

12. 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 22:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	92%	96%	95%	94%	94%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

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

Yes ☐ No ☒

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

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

Provide daily academic, social, and emotional support to each and every student.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<http://go.boarddocs.com/mi/hpts/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=C4HKVH52E50F>

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

Houghton-Portage Township Schools, including Houghton Elementary School, accepts all School-of-Choice students that enroll in our schools. We do not have a cap on the number of School-of-Choice students that we accept.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

We are part of the Houghton-Portage Township School District, a small rural district composed of our elementary school serving 648 students, one middle school, and one high school. The district is located in the Keweenaw Peninsula of Upper Michigan. Nestled near the shores of Lake Superior, we are surrounded by nature and receive an abundance of snow. Although we are remote, sharing our town with Michigan Technological University (MTU) ensures a comparatively diverse student body and a strong community value on education. We take advantage of our location with extensive outdoor educational opportunities and partnerships with the university.

With the mission of “Every Student, Every Day,” Houghton Elementary School strives to meet the individual needs of our students, whether they are on track, advanced, or in need of additional support. Our school uses a vertically aligned curriculum that supports the Common Core Curriculum from young fives through fifth grade, and communicates with our middle and high school to ensure that we prepare students to succeed as they progress through the district.

Communication is a key to our success from the top down. The Houghton-Portage Township School Board is supportive of students and staff in the district. The district superintendent and building principal are visible throughout the school and have positive relationships with staff and students. In the morning, the principal or superintendent often greets staff and students at the entry doors. This positive relationship allows for open and honest communication regarding student concerns and curriculum needs. Teachers sit on committees and have leadership positions within the district, allowing staff to grow as educational leaders. Grade level teams have a daily common planning time to promote collaboration. Teachers are able to work together to plan special events and stay on track with the curriculum.

Although we consider the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) scores, formative and summative assessment data hold greater value in assessing achievement level. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) provides a framework for tiered instruction. Benchmark testing occurs three times per year to assess student growth in math and reading. Data reviews occur at the district, building and grade levels to analyze scores and set goals. Students receive Title I support based on benchmark scores and teacher recommendations. Common grade level planning time encourages teachers to meet weekly to plan curriculum, and problem solve specific academic and behavioral needs.

In the spring of 2022, our MTSS work was recognized at the state level with a bronze award for reading and a silver award for behavior. MTSS also provides the framework for student behavior support. We use Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to guide building level and classroom expectations. Behavior expectations are explicitly taught and regularly reinforced. Teachers work together to create the guidelines and matrices. We encourage students to exhibit TEAM behavior (Take responsibility, Earn respect, Act positively, and Make it safe) and provide monthly whole school rewards such as sledding on our playground, special outdoor yard games, and extended recess. Students earn tickets for positive TEAM behavior, which they turn in for small weekly incentives such as leading the Pledge of Allegiance on the morning announcements and eating lunch with a friend. These tickets are then used in an end of year celebration that includes a drawing for multiple small prizes and two bikes.

As a part of a small district, we receive strong support from our local community. The Copper Country Intermediate School District (CCISD) provides opportunities including professional development for teachers and special education resources. The Regional Educational Media Center (REMC) offers technology assistance, training, and materials for students and staff. We have a strong and supportive Parent Teacher Organization. The PTO promotes staff and student development with fundraising and sponsored family events.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At the start of the 2022 school year, Houghton Elementary School adopted Into Reading as a Tier 1 ELA curriculum in order to more closely align instruction with the science of reading. Each grade level teaching team has agreed on non-negotiable instructional components. Kindergarten and first grade teachers use the Heggerty curriculum to support phonemic awareness instruction. Kindergarten through second grade teachers use a phonics component called Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI) to supplement reading instruction. When data analysis showed a need for extra vocabulary and comprehension support at the Tier 1 level in the upper grades, teachers responded by addressing those needs. Post-pandemic, all grade level teachers have placed a strong emphasis on phonics instruction and reading fluency to fill in some of the achievement gaps.

Teachers use the Daily Five model as a structure for lessons with a 90 minute reading block. This workshop model provides time for whole class learning, teacher small group time, and independent reading, writing, and word work. Teachers encourage students to find “good fit” books in extensive classroom libraries supplemented by grants from our PTO as well as on reading websites including RazKids and Epic. Multiple story walks are placed on school grounds throughout the year.

We use Acadience as our Tier 1 reading benchmark assessment and progress monitoring tool. Research-based Title I services are supplied as needed, and students move in and out of Title I throughout the year. We have access to two building level literacy coaches, both teachers in our school, as well as an Intermediate School District literacy coach. They meet with grade level teams as needed, as well as with individual teachers who request more support.

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Houghton Elementary School uses the updated Everyday Math as a Tier 1 math curriculum. This program provides a solid foundation for our students, and they have consistently scored well on state standardized testing. We use formative and summative testing to assess student growth. Students learn new material and review previously taught concepts daily through instruction and hand on activities. We also implemented two math fact practice programs: Rocket Math for early elementary students and the Xtramath.com program for our upper elementary students.

Many teachers use a small group teaching format, allowing for more individualized lessons as well as time for independent and partner work. Title I services provide additional support for Tier 2 and Tier 3 math students. Advanced students have the option of testing out of their grade level curriculum and attending math class with a higher grade level.

The Western UP Math and Science Center (WUPMSC) as well as our CCISD provide opportunities for long term professional development. These opportunities include collaboration with other local teachers as well as teachers from around the state. Teachers are introduced to new teaching techniques that are then piloted in the classroom.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Houghton Elementary School uses the Next Generation Science Standards to drive our science curriculum. Mystery Science is the main resource used by our upper elementary teachers. Video lessons, hand-on activities, and follow-up assessment engage students in active learning. The anchor layer that accompanies each unit provides a critical thinking component to the science instruction. The lower grades use Mystery Science as a supplement and are piloting a literacy-based science curriculum called SOLID Start Science. This Michigan-based program incorporates reading and writing into the instruction.

Houghton Elementary School has a school forest adjacent to our playground. This forest includes maintained trails, age appropriate educational signage, and two outdoor classrooms. We use the trails year round with nature hikes and outdoor lessons in the spring and fall and snowshoe experiences in the winter. A third outdoor classroom is located in a courtyard next to the school building.

We are fortunate to have a strong working relationship with MTU. This relationship results in guest speakers, field trips, and additional hands-on STEM activities for our students. Our Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative (LSSI) team, in partnership with MTU, WUPMSC, and the CCISD, has received grants to install vegetable gardens, a perennial garden, a weather station, and two indoor garden towers. We are working with our food services director to provide our kitchen with produce. Students work together to plan and maintain the gardens year round.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Houghton Elementary School uses a variety of materials and resources to teach Michigan K-12 Social Studies Standards, including the Michigan Citizenship Curriculum, Weekly Reader, National Geographic for Kids, myWorld Interactive Social Studies, and Social Studies Weekly.

Houghton Elementary classroom teachers use our area's rich history to help bring social studies alive. Students visit local copper mines, forts, museums, and homesteads to experience the history and geography of the area. Guest speakers from MTU and the local community enhance lessons by sharing their culture and experiences both locally and worldwide. Our students are taught how to positively contribute as an active community member, whether their community is the classroom, grade level, school building, district as a whole, local community, State of Michigan, United States, or Global community.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Our fine arts program uses the Michigan Merit Curriculum: Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theatre Standards. All students have art and music classes weekly with certified specialist teachers. Music classes are offered twice weekly for thirty minutes per session, while art classes are offered once a week for fifty-five minutes. The visual art program maintains an observation bee hive through grants from the Bee Cause Project. All grade levels participate in art lessons connected to this project. Many art lessons are cross-curricular, and the art teacher hosts multiple guest speakers. Art students have worked on several large-scale mural projects to enhance our building walls and have decorated for special school events.

The Houghton Elementary music program uses QuaverEd to support the curriculum. Students learn singing techniques, practice rhythm and dance, play musical instruments, and study music history. Fourth and fifth grade students have the opportunity to join our school choir, which performs several times per year. All students perform in a winter concert. The Houghton High School Band shares their music with our students multiple times per year, fostering an appreciation of music throughout the district.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Students in grades one, two, three, four, and five at Houghton Elementary School receive physical education class twice per week for thirty minute sessions. Students in kindergarten and young fives have one session of physical education each week for forty minutes. The Michigan K-12 Physical Education Standards drive the curriculum. Students participate in a variety of games designed to promote teamwork, motor skills, and an active lifestyle. Several times per year, including the winter, gym class is held outside. Field Day is a highlight of our school year with students participating in group games and team building activities. Fitness clubs and basketball camps are offered multiple times per year. Students also receive fifty minutes of daily unstructured outdoor play time divided between two recesses. Students who arrive early or stay for our after school care receive additional outdoor recess time.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

2d. Technology/library/media

Computer classes and Library are offered weekly to all students. Students attend library classes once per week for a minimum of forty minutes. ELA and technology standards are covered in this class. Students are exposed to a variety of different genres and have the opportunity to check-out books and engage in team building and STEAM activities.

Students attend computer classes once per week for fifty-five minutes (forty minutes for young fives and kindergarten). The Michigan Integrated Technology Competencies for Students (MITECS) and the Michigan K-12 Computer Science Standards drive the curriculum. Students are exposed to both Google and Microsoft platforms and learn keyboarding, digital citizenship, and software applications. Students in second through fifth grades use the Computer Science Fundamentals for Elementary Schools courses from Code.org. In addition to computer classes, students have access to Chromebooks in their classroom at all grade levels. Our local Intermediate School District provides additional STEM resources such as Virtual Reality kits, robotics, Star Lab, and professional development opportunities.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

Houghton Elementary School uses Second Step as a social emotional learning curriculum. The school counselor pushes into classes to provide additional lessons as needed. The 31n School-Based Mental Health Services grant provides short term counseling for students on a referral basis. The principal, school counselor, and 31n school social worker collaborate as a Behavioral Health Assessment Team, meeting weekly to review the progress of students receiving social-emotional supports.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Houghton Elementary School identifies students performing below grade level through benchmark testing and formative assessments. Teachers communicate with parents and consider student history to determine the need for a Student Assistance Team (SAT) meeting. The classroom teacher, principal, parents, counselor, and other professionals involved with the student attend this meeting. If needed, further testing and documentation may lead to a 504 Plan or an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). These meetings are held as needed based on individual circumstances.

All students receive Tier 1 instruction, and teachers differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of all learners. Classroom libraries and websites such as RazKids and Epic offer books at many different levels.

Students who qualify for Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions receive extra instruction in math and/or reading. This is provided through our strong Title I program, which consists of a highly qualified Title I Director, a Reading and Math Intervention Specialists, and several Title I Aides who are all trained in providing intervention support for reading and math. Students that are identified as Tier 2 or Tier 3 in reading and/or

math receive small group or individual intervention a minimum of four days a week. Students who qualify for Special Education services receive that additional support.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Teachers at all grade levels differentiate instruction to challenge students at their level each and every day. Differentiation takes place in the classroom by utilizing student-centered instructional practices and by having a variety of resources at varying levels. Reading groups offer students performing above grade level the opportunity to enrich their learning with advanced reading material and readers' theater. Classroom libraries and websites such as RazKids and Epic offer books with a wide range of reading levels. Students are provided opportunities to work at their own pace in Rocket Math and Xtramath. Prodigy and Khan Academy offer enrichment opportunities for advanced learners. Students that excel in the area of math are identified by the classroom teacher or by request of parents to take a placement test at the end of an academic year. If the student demonstrates mastery of the content within the next grade level curriculum, the student is advanced a level and is placed in the math class at the higher grade level for the next academic school year.

Teachers are consistently working to level writing skills by using writing stations and writers' workshops. Students are not only identified through content mastery in a specific classroom setting, but we also make certain that teachers collaborate from one grade level to the next (for example providing time for third grade teachers to speak with fourth grade teachers). This time is typically set aside during meetings prior to the school year. We also identify those students from school to school within the district during the important transition year (fifth grade in the elementary school to sixth grade in the middle school). It is most important that we allow our classroom teachers the freedom and support to pass along what they see in high-performing students. As an educational team, we can then communicate ideas between the classroom, administration, and parents.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Houghton Elementary School has two full time special education teachers, three full-time paraprofessionals, and several part-time time paraprofessionals. Our special education team works with classroom teachers to meet IEP goals by pulling students out to support students. Students receive the help they need to be successful, whether it's extended test time, reduced work, individual or group lessons in the Resource Room, a one-on-one paraprofessional, or meetings with specialists from the Intermediate School District. Houghton Elementary utilizes additional supports provided through our Copper Country Intermediate School District, including Behavioral Support Specialists, School Social Work for students with disabilities, and Autism Spectrum Disorder Consultants.

Houghton Elementary School also has a rigorous "child find" process and procedure in order to identify and evaluate students with disabilities. The process begins both in the school and/or at home, as any stakeholder for the child can put the wheels of a "child find" in motion. Once a stakeholder identifies a student that is having difficulty, a Student Assistance Team meeting is scheduled. The Student Assistance Team (SAT) is a school team, which includes school staff, the parent and, when appropriate, the student, that work together in a positive, problem solving process. Interventions and supports for the student are brainstormed and put together into a formal plan. Data is gathered during the intervention period and assessed by the SAT, which then helps to determine if further testing for disabilities is needed. The SAT then transitions to an Individual Education Planning (IEP) team if it is found that the student has a specific learning disability or other impairment.

3d. English Language Learners:

Houghton Elementary School has several English Language Learners each year. Students are identified upon enrollment with a questionnaire filled out by their family. The counselor gives the WIDA screener and assessments to identify students who might need more intensive support from our Title I services. Additional ESL supports are provided through small group intervention focusing on additional vocabulary instruction. This intervention is provided twice per week for thirty minutes a session. Students are grouped

according to age and English proficiency. During the small group interventions, students are provided with additional vocabulary instruction, with a focus on fluency with speaking, reading, and comprehension of English vocabulary.

We also have supports through Michigan Technological University that can be accessed if a student is having more significant difficulties. Due to Michigan Technological University's diverse population and connection to our educational community, it can offer services through tutoring and immersive activities. Most students have proven to manage well with grade-level curriculum through the support of the classroom teacher and additional ESL supports that are offered at Houghton Elementary.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Houghton Elementary School values the importance of developing positive relationships built on respect and rapport, both peer-to-peer and staff-to-student. By developing strong connections, students have a positive, supportive, and safe learning environment. This is essential for our students' academic, social, and emotional growth. Our teachers and staff are trained in and follow best practices from both Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Capturing Kids Hearts. Both of these systems promote positive, meaningful relationships and complement the use of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS).

Houghton Elementary School has been an MTSS school for more than a decade, utilizing PBIS to promote student engagement. Monthly behavioral goals are set and rewarded with school wide behavior incentives. Students earn orange tickets for demonstrating positive behaviors, which can be used to earn weekly and monthly prizes. Additionally, the staff at Houghton Elementary seek out positive and fun ways to celebrate learning and our school. We have had a "Rock Your School" event for the past two years, where local musicians and artists shared their talents with our school throughout the day. March Reading Month is another great example of how our school community comes together to engage students and celebrate learning. We have a whole month of activities planned throughout March that help fuel a love of reading, including a large Kick-Off assembly, weekly themed related dress-up days, prizes earned for meeting reading goals, and a Community-Family Reading Night.

Our staff and school community also engage our students by finding ways to connect our students to events going on within our greater school district. We hold pep assemblies for our high school athletes during our fall and winter Homecoming weeks. Our high school band comes to perform for our students and share their talents. The graduating seniors walk our hallways in their cap and gowns on the morning of their graduation. All these valued events are essential components to our students' academic and social engagement as well as their commitment to our school community.

Lastly, our Student Council at Houghton Elementary is very active in planning activities that support student engagement. The Student Council has two student representatives from each classroom within the fourth and fifth grade. Positive student engagement is a top priority for this group. On Fridays, the Student Council members greet students at the start of the day with positive and encouraging signs, friendly smiles and cheers, and energetic music. Additionally, our Student Council plans school-wide activities to bring our school together and promote positive community and culture.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Houghton Elementary School values the importance of family and local community involvement when it comes to providing a well-rounded education for our students. Parents and family members are provided with opportunities to participate in their child's learning. We start each school year with an Open House, where students and parents make their first positive connection with our teachers and staff, and open the lines of communication between school and home. This is a highly attended event, with nearly 90% of our students, along with their parents, attending and making those the first steps towards a collaborative effort between school and home to support student success. At this event, parents sign-up for opportunities to volunteer in the classroom, join parent committees like the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) and School-Wellness Community Advisory Committee, and learn of other ways that they can be involved. Parents also take this opportunity to sign up for their Fall Parent Teacher Conferences, where we historically have a high parent attendance rate of over 90%.

Additionally, our teachers and parents collaborate throughout the year to put on engaging activities that support a positive learning community at our school. The PTO hosts a Scholastic Book Fair to encourage literacy and raise funds for supporting students and parents. During the month of March, the PTO supports literacy by providing opportunities for students and families for Reading Month. A Family Reading Night is a popular event where students and families participate in a range of fun activities centered around literacy.

Teachers set goals to ensure family engagement. They send out classroom newsletters regularly and make positive phone calls home early in the year to establish working relationships with families. They respond to parent emails in a timely fashion. They also mail at least one Gremlin postcard to each of their students' families each year, mentioning something positive happening with their child in the classroom.

The community also plays an important role in our students' success at Houghton Elementary. Our school and community is tied closely with Michigan Technological University (MTU). MTU provides many academic opportunities in the areas of science and math. We have partnered with MTU to hold STEM Nights where students and their families participate in fun STEM activities in the school. MTU's Mind Trekkers has also come to present to our students during our "Rock Your School" event. Our teachers also take advantage of science-based field trips put on by MTU's science department. Aside from MTU, we have additional community members that are committed to supporting learning at our school. Members of the local Ojibwa Tribe come in to teach about Native American history and culture. Community members have also taken on initiatives like creating outdoor classroom spaces and an educational nature trail in our school forest, which our teachers and classrooms utilize regularly.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The leadership team at Houghton Elementary School believes that teachers do their best when working in an environment where all school staff feels appreciated and supported. We seek to provide a balance between teachers' emotional well-being and their professional growth and responsibilities.

Teachers and staff at Houghton Elementary have numerous opportunities for professional growth. In addition to yearly district-provided professional development that focuses on district and building level initiatives, staff can attend professional development based on the growth plan they develop with the principal. Teachers can request to attend professional development locally, online, or at the state level. The Houghton Portage Township Schools Foundation provides grants to teachers for additional professional development or classroom equipment.

Grade level teams meet regularly during their common planning time. In this collaborative time, teachers work on academic and behavioral needs, share ideas, and provide moral support. Monthly staff meetings provide opportunities to review behavior data, update staff on upcoming events and initiatives, and share ideas and concerns. Teachers organize summer book clubs to learn together and grow relationships with each other.

In our time of post-pandemic teaching, one main focus has been on teacher well-being and overall morale. The PTO shows support by treating teachers and staff throughout the year with encouragement such as a trail mix bar, snack cart, and welcome back treat bags. Teacher Appreciation Week, also hosted by the PTO, holds lots of surprises and a nice lunch for teachers and staff. Twice per week, Jeans Days is an opportunity for staff to dress casually. We collect a one dollar donation for each Jean Day that goes to support families in need within our district.

4. School Leadership:

Successful leadership can be found at all levels at Houghton Elementary. Student leadership is supported through Student Council, where every fourth and fifth grade classroom selects two Student Council members. Student Council members work together to plan school wide activities, coordinate and promote community drives like a Can-a-thon and Toys for Tots, and plan fundraising efforts to help support targeted goals that benefit all students.

At the staff level, teacher leadership can be found within Grade Level Teams, which meet a minimum of once per month, but often more frequently during shared planning times. Houghton Elementary also has staff on both the building level and district level Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) teams that work on school-wide and district-wide behavioral and academic goals, along with school improvement initiatives. Our building level MTSS team has representation spanning all grade levels, including a voice and

perspective from our Special Education Department and non-essentials/specials department.

The principal at Houghton Elementary is an active leader and advocate for students, staff, and parents. The principal is on the building level MTSS team, actively attends monthly Parent-Teacher Organization meetings, a member of the Community Advisory Committee to support our School Wellness Program, and collaborates regularly with the district Administrative team. Being a part of all of these groups allows the principal to bridge the visions of key stakeholders and keep the students at the center of discussions before decisions are made.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The mission statement at Houghton Elementary School is “Every Student, Every Day.” Our staff focuses on this as we plan lessons and extracurricular activities that meet students where they are, and then stretch them to learn more about the world. Our student population is more diverse than surrounding districts, and we celebrate that diversity by inviting local guest speakers, university student groups, Ojibwa tribe members, and student families to share cultural experiences with our students.

Throughout the academic year, teachers incorporate cultural diversity into lessons and activities. For example, our first grade learns about winter holidays around the world, and upper grades honor ancestry with a unit on family traditions. Our art and music teachers provide multicultural enrichment experiences for all grade levels. Teachers and the school librarian seek to fill classroom libraries with culturally diverse selections. The Second Step SEL program provides tools to encourage acceptance and understanding of all people. We have programs in place such as 31 Backpacks to support all students.

When looking at academic and behavior data, we focus on each student regardless of their demographic data; however, teachers do take into account socioeconomic, gender, and ethnicity variables when assessing student needs. In our student population, cultural background and socioeconomic status are not tied together as much as in other communities. That being said, socioeconomic differences are balanced with a weekend and holidays backpack program that provides food for students at home. We have the opportunity to provide free books from our book fair for students in need. A local grant program provides needs such as glasses, field trip costs, and sports fees for individual students at teacher request.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is the single most instrumental practice that can be directly tied to the success of our students and staff at Houghton Elementary. The Houghton-Portage Township School District has fully implemented and supported MTSS in all three buildings with K-12 students for a decade. Our district earned a Gold Level MiMTSS Recognition award for efforts during the 2021-2022 school year.

At Houghton Elementary, the MTSS team plays an essential role in identifying academic and behavioral areas needing greater support for our students. The team then makes data driven decisions for implementing supports and programs, making positive changes that have proven to strengthen our school as a whole. The MTSS process is at the heart of our school improvement process.

Through our MTSS process, we have identified that the social emotional needs of our staff and students continue to be a priority. A universal social emotional screener provides staff with insight to their students' needs. We are currently creating partnerships with local organizations to provide our students with resources such as a school nurse, social worker, behavioral specialist, and resource officer. The district has prioritized upgrading the playground structures to support our students' physical and emotional health.

As we assess where we are and look forward, we are excited about the future. Our academic and behavior structure, supported by a solid MTSS and PBIS system, is strong. We continue to review data, look for achievement gaps, create goals, and celebrate successes. Houghton Elementary School is a place people want to work, and we are able to hire and retain strong teachers and staff.