

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 6360 Camp Creek Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Manhattan State MT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 59741-8322

County Gallatin County

Telephone (406) 282-7216 Fax (406) 282-7724

Web site/URL <https://www.amsterdamschool.org> E-mail [kdawe@amsterdamschool.org](mailto:kdawe@amsterdamschool.org)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mrs. Katherine Dawe E-mail [kdawe@amsterdamschool.org](mailto:kdawe@amsterdamschool.org)  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Amsterdam School District Tel. (406) 282-7216

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Brandon Bailey  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

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

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**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)  
0 Middle/Junior high schools  
0 High schools  
0 K-12 schools
- 1 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	24
1	23
2	27
3	22
4	25
5	27
6	17
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	165

\*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 91 % White
  - 2 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 10%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	16
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	156
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Spanish, American Sign Language

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %

Total number students who qualify: 19

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 7 %  
Total number of students served 12

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

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 1 %  
Total number of students served: 1

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 8

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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 14:1

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	95%	96%	97%	96%	96%
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.

The Amsterdam School community supports quality rural education where all students develop a life-long love of learning. The Amsterdam School community fosters positive social and academic performance, which encourages staff and students to be safe, respectful, responsible, and ready to learn.

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

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gaC-e2pZrjqHeYLaPo-LjG\\_dv22dNM7RssiljVC4K4Y/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gaC-e2pZrjqHeYLaPo-LjG_dv22dNM7RssiljVC4K4Y/edit?usp=sharing)

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

## PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

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Amsterdam School lies within a small, rural farming community that has experienced gradual, yet significant growth over the last decade. Some families have been a part of this community for multiple generations while others have moved to the area in recent years because they desire to share the core values of this community. The Amsterdam community is overwhelmingly conservative with strong Christian values and traditional beliefs. Families are very involved in their children's education and upbringing. It is community centered with people who are welcoming and accepting of others for who they are. Most people within the community know others and build strong relationships with the individuals within the community.

Amsterdam School's staff is very unique in that most teachers are tenured and choose to remain employed in a district that does not have many financial resources, but does have high morals and standards. Teachers who stay recognize that working in a small, supportive community has value that goes beyond their paycheck. They choose a work environment that values professionalism, experience, and work ethic. They appreciate an administration and school board that is reasonable, supportive, and appreciative of their endeavors. Ideally, Amsterdam School teachers would earn more than those who are in larger communities, but unfortunately that is not the reality due to the small tax base within the rural setting.

Amsterdam School students come from families who hold their children accountable for typical child behaviors. Oftentimes, when there is an office referral for discipline, students are more impacted by consequences set from home. When parents and school are working as a team to mold and support students we achieve higher success rates because all adults involved in raising children are collaboratively involved in the process.

Similarly with behaviors, student success is derived from a strong team of community members, parents, and school staff working together to support the needs of students. Parents and caregivers have their own values and goals for their children. These values and goals are respected by the school and boundaries are not crossed. At school, staff focus on supporting the academic, social, emotional, and physical development of all children. Staff joins together with parents to align goals and develop individual learning plans that we, as a team, believe will positively impact individual students. Not only do we work on this plan as a team, we regularly and intentionally review the data and anecdotal observations to make decisions regarding adjustments or modifications.

With clear expectations regarding respect, responsibility, safety, and being a learner, the community understands the standards set for all Amsterdam School students. As the team of parents and staff advocate for student success, community members can support students because they know what the standards and expectations are at Amsterdam School. All adults in these children's lives wrap around them to provide an ideal environment to create success.

Adults within the Amsterdam School community work together to support student success. It is important to understand that the core values and beliefs guide the educational mentality. Amsterdam School believes that every student can learn. Every student can make personal and academic gains. Every student has unique and individualized experiences that are valuable and can be utilized to increase student engagement. High quality, individualized professional development allows great teachers to become amazing teachers who support the needs of all students.

A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is implemented with fidelity and creates a school culture where all students are able to flourish. Status meetings are conducted with classroom teachers every four to five weeks. The focus of these meetings are both academic and behavioral as staff delve into deficit skills. Plans are created to target deficit skills with research-based interventions that support small groups and individual learners that are individualized for each student.

With specific and individual plans in place that are implemented by highly certified staff, classroom teachers are able to focus on core curriculum areas that support high achievement. Across the board, students go



slowly in K-2 foundational skills so that learning is comprehensive and firm which allows more in depth learning as they gain maturity in grade levels. The school's ELA curriculum is aligned in all grades which allows consistency and a scaffolded approach. Students are challenged to learn foundational number sense and math skills in primary grades so that they can delve successfully into more complex and abstract learning as they progress to sixth grade. Science and social studies skills are relevant and appropriate within the community's values so that the focus remains centered around learning instead of competition for ideals and values.

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

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

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

Amsterdam School strives to build a strong English Language Arts (ELA) culture where reading and writing are developed into life-long skills. The same curriculum is used from kindergarten to sixth grade ensuring that skills develop in a systematic way and at developmentally appropriate times. In addition to the set curriculum, teachers use high-interest books to keep students engaged and create projects that challenge and excite students to become strong readers and writers.

Reading and writing are taught using the Collaborative Literacy curricular resources. Collaborative Literacy supports all learners through whole-group instruction, small-group lessons, paired reading, and individual reading. Students are also able to choose from a wide variety of leveled, fiction and non-fiction books and poems, which allow them to find many reading options within their personal interests and reading levels. Assessment is regular and ongoing. During whole-class lessons, teachers gauge student understanding through pair-share and oral and written responses. In k-2 small group learning, teachers assess student mastery for decoding, sight words, and comprehension with end of unit assessments where students must be able to pass with 80% accuracy or better. In 3-6, students are assessed through written reports, individual learning projects/presentations, and tests that require demonstration and application of skills learned. When students are unable to demonstrate mastery of ELA concepts, reteaching occurs with varied materials.

Creating a culture that values reading and writing starts with our youngest learners. Kindergarten students are immersed in fiction and nonfiction picture books and decodable texts. Read-alouds bring books to life as students listen to and draw upon their own life experiences. The art of oral storytelling opens the world for students to gain new insights into the world. Students are introduced to letters and sounds and explore making words through phonics and whole-language activities.

Intermediate-grade students explore various types of fiction and nonfiction books. Students are more independent in choosing books and enjoy discussing books they have read with their peers. This creates a joyful reading environment as students enthusiastically share their recommendations. Nonfiction book studies include our rich Montana Native American culture. Coyote stories are favorite winter stories for third graders. Folk tales including tall tales, fables, and fairy tales are another popular unit of study. Students write their own fables after reading and sharing several classics. They also compare and contrast settings and characters within popular tales.

Building upon skills developed in the earlier grades, our fifth and sixth grade students are ready for bigger ELA challenges. New skills and strategies are taught to the whole class. Once students are introduced to the new concepts, they read books at their level and at their own pace; applying their learning to books of their own choosing. Students participate frequently in group and partner conversations to ensure strategies and concepts are learned.

Older students create projects to demonstrate learning. For example, fifth-grade students write their own poetry books with several different types of poetry and share them with other grades. Sixth-grade students develop a website as a companion to their study of the book *Code Talkers*. For each set of chapters, sixth graders create a new page on their website and gather Navajo words, maps, summaries, research, character descriptions, and personal reflections. At the end of the book, students have a well-curated collection of digital artifacts that narrate their learning throughout the book.

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

Mathematics at Amsterdam School is taught with a mindset of providing students with the tools and skills they need to be successful in all mathematical pursuits. Math concepts are developed through various methods including teacher led instruction, peer teaching, hands-on activities, and technology integration.

Mathematical concepts are intentionally scaffolded from grade level to grade level so that all students can continue to build skills with strong foundational knowledge and understanding. Math is accessible, systematic, and engaging at Amsterdam School.

In early grades, the emphasis in math is developing strong number sense and a strong foundation in mathematical reasoning abilities. Manipulatives and hands-on exploration are the primary vehicles for teaching these early math concepts. Manipulatives allow students to both gain an understanding of concepts and demonstrate knowledge. To develop reasoning skills, students are guided in such a way that they find their own strategies for solving problems rather than the teacher telling them how it should be done. Math games are another tool teachers use to develop math skills. Games reinforce mathematical concepts while students practice skills in a way that brings joy and enthusiasm to math in the classroom. Games make learning accessible to all levels of learners and the students are less intimidated by new concepts.

In intermediate grades, the emphasis shifts to making sense of problems with reasoning. Teachers adopt a problem-solving approach where students exchange their thinking and strategies with peers. Technology is integrated into math as a way to differentiate and provide immediate feedback to students. This strategy also helps teachers identify and provide support for struggling and high-achieving students in a more individualized manner. Teachers use best practices including the “I do, we do, you do model” for teaching and learning. Teachers spiral math topics throughout the year to build a strong base of understanding as well as regular and consistent review of concepts. Project-based learning is used for assessment and enrichment.

Formal and informal math assessment is ongoing in all classrooms. Daily, teachers record formative assessment data to track student knowledge and understanding of specific concepts as displayed through oral discussion, written practice work, peer teaching, and hands-on activities. As students demonstrate mastery, more complex concepts are introduced, practiced and applied. Students demonstrate mastery through summative, end of unit assessments that are written response (not multiple choice) or project-based. Teachers use state standards to evaluate student mastery. Those students who do not demonstrate proficiency receive extra support and/or reteaching in specific skill sets that are lacking. Assessment informs teaching practices.

Older grades start to transfer their understanding to more abstract concepts and how these concepts can be used in real-world applications. Teachers begin with a whole group lesson. Students then take ownership of the skill by practicing first in small groups, then as partners, and finally as an individual. Hands-on activities, body movement, and technology are incorporated into learning. Math projects are another way students practice their skills in fun and challenging ways. For example, fifth-grade students practice geometry skills by finding the volume of each of the different types of the Angry Birds. They also create their own coordinate graph picture. While in sixth-grade students are applying algebraic skills and begin the year with hands-on algebra utilizing manipulatives so that they can develop concrete understanding prior to moving to abstract algebraic application.

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

At Amsterdam School, science topics are taught and assessed in a variety of ways. Science is presented through nonfiction texts, experiments, videos, exploration, and guest scientists. Teachers modify instruction to meet the needs of their class. Specific science standards are taught while frequently integrating science with math, ELA, social studies, and art.

Science is taught through the lens of discovery supported by content that further informs student understanding. At all grade levels, students learn about life science, physical science, and earth science. In the primary grades, students examine concepts such as habitats, forces, states of matter, weather patterns, landforms, and an introduction to the solar system. Intermediate grades explore native plants, photosynthesis, rocks and minerals, electricity, magnetism, sound and light waves, weather, and natural disasters. Science concepts in the upper grades become more complex as they investigate the Yellowstone ecosystem, cells, biomes, chemical reactions, energy, the solar system, complexities of the water cycle, and plate tectonics.

Some examples of engaging science activities that students participate in are an invention convention, manipulating cars and ramps to learn about forces, modeling cell structures, building habitats for a class tortoise, planting a native plant garden, constructing bird feeders that are observed throughout the year, and creating 3D aliens that are adapted to imaginative planets.

Acknowledging the agricultural heritage of the Gallatin Valley is a unique aspect of the school's science curriculum. In the fall, classes take a field trip down the road to a farmer's field to learn about crops. Students walk back to school munching on corn they picked themselves. Baby goats make appearances every spring and alpacas occasionally come for a visit. The first-grade class incubates chicken eggs. Once the chicks have hatched, students in all grades come and observe the fluffy results of the investigation of a chicken's life cycle.

Formative science assessments provide teachers with data throughout dynamic units of studies. Throughout learning, teachers are actively engaged with students so that they can track what students know, understand, and can do. These formative assessments inform teachers what needs to be retaught or presented in a different way in order to increase understanding. Summative assessments, oftentimes projects and presentations, allow students to demonstrate their scientific understanding while continuing to support the knowledge of their peers.

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

There is great diversity in the ways social studies at Amsterdam School is taught. Our teachers embrace various methods to lead social studies investigations including book studies, digital experiences, research projects, and guest speakers. The one constant is that no matter the grade, the teacher, or the topic, students are engaged in meaningful learning.

Research projects take students beyond the pages of a history book and into a far deeper understanding. These projects can vary from creating digital presentations on Native American regions in second grade, to developing travel brochures that highlight points of interest in the thirteen colonies in fifth grade, to a student museum of Egyptian pyramids in sixth grade. Students love these projects as they become experts about their topics and are able to create educational artifacts that have great meaning to them.

Mystery Skype is an example of a digital experience that creates a real-world connection to geography studies. Fourth-grade students first become familiar with Montana geography and then take their accumulated knowledge and test it out against classrooms across the country. Through this experience, they not only become knowledgeable about our state but also become masters at map reading and identifying features and regions of the United States. This also helps create global citizens and builds cultural awareness.

Social studies is often included in cross-curricular units as well. For example, third-grade students follow the Iditarod. Throughout the unit, students study mapping, climate, population, and distance. Civics is introduced to the unit as students work in teams to complete activities. In each activity, students must depend upon the skills and strengths of their teammates and achieve high-quality work together. Completion of activities earns group Iditarod Bucks. The Bucks teach students important economic lessons about comparing the wants of the group versus the needs of the class.

Summative social studies assessments frequently include the use of a rubric, conceptual standards, and expectations for the project-based learning activity. Students are to meet basic expectations and encouraged to exceed the expectations in order to grow their depth of knowledge. Students present projects and answer questions to specific concepts in order to demonstrate learning mastery. Again, students who do not demonstrate proficiency, participate in supplemental activities to continue learning until proficiency is attained.

#### **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)**

Amsterdam's students in kindergarten through second grade meet weekly to learn the notation of music, to sing and play music, and to develop listening skills. Initially, students read simple rhythm patterns and develop into reading and writing pitch notation. In more advanced studies, students play mallet instruments. Songs encompass Folk Music and other relevant K-8 curricular recommendations. Students listen to classical and various music types to learn about music elements such as tempo, timbre, and style.

Amsterdam's third and fourth grades meet twice a week to build on previous skills and focus on elements of music. Music theory is taught with specific songs to which students listen, sing, or read. Fourth graders learn to play recorders and basic rhythm instruments to prepare for fifth grade band. They are introduced to ensemble skills – listening, responding and contributing to a cohesive outcome.

Fifth-grade students begin band and learn instrumental technique, reading, and ensemble skills. Their choir class focuses on singing, music theory, music genres, composers, and history. In sixth grade, students develop technique and reading abilities. They hone in on ensemble, playing skills, drumming, singing, and history.

All students showcase musical accomplishments during a holiday program as well as a spring program.

**2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

Our healthy and active physical education class for elementary students is designed to encourage physical activity, develop physical fitness, and foster teamwork and social skills. The class provides a variety of activities that engage students of different skill levels and interests.

To start, the class begins with a warm-up that incorporates dynamic ballistic stretching exercises and movements with music to increase heart rate and blood flow. Next, we engage in a variety of activities such as tag games, relay races, ball games, and obstacle courses. These activities can be adjusted based on the age and skill level of the students, and emphasize fun and participation over competition.

In addition, the class also focuses on skill development and proper technique for activities such as throwing, catching, kicking, and jumping. Students are given opportunities to practice these skills in a safe and controlled environment.

Finally, each class is concluded with a sportsmanship award where we recognize a student that showed great sportsmanship in how they acted with the judgment calls, encouraging teammates and shaking hands with the opposing team. All of these great assets to the class are tied into living a healthy lifestyle with physical activities and talks about nutrition.

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

**2d. Technology/library/media**

All students participate in Library and Technology classes. The classes are taught by the same teacher and occur twice a week: once with an emphasis on library skills and once with an emphasis on technology skills. This model allows for a rich understanding of how the subjects relate to each other and provides the time and tools to teach complex units. Working with the same teacher for Library and Technology also supports students' recognition of the importance of both online and offline activities.

Units in Library and Technology are cross-curricular and often follow an inquiry or project-based model. Examples of units include fairy tale STEM projects in kindergarten, using books and digital maps to study heroic animals around the world in third grade, and coding playable stories based on traditional Greek myths in fifth grade.

Students in all grades log into their Google accounts the first week of school and develop an extensive collection of digital artifacts every year. The school is 1:1 which allows for the creation of meaningful experiences with technology. It also means that computer time is not limited to a computer lab or Technology class. Technology is encouraged to be integrated judiciously into every subject.

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

Amsterdam School's parent group, Parents of Amsterdam Children (PAC) ensures all students may experience the abundant activities available in our area.

PAC sponsors PE field trips for all students. Third to sixth grade students participate in downhill skiing lessons and practice time. Kindergarten students participate in gymnastics and tumbling. First and second graders have participated in different activities over the years including indoor rock climbing, a trampoline gym, and most recently ice skating. Each PE field trip includes three sessions so that novice participants have the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to be successful.

PAC funding allows the school to host outdoor educators from Montana Outdoor Science School (MOSS). MOSS educators come to teach for eight weeks during the spring. They provide hands-on learning experiences that engage students in high-quality learning. Students favorite activities range from examining rock and fossil samples to handling living reptiles to dissecting owl pellets.

PAC strives to build a stronger community. All families are invited to participate in the Halloween Carnival, a home cooked Thanksgiving meal during school, students have the opportunity to purchase inexpensive gifts from Santa Store. PAC runs skill-based fundraisers that encourage physical fitness and reading.

## **3. Academic Supports**

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

Amsterdam School uses the Response to Intervention (RtI) approach to evaluate the needs of all students and to foster positive student outcomes through carefully selected and implemented interventions. RtI assists staff in identifying students who may require more intensive instructional services.

In order to have a successful RtI process, Amsterdam staff regularly screens all students in second through sixth grade and applies targeted interventions to students who are flagged as performing below grade-level. Three times a year, school-wide benchmark assessments are administered. After the benchmark assessments are completed, individual assessments are conducted with students who demonstrate the need for extra support. These individual assessments are designed to measure student abilities in targeted learning areas so that effective instruction can be designed to remediate deficits.

A Problem Solving Team (PST) composed of the principal, classroom teacher, Title I teacher, and Special Education teacher meet routinely to review data and discuss classroom performance. The PST creates individualized learning plans for students performing below grade level with specific academic learning goals. The plan outlines targeted skills, the intervention program(s) to be used, and the intensity (time)

needed. Amsterdam has access to a wide range of evidence-based, explicit, and systematic intervention programs that are designed to target specific learning deficits. Once a plan is in place and approved by parents, the parents become part of the PST and receive consistent communication about progress towards learning goals.

Progress monitoring is conducted monthly with assessments that are sensitive to small changes in skill development. Following progress monitoring, adjustments to individualized learning plans may be made during Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports meetings as well as during PST meetings. In order to best support students from year to year, all data from benchmark and progress monitoring are tracked in an individual student's PST form.

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

There are a variety of ways that students who are performing above grade level receive enrichment and challenges. As a small school, students who are above grade level in reading and math are able to stay in the classroom and continue to receive instruction that is modified to keep them interested and engaged. Teachers are accommodating of students who show aptitude in other areas and provide time during activities like genius hour, show and tell, and free time to explore, explain, and develop their interests.

In older grades, reading lessons and strategies are taught in a way that students can use their own reading materials rather than a traditional textbook. This allows students to choose a book that interests them and ensures that each student is using a text that is a good fit for their academic reading goals.

Students who are above grade level in math have access to utilize EdReady Montana, a digital learning platform, as a way to engage with higher-level math concepts at their own pace. Technology integration is also used to create opportunities for students to extend their learning in other ways. Self-paced and adaptive platforms allow students to work at their own pace as well as work beyond grade-level expectations.

Enrichment activities are used to push students to extend their learning. Examples of enrichment activities include creating games, developing crosswords with clues that reflect concepts that are being taught, and leveling-up coded programs beyond the base assignment with additional things like sounds and scores. STEM projects are another type of enrichment that motivate students to experiment with design, critical thinking, and application.

### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Amsterdam School is dedicated to identifying students in need of academic/social/emotional interventions based on individual disability categories. The Amsterdam special education team works closely with classroom teachers, administration, Title I teacher, Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports team, and cooperative specialists (e.g. speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, school psychologist, teacher of the deaf and blind, physical therapist, etc), to ensure that interventions are addressing individual student needs, being provided with fidelity, and that the direction and intensity of interventions is guided by updated data.

The special education program at Amsterdam places utmost value on building lasting relationships with students and families. We strive to understand the nuances of how individual students learn and what motivates them. Time is invested to understand student interests, abilities, and learning styles. This allows us to create and assign instruction that is highly engaging and applies a multisensory approach to learning.

Amsterdam School's community provides unlimited support to the special education team. Whatever the students need, the school finds a way to provide. This includes tools such as advanced magnification devices for students with visual impairments, organization tools for students with executive functioning challenges, sensory objects for autistic students, and active seating chairs for students with ADHD.

Special education students at Amsterdam have a wide range of disability categories and vastly different needs. The team has access to a diversity of research-based curriculum and teaching strategies to help students bridge the gap. The Gallatin Madison Special Education Cooperative (GMSEC) is an integral part

of our special education program. The GMSEC assists in fulfillment of Child Find responsibilities through the provision of developmental screenings, hearing screenings, and comprehensive educational evaluations. They also provide resources for accessing specific special education curriculum or teacher/paraprofessional training opportunities.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

Within the tight-knit community, English Language Learners (ELL) receive intentional support at Amsterdam School. All ELL students are placed into Response to Intervention (RtI) and are eligible to receive any services they need in addition to language acquisition services. The intervention programs used to support ELL students are research-based, explicit, and systematic. In addition, the school-wide reading curricular resources provide built-in ELL components.

When staff is planning academic content for ELL students, several factors are taken into consideration while ensuring the needs of individual students are met. Factors include learning readiness, interests, and learning styles. The intervention team assesses if the ELL student has the background knowledge to understand instruction, prepares methods to teach content in a way that will motivate the learner, and plans supports to fit specific learning styles.

Once the intervention team knows and understands each student's needs, \ instructional decisions are made. Some instructional decisions include modifying content in order to make learning accessible through assistance and scaffolding, modifying processes by allowing additional time or differentiated experiences, and integrating a variety of ways that ELL students can demonstrate their learning.

Staff members at Amsterdam are able to work closely with community members to support the family of ELLs in whatever they might need. Examples of support provided include interpreters, rides to and from school, translation of materials to and from school, and assistance with language acquisition. Other students are also part of the network that boosts the skills of ELLs. Through Amsterdam School's Cougar Buddy program, older students are paired with younger students including our ELL students. The ELL students are able to practice conversational English with their buddy in unstructured discussions and games. Some buddies have even helped ELLs with other skills such as letter names and sounds.

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



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

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

Amsterdam School strives to provide an engaging, supportive, and positive learning environment. School-wide activities unite all grades in a sense of community. Activities take place throughout the year and include a fun run, Thanksgiving lunch, bowling before winter break, a reading month, a carnival, and Field Day. Some of these events are also fundraisers. Money raised during these events pays for skiing, skating, and gymnastics trips, playground equipment, and educational materials like library books and 1:1 devices. Students know that they are participating in a learning community; the money they raise will help students have an enjoyable experience at Amsterdam in years to come.

Building trust relationships with students creates a safe and positive learning environment. When students make poor choices, the focus is on supporting students to create a solution that will lead to success in the future rather than enforcing punitive punishments that do not create growth. Classroom management language throughout the school reflects a positive mindset. Staff use language like, “You may try again for more success” and “You may make a better choice.” Positive language supports behavior adjustments and ownership of actions.

Leadership Club is a powerful opportunity that supports students to make a positive impact within the school community. The club consists of a group of older students who want to participate in community service and volunteer efforts. This group of students organizes a food drive, sells “candy-grams” to raise money for local causes, and helps run used book sales. They also meet every-other week with their younger Cougar Buddy, whom they mentor. These relationships are very impactful for both the older and younger students.

Highly engaging lessons and activities keep students motivated and teach them skills outside the core curriculum. Inquiry-based learning and STEM projects allow students to explore how problems are solved in real-world situations and create solutions of their own. Genius hour creates time for students to explore personal interests and passions. Student work is displayed in the hallways and the whole school is invited to participate in classroom showcases like a wax museum, an international food fair, and an invention convention.

Amsterdam’s community of positive behavior that encourages students and staff to be respectful, responsible, safe, and a learner is reflected throughout the school on a daily basis. Students are rewarded for being caught exhibiting “The Amsterdam Way” with a Paw-sitive Cougar Paw that is posted on a bulletin board.

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

Amsterdam School embraces community engagement. Families of Amsterdam students are supportive and highly desire to engage in their children’s growth and education.

Families and community members volunteer to coach, referee, and help with the fifth and sixth grade sports programs. Parents volunteer regularly in classrooms to support reading and other academic skills. Community members present to classes on a variety of topics ranging from raising livestock/pets, specific professions, and content specific topics in math and science. Throughout the year families join students in the classroom: wax museum, winter plays, music concerts, invention convention, student author presentations, and end of year celebrations.

Families support the school and its constituents. The Amsterdam parent group (PAC) implements fundraisers and raises approximately \$30,000 each year. These funds go toward supplemental curricular activities and improvements for the playground, technology, classroom resources, and library books. PAC strives to build a stronger community. All families are invited to participate in the Halloween Carnival, a home cooked Thanksgiving meal during school, and students have the opportunity to purchase inexpensive

gifts from Santa Store. PAC runs skill-based fundraisers that encourage physical fitness and reading.

Amsterdam School partners with various local groups to address student and family needs. Costco donates backpacks and supplies for local students. The Gallatin Valley food bank provides food bags for students who need extra food during the weekend. Amsterdam School runs a food drive to provide nonperishable food to the local food bank. Every winter, 3-4 Amsterdam School families are provided gifts and food for the holidays through Amsterdam School's Giving Tree.

Community helpers are regularly involved with Amsterdam School. Local volunteer firefighters present to every classroom about fire safety. The School Resource Officer is a regular presence and provides safety presentations for community adults. The sheriff's department's program, "Handle with Care," allows deputies and other community helpers to supply families with needed supports: well-checks, counseling resources, health supplies, and financial support programs. Every year, two Amsterdam students are nominated to "Shop with a Cop." A local youth pastor eats lunch and attends recess with students weekly.

Every semester, Montana State University (MSU) students work with teachers to gain professional experiences required for their elementary education studies. Student teachers are engaged at Amsterdam School as they complete their final year of study. Professors in science and engineering have presented complex science topics for Amsterdam students. MSU students have provided enriching technology learning opportunities as well as a girl's STEM club.

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

Amsterdam staff develops relationships with community members, families, the parent group, and the school board. The community demonstrates appreciation of Amsterdam staff through Teacher Appreciation Week, teacher funds, stipend from the local bank, and school board members offering words of encouragement and treats after a special staff meeting of appreciation.

Professional development (PD) is teacher-driven and based on student and staff needs. As with student education, staff professional development is individualized. Teachers reflect on their strengths, interests, and challenges to determine the most relevant PD needs. This individualized approach increases capacity for specialization while creating ownership and desire to continue learning. For example, the Title I teacher focused on strengthening her skills with "The Science of Reading" while the upper-grade teachers collaborated on comprehension strategies.

Staff are challenged and encouraged to participate in continued learning opportunities appropriate to their certifications and interests. PD ranges from taking short classes to earning Master's degrees. Our fourth-grade teacher was named as a digital innovator for PBS. In this role she provides PD for other educators throughout the Northwest centered around technology integration in the classroom. She also writes educational materials that will be featured on PBS Learning Media.

When new curricular resources are reviewed and adopted, all teachers are actively involved. Teachers review samples and discussions are held and actively reflected upon. Once the best resources are determined and purchased, PD is provided for all staff to ensure strong background knowledge, prior to implementing with students.

Teacher inservice time is frequently focused on students while staff also has time to plan and complete paperwork. While focusing on students, the MTSS team supports classroom teachers as plans and interventions are created by a team of educators instead of individual teachers or interventionists. This team approach supports staff while ensuring high-quality education for students.

New teachers to the district receive mentoring support from tenured teachers and administration to ensure opportunity to intentionally learn about the school culture, curricular resources and expectations, and Amsterdam's programs and procedures. New teachers meet with mentors weekly to develop and maintain high-trust relationships.

Daily, staff converse in the halls before and after school, offering encouragement, strategies for instruction and behavior modification, and interest in personal lives. Staff supports one another tremendously. Administration encourages staff to attend family events and helps make adjustments to schedules within reason. We are close-knit, professional educators who help ensure personal and professional balance, thus feeling respected and valued.

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

Amsterdam School is a single-school district with one administrator who is both the principal and superintendent.

The leadership philosophy at Amsterdam School is that all stakeholders – families, students, staff, and community members – should feel accepted, welcomed, and supported. Through servant leadership, the administration seeks to create a culture of mutual respect and understanding and in doing so establishes an environment where teachers and staff are inspired to attain high standards. Collaboration is a priority at Amsterdam School. When all stakeholders are involved in decision making and procedural determinations, the school community is invested in working together to uphold high expectations. Through this process, the sense of commitment grows as each person works to share ideas and goals while trust and support strengthens relationships.

The Amsterdam School community is a team where everyone works intentionally to support the efforts of others for the success of all. Fair and consistent expectations create a setting where staff are able to take appropriate risks so that they can learn from both their achievements and mistakes. The administrator offers support and resources while understanding that there are times to step back and admire the independence and talent that is frequently displayed. When mistakes are made, the cohesive organization responds with grace and freely offers support. This creates safety and comfort for staff so that they can focus on the success of students.

The school board and administrator give teachers and staff great flexibility to use their knowledge and experiences to effectively teach students instead of being mandated to align strictly with specific curricular resources. With the freedom to adapt to the needs and interests of an ever-changing group of students, teachers modify their lessons, tools, and resources in order to create the best learning experience possible. Teachers have gained independence and ownership within the school community and feel confident in taking initiative to prepare students for high academic achievement.

The school staff is highly devoted to understanding how each student learns and applies this knowledge to create safe, secure, and healthy learning environments. We appreciate individuals for who they are, meet students at their current abilities and skill levels, and provide everyone in the school community opportunities to learn and grow. We value progress more than an individual test score and see the students beyond the data points. At Amsterdam School we work as a team to ensure the success of every student.

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

As part of a small community, the staff at Amsterdam School has the opportunity to get to know each student and family. Teachers go above and beyond to support students, during and after school. Staff can be found attending sporting events and in the audience at plays and dance recitals. The school community endeavors to provide students with whatever they need to be successful – be it clothing, food, school supplies, love, respect, or quiet breaks. The school's staff works with families to ensure students are safe and healthy. There are no students that get lost in the cracks, no family that feels unseen.

Amsterdam School has a standard of behaviors that we call the Amsterdam Way. Every student is held accountable to follow the standards: be respectful, be responsible, be safe, and be a learner. Teaching the Amsterdam Way provides direct instruction on how to handle situations when there are different ideals, beliefs, and opinions. Teachers set the example regarding the treatment of others and accepting everyone regardless of differences. Parents are encouraged to share culturally diverse perspectives through presentations, games, and activities.

Amsterdam teachers include instruction that honors American Indians in accordance with Montana's Indian Education for All Act and with a desire to teach students about the rich history and vibrant cultures of our state's American Indian tribes. Examples of activities that immerse students in Indian education include integrating Native games into math, movement, and team building lessons, interacting with guest speakers, discovering and recreating ledger art, and examining archaeological evidence and physical objects such as furs and skulls to explore how resources from our ecosystem were essential to the lifestyles of many Plains Indian tribes.

Field trips create additional opportunities for hands-on learning about Montana's cultural heritage. At nearby Missouri Headwaters State Park, third-grade students explore how abundant resources have drawn Indigenous Peoples to this major confluence for thousands of years. Fourth graders walk in the footsteps of many tribes on their field trip to the Madison Buffalo Jump. Standing in a tipi ring high above the plain below, braced against wind gusts, students can vividly imagine the scene that occurred there: bison hooves pounding, a brave teenage boy leading the herd, and down below, jubilant tribal members thankful for the harvest. These special sites are cultural treasures and provide our students with meaningful experiences to develop enduring understandings about American Indians.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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The most instrumental practice in place at Amsterdam School is valuing every person within the school community (student, staff, and family) as a unique individual. Intentional decisions are made with the consideration of what is best for each specific child. Instead of making decisions and implementing practices at a school-wide level with a one size fits all mentality, Amsterdam School works with the community to ensure that decisions are best for each individual whom the decision impacts.

Creating a culture that truly values all individuals requires establishing consistent and clear expectations for students and staff. The Amsterdam Way consists of a table that clearly defines what it looks like for students and staff to be respectful, responsible, safe, and ready to learn in a variety of school and community settings. These expectations are non-negotiable standards for all students, staff, and community members that are reinforced daily. With clear, consistent, foundational expectations, appropriate behaviors become a norm so that everyone within the school can maintain focus on academic goals and progress.

Everyone, including parents, work together to support students and teach skills so that each individual can make gains academically, socially, and emotionally. Deficient skills are tracked with progress monitoring every 4-5 weeks at which time a team of teachers come together to discuss data while valuing anecdotal evidence. All areas of child development are considered before making recommendations for interventions and supports. Families understand that Amsterdam staff have the best interests of their child at heart. With this understanding, all parties work together as a cohesive team to support all areas of child development.

The Amsterdam School culture is built on a foundation of trust. Staff takes a vested interest in all students and families with meaningful relationships. This creates an opportunity for parents and caregivers to share concerns and issues with the school. Transparency among adults allows student support and focus to become meaningful and individualized.

When individuals struggle with meeting the expectations of the Amsterdam Way, the focus becomes teaching individual skills that allow moving to solution and develop problem solving skills. This community supports all individuals in moving to solutions instead of admiring problems.

Staff are appreciated for their unique skills, experiences, and personalities. Successes are celebrated and when there are challenges, all staff members unite to offer solutions. Teachers and staff are encouraged and supported with balancing their personal lives with their professional commitments.