

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name William S Gussner Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1509 4th Street NE
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Jamestown State ND Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 58401-3813

County Stutsman County

Telephone (701) 252-3846 Fax (701) 952-3846

Web site/URL https://www.jamestown.k12.nd.us/gussner-es E-mail Luke.Anderson@k12.nd.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* Dr. Robert Lech E-mail robert.lech@k12.nd.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Jamestown 1 Tel. (701) 252-1950

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 Dr. Heidi Larson
(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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
1 Middle/Junior high schools
1 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 7 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	17
K	33
1	35
2	38
3	51
4	35
5	41
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	250

*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):
- 0.8 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.5 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 3.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 86.6 % White
 - 5.6 % 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	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	19
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	250
(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):

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 25 %

Total number students who qualify: 63

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 19 %
Total number of students served 47

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>17</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>3</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>9</u> Developmental Delay	<u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>33</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</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: 5

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 5

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.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
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 20:1

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	96%	96%	97%	97%	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 X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2013

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

To support a safe, educationally rigorous and collaborative environment and to prepare students for tomorrow's challenges by practicing skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.

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

<https://www.jamestown.k12.nd.us/board-policy/files/documents/A%20Policies/AAC%20Nondiscrimination%20%20Anti-Harassment%20POLICY.pdf>

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

Jamestown is located in central North Dakota and is designated as a Class A district making us one of the larger districts in the state of North Dakota. Jamestown is located in Stutsman County and has a population of nearly 16,000 people according to the newest census. Jamestown is the 9th largest community in the state of North Dakota. Jamestown's nickname is the Pride of the Prairie. The community is strongly supported with precision manufacturing businesses as well as a strong agricultural presence and an active Chamber of Commerce. Jamestown is home to the Jamestown and Pipestem Reservoirs and outdoor activities such as fishing, water sports, mountain biking, and hunting are prevalent in the area.

Wm. S. Gussner Elementary is one of 5 public elementary schools in Jamestown, North Dakota. Jamestown Public Schools consists of one middle school and one high school. Wm. S. Gussner Elementary is located in the Northeast part of town and located near Jamestown High School, the University of Jamestown, and Two Rivers Activity Center. Our location provides rich collaboration opportunities with these community partners such as STEAM activities at UJ, physical education opportunities at TRAC, and connections with our high school students to ensure collaboration between high school students and the future high school students of our community.

We have a highly engaged parent stakeholder group that takes great pride in Gussner Elementary. With this positive collaboration, we have been able to achieve great success together. We strive to provide additional opportunities for students that struggle initially, as well as extension opportunities for those students that have already demonstrated mastery. We use Second Step as a Social Emotional curriculum within our classrooms, as well as a full time counselor that is available to provide guidance lessons in all grade levels. Second Step teaches coping mechanisms as well as positive social norms to ensure we have a welcoming and safe environments for all students and staff. We have identified The Wildcat Way as the expectations and routines we use to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment for all of our students and staff. Wherever you walk throughout our building, you will see our Wildcat Way Expectations posted as a reminder of how we behave in our school. The 3 guiding principles within the Wildcat Way are Safe, Respectful, and Responsible. We are very proud of the culture and climate that we have created at Gussner Elementary! Relationship building is the foundation of all that we do!

Through our Professional Learning Communities and professional development work, we have created priority standards that are directly linked to proficiency scales to ensure all students in Jamestown Public Schools receive a guaranteed and viable curriculum. We employ a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to ensure all students are pitched where they can hit it. For students that are in need of extension opportunities, we are proud to have an Innovation Academy to push those students that achieve at the highest levels. Within our MTSS systems, there are both academic and behavior pathways. Over the last 3 years we have been working with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports to ensure that all students are recognized and celebrated.

As a 2013 recipient of the National Blue Ribbon School Award, Gussner has a long standing belief in the staff and our entire community. The current staff consists of many of the same partners in the 2013 recognition. Staff retention has been a huge part of our consistent approach to student success. As a Gussner family, we take tremendous pride in providing the best possible educational opportunities for all students that walk through our doors.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Jamestown Public Schools is currently moving to Standards Based Learning and Reporting. Therefore, our school's focus has been on teaching our North Dakota State Standards. We've dived deeply into proficiency scales and assessments that match those proficiency scales. Our standards are our curriculum, however, there are many district approved curriculum resources the teachers at Gussner use to meet these standards. Our K-2 teachers have all been trained in the Science of Reading and are implementing many strategies based on what brain research says about developing readers. It is the expectation that all classrooms implement small reading groups using the Guided Reading framework. We have a 90 minute reading block reserved for small groups and direct, explicit reading instruction. Teachers are expected to provide a 45 minute Writing Workshop each day. This is to fall outside of the reading block. Our writing curriculum is Steve W. Dunn's Writing Workshop. Reading instruction is supported in many Gussner classrooms through technology. We are a 1:1 school, teachers have done an excellent job integrating iPads into their daily reading instruction as a learning tool. Our assessment tools include Guided Reading Leveling Kit, Guided Reading Spelling inventory, FASTBridge, ND State Assessment, and Grade-level common assessments.

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

As mentioned above, we are moving toward Standards Based Learning and Reporting. This means that what we are teaching and assessing in math is centered around our proficiency scales. Our main curriculum resource is Every Day Math. Every Day Math has been a great curriculum for us because it is a focused spiral curriculum and skills are practiced continuously throughout the year so they are never abandoned. We have several online resources to support math fact fluency as well. Some of these online resources include, IXL, Xtra Math, Prodigy, and the McGraw Hill online component. Our assessment tools include FASTBridge, ND State Assessment, and Grade-level common assessments. While the curriculum is vital, the engagement strategies and teacher providing instruction is even more essential in our eyes. We have done a great deal of professional development with Improving Academic Literacy to focus on engagement strategies such as turn and talks, precision partnering, give one-get one, and gradual release of instruction. Throughout the learning process with IAL, Dr. Kevin Feldman used the statement that "We need to get those academic miles on all students tongues". These strategies are equally efficient in all content areas and guide our instruction.

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

Science is an important part of the instruction happening at Gussner. Currently in Science we are using McGraw Hill's Closer Look science curriculum. In addition to the featured curriculum, we also supplement with Scholastic News, Engineering is Elementary, Picture Perfect Science, and units from Museum of Science. It is the expectation that all grades K-5 have scheduled science instruction in their schedule. Our approach to Science instruction consists of both teacher driven instruction as well as inquiry based learning opportunities. English Language Arts and Math have been a focus for education and through our Science instruction we are able to deliver cross-curricular instruction to meld all content areas into our instruction. Everything taught is based on the ND Science State Standards. Assessment takes place through multiple means including unit assessments, project based learning demonstrations and informal assessments through teacher collaboration. Classroom teachers in grades 2-5 received STEM training and implement many STEM lessons into their instruction. Students in grades K-5 have a scheduled STEM exploratory time once a month. We are also in the process of raising money for a Maker's Space to provide even more STEM opportunities for our students. This Maker's Space is projected to be ready for the 2023-2024 school year.

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

Social Studies is taught in all classrooms K-5. Content is based on the ND Social Studies State Standards. Similar to Science instruction, Social Studies instruction is delivered in many different ways. A feature for all of our classrooms are project based learning opportunities that feature community collaboration and group based learning activities. The younger grades collaborate closely with our police and fire departments. Officers make many visits to classrooms to make civic learning relatable and engaging for students. Our 4th grade features North Dakota Studies and our teachers do an excellent job making the history of our state interesting to our students. Through those learning opportunities we are able to learn how our state came to be and regional make up is featured as well. Social Studies is also featured in our reading programs. In our reading instruction, we use non-fiction texts as part of our small group instruction and many of those books contain social studies themes and provide opportunities for our students to connect to prior knowledge such as landforms and locations. This allows cross-curricular opportunities to be academically rich. Assessment takes form in multiple ways through our Social Studies instruction. Projects are completed at both the individual and group level and formal assessments are used as well to assess the depth of learning.

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

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

Gussner is the only public school in Jamestown that provides PreK services. Our Early Childhood Special Education program is designed for students ages 3-5 that are identified as having a disability. Our students receive PreK services based on their needs and their days of attendance can vary from 1/2 days all 5 days of the week to limited hours for 2-3 days as well as speech services on an identified needs basis. Our school environment is welcoming of all students and our ECSE group of educators is second to none. While we are the only school to feature the ECSE program, all school throughout Jamestown are impacted by this program. Based on disability category, students receive academic services such as letter recognition, phonemic awareness, number concepts, and behavioral skills to ensure a smooth transition into our 5 elementary schools. Upon completion of our ECSE program, students transition into our elementary schools based on our local boundaries and all schools are involved in transition meetings to ensure that student needs are met in all buildings. We are proud to serve our PreK students here in Jamestown.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Along with each classrooms art projects throughout the weekly lessons, we have a partnership with the Jamestown Arts Center in which we have an Artist in Residence come to Gussner each year. This artist works with all students K-5, and introduces different mediums and techniques to our students demonstrating the many opportunities that the arts provide. Along with our Artist in Residence, we also have a youth choir that our students are able to be a part of outside of our day to day music instruction. Jamestown Public Schools as a district flourishes in the arts and Gussner Elementary is proud to support those programs at the elementary level.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Gussner Elementary takes great pride in our PE and Health program. Our physical education department does a great job with programming, and over the last 5 years we have been able to add multiple life long hobbies into our instruction. Currently our students participate in our archery program, community bowling, and ice and roller skating. These programs are introduced at the building level and our students have opportunities outside of school to expand their experiences in those programs. Our students participate in FitnessGram which is a multistage aerobic capacity test. This program is designed to determine whether our students are in a Healthy Improvement Zone or if we need to provide opportunities to improve. All of our

students are able to achieve a Fitness Award based on their competencies through our FitnessGram programming.

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

2d. Technology/library/media

Grades 3-5 receive Library Skills class once a week from our district's Elementary Librarian. During Library Skills students are taught about cyber security, cyber bullying, media literacy, and so many other topics regarding research. Grades K-5 get to do library check-out once a week. Technology is a strength of Gussner Elementary School. We are a 1:1 school, all students have their own iPads, teachers have laptops, iPads, Apple TV, and SmartBoards. Since moving to 1:1 iPads, teachers have had opportunities to attend Apple trainings from the building's technology facilitator. Teachers are able to implement the many innovative classroom features Apple has to offer. The expectation is not for teachers to use the iPads to sit students on a game, rather the iPads are meant to enhance the learning that is already happening in the classroom through student engagement (everybody actively participating in lessons), creativity (students creating projects on their iPads), and experiences that could only be possible through technology such as virtual field trips and video chatting with authors.

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

Gussner implements Second Step which is a social/emotional curriculum. We also have several teachers that are trained in the Nurtured Heart Approach. These programs have provided our teachers with confidence in working with students with all social and emotional needs.

We house our district's special education preschool program at Gussner. We are fortunate to be able to integrate these young learners into our many school wide activities.

We've partnered with our High School's Career and Technology Center for many building projects around our school. Examples of things they have made for us are whiteboards, lockers, furniture, and a storage shed. This provides real-life building experience for our district's high school students as well as an opportunity to improve the physical make-up of our school.

Our teachers provide two former Gussner students with the Wildcat Way Scholarship. This is a scholarship awarded to two graduating seniors that are formal Gussner Wildcats. The Scholarship is fully funded by current Gussner Teachers and staff.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Gussner uses a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for our students. We have a clearly defined Learning Pathway that ensures no student falls between the cracks. Tier 3 students are placed into a replaced curriculum intervention. These interventions are available for both reading and math. Tier 2 students are provided with small group FASTBridge interventions. Our school's building reading specialist and instructional coach play an integral role in getting students in these interventions and ensuring the validity of these interventions. We also have summer school opportunities for students that may regress over the summer without any formal instruction.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Jamestown Public Schools has an Innovation Academy where high-level learners are able to be challenged in all content areas. These students attend the Innovation Academy for a full school day once a week. The Innovation Academy is available to students grades 3-5. In order to attend the Innovation Academy, students are assessed through a multi prong approach. Innovation Academy uses a Gifted Screener, North Dakota NBRS 2023

State Assessment results, Fast Bridge progress monitoring and teacher perception. Our Innovation Academy instructor has a credential in a Gifted and Talented Program of Study. Within this credential, our instructor completed coursework in children with exceptional learning needs, methods and materials of gifted and talented, and assessment of gifted and talented individuals. All teachers in grades K-5 are expected to teach small reading groups. Learners that have a Guided Reading level that is above grade expectations, are able to work in small groups of like-learners to read and respond to more challenging materials. Through our work with standard based learning, and our proficiency scales, we have created enrichment opportunities for all students that demonstrate mastery. These activities provide students personalized learning opportunities to ensure they are able to achieve at the highest level possible.

3c. Students with disabilities:

At Gussner Elementary we employ 2 special education strategists as well as one special education technician. All of our students are providing programming created through the IEP team to ensure their individual needs are met. Along with those strategists, we have special education para-educators to assist in carrying out IEP programming. Individual minutes that are required through their IEP's are served through our strategists and our strategists and the entire team meet with the families once a year to review programming and adjust accordingly. For example, if a student requires individual minutes in comprehension, the targeted skills are addressed in a 1 on 1 time with their case manager. Along with the members mentioned, we have a physical therapist, occupational therapist, school psychologist, and 2 speech language pathologists to serve our students.

3d. English Language Learners:

Gussner is one of 5 elementary schools in Jamestown and when we have ELL students, we are served through our ELL department. Currently there are no ELL students at Gussner Elementary.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At the forefront of everything we do here at Gussner, our goal is to build trusting and caring relationships with all of our students, families, and staff. We employ the Wildcat Way throughout our building which is guided by the desire to act Respectful, Responsible, and Safe. We engage our students through the relationship building process and engagement increases with those safe and trusting connections. Through our Second Step instruction as well as engagement professional development such as Guided Reading, Improving Academic Literacy (IAL), and other opportunities we strive to provide an engaging and energetic learning environment. We have done a great deal of professional development with Improving Academic Literacy to focus on engagement strategies such as turn and talks, precision partnering, give one-get one, and gradual release of instruction. Throughout the learning process with Improving Academic Literacy, Dr. Kevin Feldman used the statement that "We need to get those academic miles on all students tongues". These strategies are equally efficient in all content areas and guide our instruction. Motivation takes place in many ways both intrinsic and external. We use business cards and post cards to share our pride in student achievement as well as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports through our MTSS-Behavior initiative. We strive to make sure that no-one whether they be a student, staff, or family member walks our halls without being celebrated and valued.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We are fortunate to live in a very supportive community. Our classrooms have established many partnerships with various community groups. We frequently have visits from officers from the police department and fire department. They are regulars in our school for drop-in visits and planned lessons. Our 5th grade students visit a nursing home frequently and have "adopted grandparents." This has proven to be incredibly beneficial for both the students and the residents at the nursing home. The Rotary Club in town donates books to first graders each year and has members come read to classes. Our local Arts Center has an Artist in Residency program that provides our school with 6 weeks of art instruction from one of their employed artists. We invite parents into the building for numerous things from student performances and presentations, to gingerbread house building and career talks. We work closely with the Central Valley Health Department in town, they provide us with a school nurse once a week and also provide in building vaccine clinics each year. A local church provides an after school program called "Good News Club" to interested students once a week. A Gussner parent started a program that provides snacks for students that need them. This parent has gotten donations from individuals and businesses in our community. The program became so large that it has been able to provide snacks to all elementary schools in Jamestown. We have a weekly backpack program that sends food home with students in need on Fridays. Volunteers from Alpha Opportunities (an organization of adults with intellectual disabilities) pack these backpacks for us each week. Our PTO is incredibly active in our community. They continually connect with local businesses to share the awesome things happening at Gussner and to raise money for various needs our school may have. A locally owned pizza shop provides our students with free pizza for reaching a reading goal each month. We also work closely with our local University. We have a handful of student teachers each year. This is a great partnership! They get to learn from us, while our teachers get energized with new ideas!

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Teachers feel valued and supportive because we have strong leadership within our building and at the district level as well. Our administrator and instructional coach are extremely supportive and knowledgeable. Ample opportunities for professional development are provided for teachers each year. Examples of professional development that have been offered are: continued work with Steve Dunn on writing and comprehension strategies, Foundations of Reading, Improving Academic Literacy, Guided Reading, Nurtured Heart, MTSSB, technology trainings (Apple, Classlink, Schoology), FASTBridge Training, Standards Based Learning, and Personalized Learning. Within Schoology, we have a resource library available for all teachers to access the necessary information and training in areas of need. Schoology is a Learning Management System that can be accessed by both students and staff. Within our

PLC process and professional development days which are embedded into our school calendar, all teachers are given the opportunity to network with teachers throughout the district to obtain support in all academic areas. During the last year, we had 4 professional development days embedded to focus on district initiatives. During our embedded professional development we have focused on developing teacher leaders at the district level. Our district has created a Teacher Leadership Academy (TLA) which allows our staff to obtain their masters degree in Educational Leadership through district based learning opportunities. Through this opportunity, our teachers learn about our district and present on teacher perception data to influence teacher guided changes. At the elementary level, we also have a Elementary Leadership Team (ELT) to allow our staff to have a voice in professional development opportunities. This group helps define what professional development opportunities are needed. In addition to these opportunities, teachers have PLCs every Wednesday morning with their grade-level teams. These PLC meetings are agenda driven and address district and building initiatives as well as professional development opportunities.

4. School Leadership:

As a building we use the term Maslow before Bloom's. In order for our students to achieve at a high level, they must first be recognized, feel a sense of belonging, feel safe, and have the things they need such as food, water and rest in order to be successful. The building principal believes in building connections, and if those connections are strong, high levels of educational success take place because our kids know that we believe and care for them at the highest level. In the words of Rita Pierson, "kids don't learn from people they don't like". We have policies and procedures in place guided by our school board that help guide our principal to ensure that the school's mission and vision is carried out to it's fullest potential.

The leadership structure at Gussner consists of the building principal, instructional coach, and our site based leadership team. The site based leadership team consists of the building principal, instructional coach, counselor, grade 4-5 rep, grade 2-3 rep, K-1 rep, para professional rep, and specialist rep. This representation structure ensures that all stake holders within the building have representation. As building principal, duties include both instructional oversight as well as all initiative oversight within our behavioral and academic pathways. The principal collaborates with our instructional coach to make sure that we are delivering a guaranteed and viable curriculum to all students. When re-direction is required, the building principal collaborates with staff to carry out the goal of a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students at Gussner. Often times, our counselor is used as a resource for situations where outside services are needed to help families succeed both in and out of our school. As a building, we have a high functioning team that believes in a shared vision for our building. All stakeholders are valued by our administration and stakeholder feedback drives administrative decision making.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

This is an area of focus for not only Gussner, but also for all of Jamestown Public Schools. Historically, North Dakota has not had a highly diverse population. Over the last 10 years or so we have seen an increase and as a district and school we are educating our staff and students on the diverse populations that we have in our buildings. Every educator goes through a cultural diversity program to learn more about the different cultures we work with in public schools and that has been a great introduction for our staff. In one instance, we use North Dakota Studies in our 4th grade social studies to understand the history of our cultures in North Dakota historically. The American Indians of North Dakota is a great part of our curriculum because it shares the history of our states cultures and celebrates the impact that other cultures have had on our state. One way we are trying to educate students and staff in addition to curriculum is to invite our families in to share their cultural experiences with our Gussner classrooms. This is an area of focus for us moving forward to become a more inclusive and understanding district and building.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

While we have explored and shared a number of different initiatives and strategies that have helped Gussner become successful, there is one overarching theme that allows us to be successful at Gussner Elementary. That is the sense of community and establishing safe, caring, and trusting relationships with all stakeholders. Both the principal and all staff at Gussner Elementary feel that without positive, caring connections with our students, high levels of student achievement will never be attained at our expected levels. One initiative that we use with great success is our Relationship Mapping activity. Through Relationship Mapping we are able to see where we have those positive connections and seek out opportunities to create new relationships where we are lacking. One additional component to academic and social success is creating a safe environment to make mistakes. We learn through our mistakes and being in an environment where mistakes are a part of the process ensures students can explore and grow with great confidence.

Our staff are devoted to creating an environment where kids feel safe both emotionally and academically. In order to grow as a learner, you have to be willing to take risks. In order to take those risks, you have to know that you have academic and emotional freedom to fail and make mistakes without judgment. Our staff has always been tremendous with this. In addition to having those relationships with students, staff need to have those same freedoms without fear of judgment. Our staff is a very tight-knit group that supports each other at the highest level. We do team building activities that have nothing to do with academics to provide those opportunities to develop peer relationships. In short, if you believe you are cared for and trusted, you will take chances to be great and that holds true for educators and learners alike.

In order to achieve at a high level for any school, stakeholder engagement is essential. It truly takes a village to achieve a high level of success. From a highly collaborative staff, to a highly engaged Parent Teacher Organization, to highly engaged parents, all are required to work in harmony to achieve great things. Wm. S. Gussner is a true community for all. For us to achieve this success, we have received a high level of collaboration and cooperation. There is a statement in leadership that the four most powerful words in leadership are, "I need your help". As a building, we feel this is the same idea behind our success. Our school community is a true family and that has allowed Wm. S. Gussner to have great success.