

***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) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

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

School Mailing Address 209 Ash Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Dodge State NE Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 68633-3564

County Dodge County

Telephone (402) 693-2207 Fax (402) 693-2209

Web site/URL https://www.howellsdodgeschools.org E-mail mernst@hdcjags.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.

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Mark Ernst E-mail mernst@hdcjags.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Howells-Dodge Consolidated Schools Tel. (402) 986-1621

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 Mr. Jason Kreikemeier  
(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

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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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
0 Middle/Junior high schools  
1 High schools  
0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

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

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

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

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

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	0
1	0
2	27
3	15
4	15
5	14
6	13
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	84

\*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 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 11 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 84 % White
  - 5 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 6%

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	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	5
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	84
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 37 %

Total number students who qualify: 31

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 21 %  
Total number of students served 18

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>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>3</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>1</u> Developmental Delay	<u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>2</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</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.	6
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
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 13:1

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%	94%	96%	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.

Produce hard-working, responsible problem-solvers who contribute to society in a positive manner.

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

<https://www.howellsdodgeschools.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/District>

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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The former districts of Howells and Dodge joined in consolidation in 2011. The consolidation was not immediately supported by the two communities. In the years that the school district has worked on building a united culture there are still pockets of discontent, but overall the district has become a point of unity for both communities, and "Jaguar Green" is displayed and worn proudly.

Many of the families in the school community are generational grandparents and parents who attended school in one of the two communities, and the families have stayed in, or returned to, the area to raise their children. Previous to consolidation, the two communities had strong reputations for success in athletics and activities at the state level. The combined district continues to value and achieve at high levels, for example winning several state championships over the past several years and qualifying several students for National FCCLA events every year. The two communities strongly support students and events are well attended, whether hosted at home or away. The community, and the school, value the consistency and hard work that is required to be competitive at a high level, which is reflected in the school's mission statement.

The key strategies embraced within the elementary school to ensure all students meet their full potential are consistency, tenacity, and teamwork. The elementary teachers work tirelessly to meet the needs of the individuals in their classrooms to support them in meeting their full potential. The programs and curriculum used within the school are high quality, but they would not be effective without the consistent effort of the teachers to differentiate, coach, and intentionally design instruction to meet the needs of the students. Due to the small number of staff, the teachers communicate frequently and work as a team to deliver the best educational opportunities. The lack of turnover within the staff allows them to watch students grow, build solid relationships, and really understand each individual student throughout their time at the elementary. The small town community values carry over into the school community. School staff expects students to work hard and meet the high expectations, but create a tight-knit, caring, and supportive community to push students to their highest levels.

There may not be a special program or innovative techniques or programs that I can speak to other than utilizing sound teaching strategies. We are a Marzano Framework school and many of our teachers have been through Kagan training and I believe the most important and innovative piece we provide for our students are strategies of engagement, strategies of differentiation, small group work, differentiated instruction, intervention services, accommodations, and whole group work. We promote reading in our district having a variety of reading challenges and D.E.A.R. time (Drop Everything And Read) to emphasize reading. It really comes down to the fact that we are consistent about what we do and teachers review the data to best meet the needs of the students.



## **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:**

The elementary school adopted Wonders in 2017 for the 2018-2019 school year. The staff looked at various samples of reading curriculums, and determined that Wonders offered varied, complex text and met the requirements of the state standards. The staff utilizes the curriculum based assessments, both weekly and unit, to measure student mastery of teaching skills and standards. Additionally, the NWEA MAP assessment in Reading is given three times per year. The data collected from the MAP assessments are used to measure which students are mastering reading standards and to determine which students who need additional interventions to meet grade level standards. All students are also given the Acadience reading screener to evaluate foundational reading skills. These results are also used to group students and intervention placement. The Nebraska State Assessment, NSCAS, shows which students mastered the state standards, according to the test and are monitored to ensure students are achieving at the highest levels possible.

Teachers provide a variety of strategies in whole and small group settings. They utilize stations, think, pair, share, choral response, elbow partners, modeling, critical thinking skills, graphic organizers, read aloud, among many other things.

The content includes working on building skills in phonemic awareness, using proper grammar, understanding different genre, sentence structure and writing paragraphs, reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, spelling, and putting ideas into words either verbally or in a form of an essay. As they get older they also have book clubs, where teachers select appropriate books at their level and then have questioning and activities to go along with the materials they are reading. In all the different lessons and activities, the teachers provide differentiation in order to meet the students' needs.

Since adoption, the staff determined that there were some gaps in the scope and sequence of skills. The staff has made modifications and adjustments based on their results from the formative and summative assessments. While the staff evaluates different curriculums to replace the current one, they are supplementing to ensure students continue to meet benchmarks.

Also the district has adopted a writing goal as part of the school improvement goal. We have developed school wide rubrics and are providing writing training to help develop a common structure and vocabulary throughout the elementary school, but it is flexible enough to allow for differentiation of content and topics.

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

The Mathematics curricular materials for grades Kindergarten through 6th grade are Math Expressions published by HMH, which was adopted by the school in 2018. Teachers evaluated several different curriculums. Math Expressions was chosen because it was well aligned to the Nebraska State Standards and because the learning routines in the program aligned well with the school's philosophy.

The program encourages student problem solving, cooperative learning, and verbal processing. Curriculum based formative assessment is built into the program and teachers use the program assessments to track student mastery of skills taught. Additionally, the district uses NWEA MAP assessment to formatively assess student growth outside of the curriculum. Students are given the MAP assessment for Mathematics three times per year. Teachers have immediate access to the classroom data and use it to determine which areas of the curriculum students have mastered and which areas need additional review. The Nebraska State Assessment, NSCAS, is given once per year as a summative assessment. These results are monitored and disaggregated to ensure we are meeting the needs of every student.

The strategies incorporated in the classroom include, modeling, think/pair/share, elbow partners, whole

group instruction, small group instruction, math stations, flash cards, among many other instructional methods.

The content includes number identification, additions, subtraction, multiplication, division, reading and effectively solving story problems, fractions, introduction to geometry and algebra.

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

The most current science curriculum we utilize in our elementary school is Mystery Science. This is an online program that is aligned with our Nebraska State Standards. Teachers are provided with lessons, assignments, and labs to encourage theories, experiments, and purposes of science. There are formative assessments that go along with lessons and activities that allow teachers to determine student mastery. Students in grades 3rd through 6th grade also take the NWEA MAP assessment to formatively assess student growth and mastery outside the curriculum. Only our 5th grade students take the Nebraska State Assessment, NSCAS, as a summative assessment.

Beyond our science curriculum, our teachers partner with the Colfax County Extensions Office to provide STEM and Science based activities to promote learning of science and agriculture. The curriculum includes, plants, scientific method, animals, photosynthesis, ecosystems, food chain, motion & energy, solar systems, chemical & physical reaction, and the earth's resources.

They do a variety of experiments that go along with the lessons, they have an egg drop challenge where students can utilize specific materials to protect the egg from being dropped and breaking. Students have a lab where they watch the incubation and hatching of baby chicks in the classroom.

The educational strategies are uniform in all subject areas, they have hands on experiments, partner work, whole group instruction, small group work, think/pair/share, modeling, choral response, read aloud, among many other instructional strategies.

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

The Social Science curriculum materials for most grade levels is the Harcourt Social Studies, except for our 4th grade students who have a separate curriculum material, which is the Nebraska Adventure, Edition 2. Students are assessed mainly based on a formative base, with materials provided by curriculum materials. These assessments allow teachers to determine comprehension and mastery of the topics being discussed. There are currently no formal state assessment or NWEA MAP assessment provided for this subject area.

There are a variety of subject areas that our students learn about in social studies throughout the school year, which include, Laws, citizenship & being part of a community, and where people live, American culture, important figures in history, what history is, location & climate, are additional examples of other subject areas covered.

The educational strategies are uniform in all subject areas, they have hands on experiments, partner work, whole group instruction, small group work, think/pair/share, modeling, choral response, read aloud, among many other instructional strategies.

#### **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)**

All elementary students are provided Art instruction once per week. Students are introduced to a variety of creative mediums. These mediums include use of lines, primary/secondary colors, creating texture, use of symmetry, water colors, self-portrait, creating art with clay, utilizing shapes to create art, and weaving.

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

All elementary students are provided the opportunity to participate in Physical Education every day. The teacher provides a variety of activities, games, learning rules, and promotes health and proper nutrition within these lessons as well. An example of this is Jump Rope for Heart. The students participate in fundraising they learn about leading a healthy lifestyle and the reason why Jump Rope for Heart was created.

They are introduced to healthy eating habits, exercise routines, and why it is important for them as kids and when they become adults. They also participate in the presidents fitness challenge. They have different units for sports like basketball, volleyball, baseball, badminton, soccer, etc. Our teacher provides the fundamental skills for health and fitness to have a better understanding of what it means to be healthy and the purpose of exercise.

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

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

All elementary students are provided media/library instruction once per week. Students are introduced to a variety of genres and have the opportunity to check out books of interest at the student's appropriate reading level to ensure success. Different programs are utilized to encourage and promote reading. These include Golden Sower Challenge, March Madness Challenge, among others.

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

## **3. Academic Supports**

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

The MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) structure provides a systematic process to review and select research based interventions to help students that are performing below grade level. The MTSS team provides rules to determine those that are performing below grade level in order to identify students that need extra support. These interventions are provided by the classroom teacher, paraprofessionals, or Title I teacher. Students also work in small groups which allows teachers to differentiate instruction to support those who are not at grade level.

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

In our small group settings within the classrooms, students that perform above grade level are challenged and instruction is differentiated to push students to reach their highest potential. This could include complex texts, reading materials above their current grade level, and higher level challenges to stretch their thinking.

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

The MTSS and Student Assistance Team (SAT) work in coordination to help in the identification of students with disabilities. The teachers and paraprofessionals provide the extra supports and interventions in the classroom. If the teams do not see adequate growth, there is a determination that students should be

referred for testing. Once identified, the IEP team members work together to develop a plan for the students' education and how they will be supported in the classroom. We provide educational support with the help of our special education teacher, paraprofessionals, and classroom teachers who provide the accommodations/modifications for each student.

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

English Language Learners are identified through the ELPA 21 Screener in the state of Nebraska and those that indicate that a different language is spoken in the home are the ones who need to take the this screener. Once the district identifies students that have E.L.L. needs we provide support much like we would for any other students that are either below grade level, on a 504 or an IEP. The district provides appropriate materials to help the student. The district has provided a bilingual para to help with interpretation if needed. Teachers make modifications to assignments and accommodations that will help the student be successful in the classroom. We also want to help the students work on language acquisition when appropriate, and provide any other support as needed by the classroom teacher or paraprofessional. All the supports are in place to ensure we do everything we can to help these students be successful. We do not have a large amount of English Language Learners, but we do have a system of support as needed.

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

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

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

The elementary teaching staff utilizes a variety of instructional programs and strategies in order to help engage students in the classroom. Staff members have been trained in the Marzano Framework of instruction and in Kagan instructional strategies to help develop the capacity to engage, support, motivate, and establish a positive learning environment for all students. Teachers review their current practices, utilize established state standards, and provide positive reinforcement to ensure that they are supported academically, socially, and emotionally. We do provide students with a guidance counselor curriculum for social and emotional needs. Our guidance counselor provides the 2nd Step program which talks about how to be a good friend, handle conflict, the importance of talking to an adult when they have problems, problem solving, calming down, showing empathy, exploration of careers, among other important life skills. We also have a licensed mental health practitioner that can help support students that may have more needs. By implementing these instructional strategies and following the standards, teachers help students grow and want to be more active participants in their learning.

We utilize our teaching strategies to keep students moving, active, and engaged with hands on activities, and movement. We recognize students' success with a program called "caught being good." We try to use positive reinforcement whenever possible to continue to motivate them. We provide activities like a glow party where they get to dance and play activities if they complete their tasks throughout the year. They receive opportunities to go bowling, play sand volleyball, they receive treats, other activities or even simple verbal praise. The teachers at our school do an excellent job of recognizing success and continue to look at different ways in which they can motivate students to do their very best.

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

The school works hard to continually inform the families and community members about the school's programs, accomplishments, and mission through social media. Both communities have a newspaper, and the school works with the entity to spread information through their publishing. A school-wide all-call goes out weekly to update on activities, notices, and announcements.

The elementary school hosts various family engagement events to help build relationships with families in the community. The annual "Family Literacy Night" has families competing in STEM challenges after reading stories and playing literacy games. Extended family members, and sometimes family and friends, attend the Grandparent's Day Celebration. The end of the year field day is also open to parents to attend and cheer students through various competitions.

The school has created a strong partnership with the local 4H extension office. The extension coordinator provides students access to curriculum or programs that the school would not otherwise be able to offer. Through this partnership, students have programmed and built robots, hatched chickens, and competed in STEM challenges.

Additionally, the school has also benefited from the Howells Community Kindness club in providing food and clothing for students in need.

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

It is important to the school culture that all in the building feel valued, especially teachers. Teacher leaders serve an important role in the school improvement process; it is their voice that determines what goals and initiatives need to be put in place in order to be successful. The school improvement team and the administration partner with the local Educational Service Unit to provide district-wide professional development that aligns with the school improvement goals. Outside of the district provided professional development, teachers are encouraged to pursue opportunities to increase their knowledge of engaging students and deliver high-quality instruction. Opportunities for professional development are promoted by

the administration, and all efforts are made to honor teacher requests. The local ESU also offers support through instructional coach cycles. The voluntary participation in these cycles, shows the commitment the staff has to improving and building their capacity.

The implementation of the MTSS process within the building has led to a PLC type structure where teachers can problem-solve with the team and develop ideas to best support students. This process is strongly teacher led and administratively supported. The success of the MTSS team is evident in the academic scores for the building.

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

The administrative team is very small. The district superintendent also serves as the elementary principal. In addition, the district has a second administrator serving as high school principal and athletic director. In previous administrative structures, the district had a superintendent, a K-12 principal, and a part time athletic director. In order to meet the demands of leading buildings in two separate communities, the structure shifted to the current roles.

The Continuous Improvement Team, which consists of our Guidance Counselor, Title I Teacher, an Elementary teacher, and two 7-12 teachers, and an Elementary MTSS team, which includes, 2 elementary classroom teachers, SPED Teacher and Title I teacher, partner with the administration to recommend programs and resources to support the district goals and maintain high student achievement.

The Howells-Dodge Board of Education is very supportive in the continuation of providing a quality education for the children of the district while maintaining fiscal responsibility. Howells-Dodge Consolidated Schools are truly very good schools, committed to the quest of becoming better schools for the future of the children served in the district. The main focus continues to be to, "provide what is best for our students."

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

The teaching staff utilizes various teaching strategies that align with culturally responsive teaching practices. The building emphasizes cooperative learning and student voice in building background and connections and processing material. The school's MTSS process ensures that all students, regardless of background, are receiving the support they need to grow towards and achieve rigorous grade level standards, and the systems of support within MTSS are varied to consider cultural background and needs that could arise due to language differences, such as providing support in the students' native language and having an interpreter on-site to assist in parent communication.

The needs of our community in terms of cultural awareness are minimal in comparison to other school districts, but we do have some diversity. The overwhelming majority come from Latin American countries to seek work in the field of agriculture. In conjunction with our Educational Service Unit, we provide what is known as a migrant program. This program provides information, resources, tutoring and advocacy for the people who have moved from different states or countries to work in the field of agriculture. The district also provides the students from these families to attend a summer camp that provides educational and community supports.

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

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The one practice that I believe to be most beneficial to our school's success is our staff's consistency. We have a dedicated group of educators, with very little turnover, who is committed to our students. They work diligently to provide a dependable, researched based instructional model that will be most beneficial to the student of our district. Our teachers are willing to branch out and attend meaningful professional development to help them improve as educators. There is no magic program or practice that I can say has led to our success. It is actually the dedication and hard work that our veteran staff puts in to ensure our students are receiving the best education possible.

The consistency of our staff has led to a process of reflection, collaboration, and teamwork to look at our role as educators and what we can do as a school to meet the needs of all of our students, from our high achievers to those that may be below grade level. Day in and Day out I can trust that our staff will provide for the needs of our students. They are also willing to adjust or adapt to not get stuck in a routine, so they are providing what is best for our students. We as a staff reflect on our how our school functions as a whole to make sure our curriculum, the engagement, and our instruction creates a positive environment and successful school.

In this day and age of education, the district appreciates the dedication of our staff now, more than ever. They show up, they do the work and they adjust as necessary. That is why "consistency" is the most instrumental practice and why we have been successful.