rU.S. Department of Education

2013 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

A Public School - 13CO2

	Charter	Title 1	Magnet	Choice
School Type (Public Schools):	☐	☑	☐	☐

Name of Principal: Mrs. Elizabeth Sloan

Official School Name: Ponderosa Elementary School

School Mailing Address: 1885 S. Lima Street
Aurora, CO 80012-5138

County: Arapahoe State School Code Number*: 7116

Telephone: (720) 747-2800 E-mail: esloan@cherrycreekschools.org

Fax: (720) 747-2888 Web site/URL: http://www.cherrycreekschools.org/Schools/Ponderosa/Pages/default.aspx

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that all information is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*: Ms. Mary Chesley Superintendent e-mail: mchesley2@cherryschools.org

District Name: Cherry Creek 5 District Phone: (303) 773-1184

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

_____ Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mrs. Jennifer Churchfield

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

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

**Non-Public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*
The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools (Aba.Kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

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

2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or its equivalent each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.

6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.

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

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

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

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district
   - 43 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   - 13 Middle/Junior high schools
   - 7 High schools
   - 0 K-12 schools
   - 63 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 6402

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area

4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6

5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	76	56	132
1	65	63	128
2	75	60	135
3	58	55	113
4	70	64	134
5	57	54	111
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
Total in Applying School:			753

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:

1 %	American Indian or Alaska Native
5 %	Asian
30 %	Black or African American
36 %	Hispanic or Latino
1 %	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
22 %	White
5 %	Two or more races
100 %	Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting 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.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2011-2012 school year: 21%

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

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred ***to*** the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	73
(2)	Number of students who transferred ***from*** the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	75
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	148
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	714
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.21
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	21

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 37%

Total number of ELL students in the school: 277

Number of non-English languages represented: 43

Specify non-English languages:

Akan, Amharic, Arabic, Cebuno, Chinese, Ewe, Farsi, French, Fulani, Gezim, Greek, Hausa, Hmong, Igbo, Indonesian, Jaba, Japanese, Kamanton, Kaninkon, Karikari, Kataf, Korean, Kurdish, Mandingo, Mandinka, Marwa, Mongolian, Nepalese, Norwegian, Oromo, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Sesotho, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Tigrinya, Turkish, Twi, Vietnamese

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 68%

Total number of students who qualify: 511

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 9%

Total number of students served: 71

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

4	Autism	1	Orthopedic Impairment
0	Deafness	12	Other Health Impaired
0	Deaf-Blindness	15	Specific Learning Disability
5	Emotional Disturbance	29	Speech or Language Impairment
1	Hearing Impairment	0	Traumatic Brain Injury
1	Mental Retardation	2	Visual Impairment Including Blindness
1	Multiple Disabilities	0	Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Full-Time	**Part-Time**
Administrator(s)	2	0
Classroom teachers	32	2
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	18	5
Paraprofessionals	11	2
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	6	0
Total number	69	9

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1: 24:1

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

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	94%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	%	%	%	%	%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size:	_____
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	_____%
Enrolled in a community college	_____%
Enrolled in vocational training	_____%
Found employment	_____%
Military service	_____%
Other	_____%
Total	**0**%

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

☉ No

○ Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

PART III - SUMMARY

At Ponderosa, we are a family consisting of 753 students, 43 different languages, and 277 non-native English speakers in Aurora, Colorado. Our dedication to empowering staff, students and community creates a climate of understanding and compassion where diversity is valued. We make data-informed decisions regarding academics and behavior in order to close our achievement gap while raising the achievement of all students. We are committed to preparing students for a post-secondary education through a STEM-based, culturally relevant curriculum that aligns with state and national standards. Our mission and vision statements are deeply rooted beliefs aspired to by staff members each and every day.

Our Mission
Ponderosa is a family where each child's individual needs are met and challenged:

- academically
- socially
- emotionally
- physically

through a relationship between home, school, and community. We celebrate success.

Our Vision
Curriculum: Our curriculum focuses on developing literacy skills through the instruction of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). It incorporates inquiry-based learning and solving multi-step problems. Our curriculum challenges our students to think critically, respond globally, and reach high academic standards.

Students: We are empowered to be active participants in our learning. We treat others with respect and dignity. We strive for excellence, are responsible for our own learning and believe in a successful future.

Staff: We analyze data to determine the appropriate instructional methods, materials and resources in order to meet the needs of our students. We treat others with respect and dignity. We strive for excellence, are responsible for our own learning and believe in a successful future.

School: We create a safe haven where all people are cared for and challenged to meet high standards. We adhere to being safe, respectful and responsible.

Community: We develop relationships with our community to promote life-long learning. We give back to our community in order to make our world a better place.

At Ponderosa, our many traditions, strengths and accomplishments transcend language and cultural differences connecting our community and students through unique, shared experiences worthy of National Blue Ribbon status. As a school, we build trusting relationships with our students, parents and community by shifting our focus from, "What can they learn from us?" to "What can we learn from each other?" We offer three academic family nights during the year with between 500-600 people attending each event. These engaging evenings allow parents and children to tackle academic learning together by participating in a variety of games and activities focused around literacy, math, and science.

Our goal of creating partnerships is accomplished by inviting parents of color to participate in monthly Reflection Rounds. In each unannounced round, parents observe in classrooms to provide teachers with feedback on how to better meet the needs of students of color. Reflection Rounds empower parents to

advocate for their children while simultaneously participating in the reform efforts of our school.

At Ponderosa, we respect, value and celebrate each family's heritage language and culture. Multicultural week is a Ponderosa tradition consisting of a "pot-luck" day for families to share meals and performance days for parents, students, teachers, and community groups to celebrate their culture. In addition, Ponderosa's well-established Family Literacy Program engages non-English speaking parents in the process of language acquisition, schooling in the United States, and provides opportunities for parents to improve their English skills and continue their own education. Family Literacy is a successful factor in closing our achievement gap.

As a PBiS (Positive Behavior Intervention Support) school, we define, teach and monitor appropriate student behavior. We established a school wide system for recognizing desired behavior and consistent consequences for problem behaviors. We have successfully implemented monthly PAWS (Positive Actions With Students) lessons; taught in small, multiage groups to teach bully-proofing and social skills. We regularly collect and analyze behavior data to inform our decisions to ensure academic and social success for all students.

We create a healthy environment for students, staff and family by addressing the whole person, both child and adult. Our specials teachers, or STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) team accomplish this through their unique, self-designed curriculum which provides opportunities for students to apply 21st Century skills as they create innovative projects related to physical education, music, art, technology, and library. In addition, we promote healthy eating habits and physical activities as a way of life through the variety of sports clubs for students, providing physical activities instead of food as a reward, and adult classes on cooking, stress management and physical fitness.

Ponderosa's many strengths and accomplishments are worthy of Blue Ribbon National status. Our work exemplifies our commitment to creating not only a community of learners but also, a community of leaders. Ponderosa is a place where students and adults are engaged as learners and share in making decisions that affect all stakeholders.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

A. At Ponderosa, we use four standardized assessments to monitor performance levels in reading: TCAP (Transitional Colorado Assessment Program), MAP (Measures of Academic Progress), DRA2 (Developmental Reading Assessment), and LSA (Literacy Skills Assessment). The LSA is administered to kindergartners at the beginning of the year instead of the DRA2. First through fifth grade teachers administer the DRA2 twice a year and the reading MAP assessment is administered three times a year to students in second-fifth grade. Math MAP assessment, administered three times a year, and TCAP are used to monitor math performance levels. Our goal is for 70% of students to score proficient or higher on all standardized assessments.

During the past year, we have reached our 70% goal on two TCAP assessments. Seventy percent of our current fourth graders scored proficient or higher on the third grade reading TCAP, and 73% of our current fourth graders scored proficient or higher on math TCAP. Our current fifth grade students were within ten percentage points of the 70% goal. Sixty-two percent of current 5th grade students were proficient on reading TCAP and 66% were proficient on math TCAP. In October 2012, 80% of kindergartners were proficient on the LSA.

As we continue to work towards 70% proficient on MAP and DRA2, we have noticed some alignment between these two assessments. In fourth and fifth grade, scores ranged within five percentage points on the DRA2 and MAP assessments with about 56% of students meeting or exceeding the expected gains on MAP.

Overall, 50% of our students were proficient on the fall DRA2 and 49% of our students scored proficient or higher on the both the reading and math MAP assessment. On average, 60% of our general education students scored proficient or higher on DRA2 and the math and reading MAP.

B. The performance trends found in our reading and math data over the past five years are representative of our collaborative work to increase student achievement however, at the same time the trends also uncover areas requiring concentrated efforts for continued improvement. Overall, our performance on the reading CSAP/TCAP has increased by twelve percentage points and we have increased our math scores by thirteen percentage points. Many of our subgroups have made significant gains in reading and math. For example, our Hispanic students have made a twenty-one point gain in reading and a twenty-nine point gain in math. Our English Language Learners have made a thirty-four point gain in both reading and math. Our IEP and FRM students have shown between twelve and sixteen point gains in both reading and math and our black students have made growth with a seven-point gain in reading and a nine-point gain in math.

Another trend evident in our data is a decrease in our achievement gap for some sub groups. Five years ago in reading, an achievement gap of sixteen percentage points existed between Hispanic students and all students. This gap has decreased by nine percentage points. Five years ago, our ELLs scored twenty-six points below all students in reading, whereas last year, our ELLs scored four points below all students. The same holds true for math. Five years ago, our Hispanic students and ELLs were scoring seventeen percentage points below all students but now the achievement difference between these groups is two percentage points.

Despite some significant growth experienced by all students, we do have an achievement gap. Our white students consistently outperform our students of color in both reading and writing. Over the past five years, white students have scored an average of nineteen percentage points higher than our black students in reading and math and an average of twenty-five percentage points higher than our Hispanic students in reading and math. This continues to be an area of concern for our school.

Over the past five years, our school has experienced many systemic transformations contributing to the success of our students. First, a shift from a Title I Targeted Assistance school to a School-wide intervention model, coupled with our work within Professional Learning Teams, provides teachers with time to evaluate data and design an intervention plan tailored to the needs of individual students. Second, our intense focus on improving universal instruction ensures all students receive grade level curriculum. Through professional development work, teachers study effective components of reading and math instruction and as a result, students are no longer pulled for intervention during core instruction. To support the high number of language learners in classrooms and to help foster effective instructional strategies for language learners, ELA teachers began co-teaching with classroom teachers during core instruction. Finally, our Family Literacy Program is a major contributing factor to the success of our language learners. Parents participating in this program not only have the opportunity to develop an understanding of how and what their child is learning in school and ways to support this learning, but parents are developing their own literacies which contribute to the success of their child.

To address the achievement gap present at our school, we continue to develop and refine the preceding factors, as we believe these are the keys to each child's success. Through our equity work, we seek out the perspectives of our parents of color during monthly Reflection Rounds in order to improve engagement and achievement of all students. This allows us to continually seek out adaptive solutions to closing our achievement gap.

2. Using Assessment Results:

For the last four years, Ponderosa's commitment to understand and develop our school as a Professional Learning Community has been a fundamental process for fostering student growth and achievement. Each grade level meets weekly in Professional Learning Teams to look at data, review student progress, study instructional practices and establish goals for student learning. Teams focus on the following four questions: What do we want our students to learn? How will we know they are learning? What will we do if our students are not learning? What will we do if our students already know it? Each week, teams of teachers are involved in data cycles focused around reading, writing or math.

To begin a data cycle, teachers determine the essential learning for all students. This essential learning is derived from the standards and is stated as a specific learning goal for all students. Teachers discuss effective teaching strategies and develop common assessments. After a specified amount of time determined by the team, teachers administer the common assessment and analyze the results together noting classroom and grade level trends, strengths and needs. Teachers determine if the needs are a universal or intervention issue. If the results of the data are a universal concern, teachers modify whole group instruction. If the results point towards an intervention need, teachers select target students, which are either students achieving below proficiency or students who have mastered the goal. Teachers establish a separate learning target for this particular group of students, determine the action steps needed to meet the needs of the students, define the extra assistance to be provided, who will provide the extra assistance, how often the student will receive support and how progress will be monitored. This information is documented on an electronic data wall. This data wall is easily accessible and shared with all teachers working with the identified students. After the allotted time has passed, teachers re-evaluate the progress of the targeted students to determine if the student has made adequate growth and to determine if any adjustments need to be made.

Recently, the second grade team evaluated a common assessment administered on counting coins. After looking at the data, teachers realized the majority of second grade students were struggling with this skill. Teachers determined this is reflective of a universal instructional need so they discussed strategies for re-teaching this concept to their students. After sorting data, teachers noted the students who demonstrated this skill successfully and asked the resource teacher to provide additional enrichment activities for these students. Teachers decided to re-evaluate their students after four more weeks of instruction.

In October, third grade teachers established a learning goal for students to determine the main idea of a

text, recount the key details and explain how the key details support the main idea. From the common assessment, teachers identified a group of students struggling with finding the main idea. Teachers modified the goal for these students and provided additional small group work with the classroom teacher. In December, students were re-evaluated. Many students showed improvement however students continuing to struggle with the concept received additional support from an intervention teacher.

At the beginning of the year, kindergarten teachers established for all students a proficiency benchmark for letter sound recognition and application to writing. In October, students were assessed and as a grade level, teachers identified students with the lowest scores. Teachers identified the factors needed for students to succeed and matched students to interventionists to receive additional work in learning letter sounds. In January, teachers assessed students with a dictation sentence to determine which students were applying sounds to their writing. Again, teachers identified students needing additional support from an interventionist.

Assessment results are frequently shared with parents, students and community. In every grade, teachers share with parents and students the results of all assessments, whether it is a teacher created assessment or a standardized assessment such as MAP, DRA2 or TCAP. During individual conferences with students, teachers share the results of the assessment, progress from the last assessment and expected performance levels. Teachers establish performance goals with students and define each person's role in achieving that goal. All students know their performance levels and what the performance expectations are. Classroom teachers and interventionists share this information with parents through phone calls and conferences. Monthly Reflection Rounds with our parents and community provide us with the opportunity to share our achievement data and seek out feedback for improvement.

As a building, we continually work to refine our understanding of PLTs as a venue for analyzing assessments and student achievement in order to shift our focus from curriculum, schedules and activities to a focus on student outcomes and achieving results.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

Within the district, Ponderosa is known for our innovative and insightful work around curriculum, instructional practices and equity. Our leadership in these areas has provided Ponderosa with vast opportunities to share our practice with business leaders and other educators within our district, state and nationwide.

Ponderosa hosts district leaders and educators from our feeder middle school and high school and a variety of elementary schools within our district and state. These visits incorporate observations of classroom, intervention or specials teachers and dialogue about the lesson and logistics of developing and implementing the curriculum and strategies we use. Visitors have learned about our work with FOSS (Full Option Science System), Science Notebooks, LLI (Leveled Literacy Intervention), CAFÉ (Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency Extended Vocabulary), Excellence and Equity, co-teaching, electronic data walls, and the integration of reading and writing with content areas. Visitors have also learned about the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) and MAC Time (My Access to Creativity) curriculum developed by our specials teachers. We have shared our work not only on a local and state level but on a national level as well. Participants in the nationwide PEBC (Public Education and Business Coalition) have observed our implementation of reading and writing workshop models to teach thinking strategies. The Idaho Department of Education has studied our co-teaching model for providing English Language Learners with grade level instruction within the regular classroom.

Many Ponderosa teachers facilitate a variety of learning opportunities for other educators. Our specials teachers presented their curriculum at the Technology in Education conference and the International Society of Technology Education conference. Ponderosa teachers are district trainers and/or mentors for FOSS, science notebooks, CAFÉ and Smart Boards. Ponderosa was selected by the district to lead the work in developing an elementary STEM program and to pilot the Engineering is Elementary (EiE) curriculum.

In an effort to seek funding for our school and district, we have shared our work with Century Link, United Way and the Cherry Creek Foundation. Regis University sends many education students to our school for practicums and student teaching experiences and Ashford University in Iowa, visited our school to learn about our equity work. The continuous work of our teachers to not only improve their skills and knowledge as effective educational practitioners but to share their knowledge and learning with others exemplifies the passion and commitment our teachers have towards excellence and student success.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

Engaging families and the community at Ponderosa is focused around the core beliefs that: our parents have dreams for their children, they want what is best for them, and our parents have the capacity to support their child's learning. These beliefs guide our work to create not only a community of learners but also a community of leaders as we strive towards engaging and empowering our parents and community. By building a strong partnership with parents and providing a means for parent advocacy, our school and students succeed.

Over the last three years, our Family Literacy Program has assisted seventy-five parents in developing an understanding of the processes of schooling in the United States, language acquisition, and practices to support learning at home. Parents also have the opportunity to further their own education by learning English and for twenty parents, obtaining a GED.

Throughout the year, teachers interact with parents in a variety of ways to establish relationships and to provide information about student achievement and curriculum. Frequent, on-going communication between parents and teachers occurs through formal conferences, emails, phone calls and planners. We host events such as a multicultural day, carnivals, Back-to School Night, Open House and four family nights focused on different content areas. All of these events are designed to be a fun, engaging way for families to interact with school staff and to participate in academic learning together.

Through many of these activities, we define for parents what we believe to be appropriate practices to support learning at home and school. In an effort to seek out the diverse perspective of our community, we incorporate monthly Reflection Rounds. Each month, we invite a different group of parents of color into our school. We share our data with parents, clearly showing the achievement disparity between our students of color and our white students. During unannounced visits, parents observe in classrooms and provide feedback for improvement. This feedback is an impetus for change as teachers reflect on their instructional practices, analyze the effects of lessons on students of color and brainstorm more effective ways of reaching these students. Our partnership with parents empowers them to be advocates for their children and active participants in school reform.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

Our vision at Ponderosa encompasses a philosophy of learning reliant on a relationship of mutual trust, respect and accountability between teachers, students and the community. We believe that there is no one clear curriculum to meet the needs of our students but rather, we work to establish effective, culturally relevant practices and principles, supported with a variety of materials and resources to address the learning standards relevant to our school.

In our building, standards provide the benchmarks for student learning. Through a team effort, teachers study and interpret the standards to understand grade level expectations. On a weekly basis, teams of teachers evaluate recent student data to monitor each student's progress. Teachers use the information gained from their data analysis and understanding of grade level expectations combined with their professional judgment and experience to reflect on their own practice to determine the tools and resources students need to meet the standards. Teachers develop an integrated, rigorous, standards based curriculum equally accessible to all students.

We believe learning should be meaningful, authentic and experiential. Our goal for all instruction is to develop oral and written communication skills through critical thinking and problem solving experiences. Content within any classroom allows for student choice and focuses on how the child's whole, real life fits into how our world works. Students are given expert instruction and extended amounts of time to read real books, write for a real purpose, perform for a real audience and solve challenging, real world problems, by collaborating and reflecting with others.

Within each classroom, teachers have established a structure of a reader's and writer's workshop or Daily 5 which provides opportunity to implement a variety of curriculum resources such as: Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Reading and Writing, The Comprehension Toolkit, and CAFÉ to support literacy instruction. Through these structures and curriculum resources along with the knowledge of each student's interests and capabilities, teachers are able to select the most appropriate tools to assist students in reaching the rigorous expectations found in the Colorado Academic Standards and outlined in the anchor standards of the Common Core.

With the emphasis on the integration of content areas in the English Language Arts standards of the Common Core, teachers work to align the processes of literacy with science and social studies. Science and social studies are taught through a hands-on, inquiry-based process with resources such as FOSS, History Alive and current articles found in resources such as Time for Kids and National Geographic. Recently, we piloted and are beginning to implement the Engineering is Elementary (EiE) curriculum to connect the scientific knowledge to the engineering design process.

The last few years, teachers have relied mainly on the Everyday Math curriculum for math instruction, however, with the emphasis in both state and national standards on developing basic skills fluency and conceptual understanding of mathematical processes, not just procedural understandings, teachers are beginning to seek out other resources to develop the mathematical thinking of students. Teachers have utilized resources such as by and the ideas incorporated in Add+Vantage math.

Aligned with content instruction, students engage in a rigorous curriculum developed by our specials teachers. This curriculum allows for the application of art, technology and physical education standards to the interest of students. Student learning is frequently shared through performances and technology productions.

We believe shared accountability for on-going data analysis, strategic planning and continuous improvement of instruction results in accelerated student growth. Given the appropriate opportunities,

resources, support and feedback, we believe all students will learn with and from others to reach high levels of achievement.

2. Reading/English:

At Ponderosa, we choose to provide professional development for the teachers in our building and trust our teachers as professionals instead of placing our trust into programs. With 70% of our students receiving free or reduced lunches, forty-three different languages spoken by our students, and 37% identified as English Language Learners, we have found that the packaged curriculums, even the curriculums that claim to be "researched based," do not meet the needs of our diverse population. We believe our time and money need to be spent on developing effective teachers of reading. We focus our energy and resources on creating environments that promote reading. These environments must include frequent demonstrations of reading, guided support and substantial amounts of time reading highly engaging, complex texts. We believe our teachers will make a difference in reading achievement not a program.

Based on this belief, Ponderosa has adopted a "Balanced Literacy Approach" to reading instruction. Teachers incorporate the following five components into their daily instruction: Read Aloud, Shared Reading, Guided Reading, Interactive Reading and Independent Reading. Within these instructional contexts, teachers provide students with opportunities for multiple exposure to grade level standards and high quality text to develop vocabulary, story structure, reading processes and strategies, and a metacognitive awareness of reading in order to become independent, proficient readers. Teachers meet bi-monthly to analyze classroom work and formative and summative assessments to determine the strengths and needs of their students to design instruction, both universal and intervention, appropriate for the needs of students. Small group instruction, individual work with students, and a structured intervention block allows teachers to differentiate instruction for students below and above grade level. Some of the resources teachers use to support this work is the CAFÉ, Daily 5, Comprehension Toolkit by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis, and Lucy Calkins' Units of Study.

Students acquire foundational reading skills through daily practice of reading a variety of engaging, high level text for a real purpose. Skills, strategies and the habits of proficient reading are entwined in the daily modeling provided by the teacher and the student's independent practice. Individual conferences with the classroom teacher, provides students with an understanding of their own trajectory of reading development and a clearly defined learning goal.

3. Mathematics:

Approximately four years ago, Ponderosa transitioned from a Title I Targeted Assistance to School-wide Title I. As we evaluated our data to determine our instructional needs mathematically and the root causes for these needs, we determined that although there was an emphasis on math instruction, there was a lack of emphasis on real life mathematical application and the development of mathematical vocabulary. As required by the Targeted Assistance model, the bottom twenty percent of our students were pulled from the classroom for intervention. These students regularly missed grade level instruction and enrichment activities and other students needing intervention seldom received any additional support. By moving to a school-wide approach for Title I, we were able to establish a school-wide schedule consisting of both core and intervention blocks for math instruction. This schedule allows all students to receive grade level curriculum, based on the Common Core State Standards and the Colorado Academic Standards, during core instruction and to provide intervention or enrichment for any student. The learning needs of students are determined through the use of frequent common formative assessments and evaluated by a team of teachers to determine appropriate learning goals for all students during intervention.

Although the Everyday Math curriculum is our main resource for math instruction, teachers are beginning to use this curriculum as more of a guide for math instruction instead of as a prescribed script for implementation. Teachers are beginning to look at materials and instruction differently as they move from curriculum coverage to developing a deeper conceptual mathematical understanding, fluency with basic

math skills, and an ability to reason and communicate about mathematical ideas. This is accomplished by creating opportunities for students to make connections between mathematical ideas and everyday experiences instead of focusing on learning a set of skills and/or procedures for a test. Teachers are requiring less rote memorization of basic skills and incorporating more games and activities to develop basic skills and number sense. Teachers promote mathematical thinking through an inquiry-based process requiring students to persevere through solving problems experienced in meaningful, real world, situations. By clearly articulating their thinking to others orally and through writing, students demonstrate an understanding of the how and the why of mathematics.

It is our goal to make math accessible to all students and to provide experiences for all students that allow them to recognize and value the power in their own mathematical thinking.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

Our mission at Ponderosa is to meet and challenge each child's individual needs academically, socially, emotionally and physically. Our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) approach focuses on developing literacy skills while promoting a culture of scientific literacy and thinking. Our students are immersed in "doing" science rather than learning about science through a second hand resource. Through an inquiry process students are developing an understanding of science concepts within the natural world while developing literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Our science instruction begins with a specific scientific domain framed around an essential question. A hands-on approach to science learning promotes scientific process skills such as asking questions, making predictions, gathering evidence, representing evidence through drawings, writing and graphs, evaluating ideas and data, and drawing conclusions. Students engage in scientific discourse by expressing their ideas, challenging the thinking and ideas of others in order to reconstruct their own thinking. This discussion promotes thinking and problem solving skills as students develop language skills and academic vocabulary through science talk.

Science content is an effective and appropriate venue for literacy instruction. Students are interested in and motivated to learn about the real-world and solve problems and answer questions about their natural world. This interest is often the impetus for seeking out answers within a text or a constructing their own understanding through writing. For some of our students, science content is their reason to read or write. Science notebooks are a tool for our students to collect and represent data through drawings, charts and graphs, and to write descriptions, procedures, explanations or conclusions. Expository writing is developed as students explain their thinking and construct their own conceptual understanding of science. Students that often struggle during writing time, such as our English Language Learners or students performing below grade level, find greater success with science writing because they are able to represent their thinking through drawings and labels, and they are writing about something they have experienced.

Through our science instruction we strive to not only develop scientific facts but scientific literacy. Our mission is to challenge our students to know and think critically about their world through a hands-on, inquiry approach, which incorporates reading, writing, speaking and listening.

5. Instructional Methods:

Over the last few years, our students have made growth; however, the disparity between many of our student subgroups has created a sense of urgency and accountability in our building to raise expectations to ensure growth and high levels of achievement for all students. The cornerstone to our instructional methods is a consistent school-wide structure of both core and intervention blocks for reading and math. The core time, regularly supported through co-teaching with an ELA specialist, provides all students with equal access to grade level content standards. Each intervention block, a scheduled time outside of core instruction, provides students with instruction specific to individual needs.

Instruction at Ponderosa is a two-pronged approach of knowing both national and state standards and

knowing students. Based on these standards, teachers and students are clear about what students need to know and be able to do, coupled with an understanding of each student's strengths and needs, teachers work with students to establish individual goals for student learning. Teachers regularly use formative and summative assessments to monitor and track student progress in order to make data driven decisions. Teachers meet frequently to evaluate data, the effectiveness of instruction, set new learning goals and to match intervention to the needs of students. During the structured intervention block, students participate in small group instruction or individual work with the classroom teacher or an interventionist. Interventionists incorporate supplemental instructional programs such as LLI or Add+Vantage math to target specific learning needs. Classroom teachers incorporate independent work with self-selected materials, learning centers, small group work and individual conferences to focus on specific learning goals and to coach students as they develop their own personal meaning resulting in accelerated learning.

Technology has become a vital part of our instructional methods. All classrooms are equipped with Smart Boards and Document Cameras. This technology is used to share images, text, and/or videos to model and further student thinking. Many classroom teachers incorporate iPads, iPods, and laptop computers for students to practice skills, read on-line, or for students to conduct their own research.

Over the last five years, we have seen an increase of proficient students in both reading and math. By knowing our students and having a thorough understanding of grade level expectations, teachers are able to group students flexibly and provide the appropriate scaffolds to ensure growth and high levels of achievement for all students.

6. Professional Development:

Our vision at Ponderosa is: "we (teachers and students) are responsible for our own learning." Our approach to professional development embodies the principles of equality; everyone has equal value. Everyone is a learner and everyone is a teacher. Our approach is not to provide teachers with a step-by-step, scripted procedure but rather to empower teachers to think for themselves and value them as creative professionals well equipped to make informed decisions for their students and their practice.

Establishing a partnership within our building fosters the belief that professional development should be done with the teachers and not to the teachers. As a staff, we have defined through our mission and vision statements what we believe about our students, our staff and our curriculum, which provides the focus and structure for our professional development. Many opportunities and choices for professional development are offered to teachers from both the district and teachers within our own building. Through professional release days and work within professional learning teams, teachers use their accumulated knowledge to take on new challenges together, to reconsider their individual practice and reflect on the effectiveness of their work. When teachers learn from each other and share what they know, they are able to make instructional changes, resulting in increased student achievement.

With an average staff attendance rate of 75% at trainings such as: Lucy Calkins Units of Study, CAFÉ (Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, Expand Vocabulary)/Daily 5, Comprehension Toolkit, Universal Instruction, Intervention Strategies, and science notebooks, teachers acquire knowledge about best instructional practices and effective assessment strategies. A representative from each grade level and department participated in a nation-wide training for Professional Learning Communities, district data training and effective professional learning team facilitation in order to develop a better understanding of why and how to look at data effectively within a professional learning team. This work is the crux of the instructional decisions made by teachers. Each opportunity provides teachers with current research on best practices and with the support of the building's instructional coach, teachers make sense of this learning through practical classroom application. The result of our professional development work instills within our teachers the capacity to be effective within their classroom and leaders within our building and district. Most importantly, the result of our professional development work is evident in the academic growth of our students.

7. School Leadership:

The Principal of Ponderosa Elementary School has demonstrated her ability to plan and lead a comprehensive school improvement effort with outstanding results. When she arrived at Ponderosa in 2007 it was a low performing school with an unaligned instructional program and very little parent support. As part of an effort to move from "targeted assistance " Title I model to a "school-wide" Title I program, the principal organized a school wide-planning process that involved staff, parents and community members. The principal provided guidance and direction, but created a school-wide ownership of the work by bringing stakeholders into the process in authentic and meaningful ways. To this date staff, parents and community members have a leadership role in our school improvement. A key component of this process has been the community data gathering efforts providing feedback to staff. These efforts take place consistently during the year targeting student engagement, culturally relevant instruction and teacher student relationships. This "data day" exemplifies the hallmarks of the Ponderosa "model" of improvement, which are accountability, data driven culture, instructional transparency, community involvement, and staff involvement and collaboration.

The Principal is a team player not driven by self-recognition but by student success. She has high expectations for her own work and expects the same from her colleagues and those she supervises. She models life-long learning and continually seeks out opportunities to increase her professional knowledge and skills. Most importantly, she understands the focus must always be on each child's academic success and personal well-being.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3

Test: Transitional Colorado State Assessment (TCAP)

Edition/Publication Year: TCAP/CSAP-2007-2012

Publisher: McGraw-Hill

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus advanced	73	66	75	54	65
Advanced	34	24	28	17	21
Number of students tested	136	102	93	119	100
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient plus advanced	66	56	72	45	60
Advanced	27	17	17	12	13
Number of students tested	96	72	69	77	62
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus advanced	63	57	64	48	57
Advanced	28	20	15	13	17
Number of students tested	40	35	33	46	34
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus advanced	75	56	73	49	48
Advanced	25	20	19	13	3
Number of students tested	48	41	26	39	29
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus advanced	43	Masked	50	36	Masked
Advanced	21	Masked	10	29	Masked
Number of students tested	14	8	10	14	4
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient plus advanced	80	60	74	56	50
Advanced	36	17	29	6	6
Number of students tested	64	48	35	32	31
6. white Students					
Proficient plus advanced	77	91	85	65	82
Advanced	39	30	50	31	41
Number of students tested	31	23	26	26	22
NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					

13CO2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 3

Test: Transitional Colorado State Assessment (TCAP)

Edition/Publication Year: TCAP/CSAP-2007-2012

Publisher: McGraw-Hill

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus advanced	70	74	75	52	50
Advanced	9	6	9	3	4
Number of students tested	136	101	92	118	101
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient plus advanced	59	68	71	45	44
Advanced	6	4	4	3	0
Number of students tested	96	72	68	76	61
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus advanced	65	74	61	57	54
Advanced	5	6	3	2	0
Number of students tested	40	35	33	46	34
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus advanced	63	66	72	42	34
Advanced	6	2	4	0	0
Number of students tested	48	41	25	38	29
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus advanced	29	Masked	30	21	Masked
Advanced	7	Masked	10	0	Masked
Number of students tested	14	8	10	14	5
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient plus advanced	70	67	66	38	25
Advanced	3	2	9	3	0
Number of students tested	64	48	35	32	31
6. white Students					
Proficient plus advanced	87	86	92	62	52
Advanced	19	9	19	8	13
Number of students tested	31	22	26	26	23
NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					

13CO2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 4

Test: Transitional Colorado State Assessment (TCAP)

Edition/Publication Year: CSAP/TCAP 2007-2012

Publisher: McGraw-Hill

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus advanced	66	69	51	61	46
Advanced	20	19	16	20	14
Number of students tested	102	96	114	104	94
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient plus advanced	60	62	44	48	31
Advanced	17	14	11	13	5
Number of students tested	72	69	81	69	54
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus advanced	58	67	53	58	53
Advanced	13	13	13	17	8
Number of students tested	31	30	38	36	38
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus advanced	65	63	43	40	22
Advanced	22	14	9	13	4
Number of students tested	37	35	47	30	22
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus advanced	Masked	43	25	Masked	10
Advanced	Masked	0	17	Masked	10
Number of students tested	7	14	12	8	10
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient plus advanced	68	63	50	31	21
Advanced	18	18	13	6	4
Number of students tested	40	40	40	36	23
6. white Students					
Proficient plus advanced	76	76	63	83	52
Advanced	24	29	33	22	20
Number of students tested	25	21	24	23	25
NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					

13CO2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 4

Test: Transitional Colorado State Assessment (TCAP)

Edition/Publication Year: TCAP/CSAP-2007-2012

Publisher: McGraw-Hill

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus advanced	60	56	46	51	52
Advanced	0	0	0	4	2
Number of students tested	102	96	114	102	94
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	98	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient plus advanced	54	48	37	38	42
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	72	69	81	68	54
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus advanced	61	43	50	53	53
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	31	30	38	35	38
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus advanced	46	51	36	30	26
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	37	35	47	30	23
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus advanced	Masked	29	17	Masked	10
Advanced	Masked	0	0	Masked	0
Number of students tested	7	14	12	6	10
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient plus advanced	53	50	43	22	21
Advanced	0	0	0	3	0
Number of students tested	40	40	40	36	23
6. white Students					
Proficient plus advanced	80	71	54	74	64
Advanced	0	0	0	4	8
Number of students tested	25	21	24	22	24

NOTES:
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.

13CO2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 5

Test: Transitional Colorado State Assessment (TCAP)

Edition/Publication Year: TCAP/CSAP-2007-2012

Publisher: McGraw-Hill

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus advanced	70	63	66	50	58
Advanced	30	24	23	15	18
Number of students tested	102	117	112	103	92
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient plus advanced	62	56	55	37	50
Advanced	30	20	16	10	13
Number of students tested	76	81	73	63	52
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus advanced	59	64	53	49	44
Advanced	21	13	16	8	6
Number of students tested	34	47	43	39	32
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus advanced	62	56	58	33	46
Advanced	35	22	18	4	17
Number of students tested	37	45	33	27	24
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus advanced	40	21	10	Masked	Masked
Advanced	13	14	0	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	15	14	10	8	8
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient plus advanced	66	63	57	33	43
Advanced	37	28	14	4	14
Number of students tested	38	46	37	27	14
6. white Students					
Proficient plus advanced	86	76	91	57	77
Advanced	38	53	27	27	30
Number of students tested	21	17	22	30	30

NOTES:
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.

13CO2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 5

Test: Transitional Colorado State Assessment (TCAP)

Edition/Publication Year: TCAP/CSAP-2007-2012

Publisher: McGraw-Hill

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient plus advanced	64	64	67	57	59
Advanced	1	3	5	3	3
Number of students tested	102	117	112	103	92
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient plus advanced	57	58	59	48	48
Advanced	0	2	1	0	0
Number of students tested	76	81	73	63	52
2. African American Students					
Proficient plus advanced	47	60	60	59	47
Advanced	0	2	0	0	0
Number of students tested	34	47	43	39	32
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient plus advanced	65	56	64	41	50
Advanced	0	0	0	4	0
Number of students tested	37	45	33	27	24
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient plus advanced	33	29	10	Masked	Masked
Advanced	0	0	0	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	15	14	10	8	8
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient plus advanced	55	61	59	30	43
Advanced	0	2	0	4	0
Number of students tested	38	46	37	27	14
6. white Students					
Proficient plus advanced	81	82	86	67	83
Advanced	5	12	9	7	10
Number of students tested	21	17	22	30	30
NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					

13CO2