

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Dr. Cheri Scriptor

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

Official School Name Strandwood Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 416 Gladys Drive

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Pleasant Hill State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 94523-2749

County Contra Costa County

Telephone (925) 685-3212 Fax (925) 798-4582

Web site/URL http://stes-mdusd-ca.schoolloop.com/ E-mail scripterc@mdusd.org

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/pages/Strandwood Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog https://strandwoodpta.shutterfly.com/ Other Social Media Link https://strandwoodpta.com/

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

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Nellie Meyer E-mail superintendentsoffice@mdusd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Mount Diablo Unified School District Tel. (925) 682-8000

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 Ms. Cheryl Hansen
(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, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any 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.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	11	15	11
K	49	45	94
1	44	47	91
2	59	48	107
3	55	56	111
4	50	69	119
5	56	49	105
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 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	324	329	653

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 11 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 3 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 71 % White
 - 4 % 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 1%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	2
(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, 2014	653
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.008
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 9 %
59 Total number ELL

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

Arabic, Cantonese, Cebuano, Croatian, Dutch, Farsi, French, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Tamil, Tongan, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %
Total number students who qualify: 81

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
51 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	25
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals	12
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. 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 26:1

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	92%	97%	96%	96%	94%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **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 2015.

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%

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

Yes No X

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

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

The Strandwood Community will inspire academic excellence and personal growth while encouraging everyone to reach their full potential and discover the lasting joy of learning.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Strandwood Elementary school in Pleasant Hill, California is located approximately halfway between San Francisco and Sacramento. Our mission statement is "The Strandwood Community will inspire academic excellence, personal growth and responsibility while encouraging each individual to reach his or her full potential and discover the lasting joy of learning." We are one of thirty elementary schools in the Mount Diablo Unified School District. Strandwood is a school with a history of high performance and a teaching staff who loves what they do. We have an active and caring parent/guardian community. Our school's best attribute is our fabulous student population! Strandwood has an enrollment of approximately 650 students and we offer transitional kindergarten through fifth grade. We feel fortunate to have a continuum of special day classes as well, for students with moderate to severe disabilities. This school year, 2015-2016, we have one transitional kindergarten class, three kindergarten classes, three first grade classes, a first/second combination class, three second grade classes, a second/third combination class, three third grade classes, three fourth grade classes, a fourth/fifth grade combination class, and three fifth grade classes.

With funding and support from our PTA, we also have an art docent, a reading intervention program for kindergarten and first graders, a science assistant, classroom instructional assistants for TK through third grade classes, and two instructional assistants for our computer lab. Our parents and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) also support and implement the Foundation for Art and Music in Elementary Education (FAME) program. In addition to all of this, our PTA also sponsors a large variety of after school enrichment programs. Parent volunteers are a valued part of our classrooms. "Every minute counts for every student," is a favorite motto and our campus is continually buzzing with activity. We take pride in our friendly and safe learning environment.

As soon as a child begins his or her elementary school career at Strandwood, they are invited to a "meet and greet" with the kindergarten teachers the day before school begins to calm any fears or first day jitters. Lower grade students are supported by upper grade buddy classes throughout the year, meeting often to participate in assemblies, parades, special activities, and other cooperative lessons. Field trips are popular across all grade levels. Every grade attends field trips to musical and theatrical performances, historic sites, and other local places where students can draw from classroom experiences and transfer them to the real world. Strandwood participates in numerous traditions and milestones every year. For example, before school starts, families return on Jumpstart Day to get their classroom assignments, buy spirit wear, sign up for extra-curricular activities, and reunite with their community of friends. In October, we hold an elaborate Fall Fest filled with games, snacks, friendly contests, and wholesome fun. Later, on Halloween Day, students are encouraged to dress in costumes and participate in our school-wide Halloween parade. This has been a longstanding tradition in our school community. Another very popular tradition is the production of the Nutcracker. Preparations and rehearsals begin in late October and last until December when three outstanding shows are performed to a packed house. In the spring, our major fundraiser is a dinner/dance/auction that is always a huge success and helps strengthen and celebrate our parent, staff, and community partnerships.

At Strandwood, teachers seek to create situations that allow all students to excel in the classroom regardless of their current levels of performance. We have a special education continuum throughout all grade levels. Students with special needs participate with their general education peers through a variety of academic and social activities. Special education student and general education students come together for FAME, PE, science lab, assemblies, daily recess, and classroom activities. Students also have opportunities beyond the academic school day. These activities include: Chess Club, Lego Engineering, Stage Play, Girls on the Run, Student Council, chorus, Mad Science, dancing, Debate Club, Sutter's Fort Environmental Living Program, art classes, and basketball. Our after school programs allow students to be recognized and valued in other arenas and often include audiences from our local community.

Our fifth grade class continues to participate in numerous rites of passage throughout the year. These include attending a week-long experience at Sempervirens Outdoor School where students get a hands-on approach to science standards and life skills. Fifth-graders also tour the middle school each March to see first-hand what middle school life entails. During the final weeks of school, Strandwood's fifth graders enjoy a

barbecue and field day hosted by our wonderful parents. Finally, their last day in elementary school includes a bittersweet promotion ceremony to celebrate closing one door and opening another. Strandwood works hard throughout the year to synergize a successful community of diverse learners. We believe in bringing out the best in each other. We believe that every child matters.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Strandwood Elementary, we strive to provide an effective, challenging, and engaging education for every single student. Our curriculum is aligned with the Common Core State Standards, as well as the College and Career Readiness Standards. This provides academic rigor in all content areas and ensures a well-rounded and cohesive curricular experience for every student.

Our language arts curriculum is designed to create and empower our students to transition into avid readers, established writers, critical thinkers, and effective communicators. Our teachers utilize quality literature and informational texts for authentic student engagement. Comprehension strategies are introduced through appropriately and explicitly taught lessons. Teachers integrate social objectives within these lessons to build classroom community and allow students to respectfully share, agree, and disagree. Additionally, our writers are given ample opportunities to share their perspectives. They spend time writing narrative, argumentative, and informative pieces. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for students to synthesize and analyze the information and ideas discovered through research and collaboration. Students at Strandwood are consistently given collaborative opportunities to learn and experience the English language in all its forms. Teachers explicitly teach students the differences between formal and informal speech, allowing time for practice and meaningful conversations with peers. Collaboration is an effective way to teach state-wide Speaking and Listening Standards, while also preparing students to become respectful and articulate citizens.

Our mathematics program is built on the expectation that students are able to demonstrate and explain their learning. Instructional practices are structured to balance conceptual learning with concrete and explicit instruction. Teachers use the Mathematics Practice Standards as a foundation to ensure that students are proficient problem solvers. Teachers demonstrate multiple approaches to solving problems, so students are able to find the answer to a problem in several different ways. Students also learn to justify their answers using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. They are encouraged to look at mathematical situations from diverse perspectives and collaborate with their peers. This practice helps them build number sense and connect ideas regarding mathematical principles and relationships. Students are also taught how to critique their peers' answers in a respectful, helpful way. This has become common practice as teachers act as facilitators, scaffolding student thinking and encouraging students to teach each other.

The purpose of our social studies curriculum is to prepare students to contribute to a democratic society. Teachers have created engaging lessons and opportunities which allow students to experience history in different ways. This is achieved through simulations, projects, and field trips which actively engage students in the learning process. For example, fifth graders learn about Colonial America by participating in a "Walk through the Revolution." Third graders learn about local government by taking part in a mock city council meeting led by the mayor of Pleasant Hill and fourth graders learn about California Native Americans when they visit our local Los Vaqueros reservoir. Our experiential social studies curriculum ensures that students gain an authentic understanding of how our world has evolved and how history affects each of us in present day.

At our school, teachers have learned that science is best taught using hands-on, inquiry-based methods of instruction. For example, students learn about the engineering process through Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) projects designed to help them work with peers to problem solve and explore scientific processes. Using the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), second graders learn about animal life cycles and adaptations on a field trip to the Lindsay Museum. First graders visit the Oakland Zoo to see animals and learn about animal adaptations. Third graders learn about ecosystems through a field trip to Crown Memorial Beach while also exploring the many tide pools found there. A major event in the life of our fifth graders is attending outdoor school in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Activities include recording and discussing local flora and fauna, and hiking in Big Basin National Park. We provide countless other opportunities for field trips, classroom visits, and engaging experiments which enable students to understand the importance of science in all areas of life. Our goal is for students to

become scientifically literate, make real world connections, and be equipped to effectively deal with the challenges of an ever-changing global society. At Strandwood, we know that students are the key to a better world.

We also know that an engaging pre-K curriculum creates school readiness that can positively impact lifelong academic success. Our Transitional Kindergarten curriculum is based on the California Pre-school Learning Foundations and modified Common Core Standards for kindergarten. While we teach developmentally appropriate academic skills, our main focus is the social and emotional development of the whole child. We teach kids to love learning. Our pre-K program started in 2012 and our primary teachers report that TK students are better prepared and more likely to meet or exceed grade level expectations than students who did not attend TK.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Strandwood provides visual and performing arts, music, physical education, science and technology to all students kindergarten through fifth grade. These programs support and enhance the academic and social-emotional growth of all students. Through our fine arts program, students take part in lessons teaching art history, theory and appreciation. In addition to this, students are able to express themselves creatively. We have adopted a program called FAME (Fine Arts Music Education) which spirals from kindergarten through fifth grade. Our art docent spotlights influential artists and musicians and encourages students to discover their own inner talents. First through fifth graders enjoy music education once a week by a credentialed music teacher. Upper grade students have the opportunity to join after school chorus. Instrumental music is offered to fourth and fifth grade students. A highlight of our performing arts program is our school-wide rendition of the Nutcracker. All students in kindergarten through second grade are taught dances twice-weekly by parent volunteers. Third through fifth grade students are encouraged to participate in central roles or become stage crew members or theater technicians. At Strandwood, the fine arts program plays a key role in promoting a lifelong interest in the arts.

All students at Strandwood participate in physical education. The instruction in this area includes gross and fine motor skills, sportsmanship, teamwork, and making healthy choices. Activities vary based on grade level standards that are designed to help all students feel successful and have fun. The primary grades participate in grade level PE groupings. They are exposed to collaborative activities which develop their fine and gross motor skills and help foster sports etiquette and outdoor play. The upper grades are honing their physical abilities by practicing team sports and building their individual capacities in an engaging way.

We work hard at Strandwood to integrate technology into instruction daily. Various modes of technology are utilized. Classroom teachers make use of iPads, Chromebooks, laptops, projectors, and document cameras to enhance learning. The upper grades have class sets of Chromebooks, and often participate in Google classrooms. Students are able to research and share documents, enabling them to work both independently and collaboratively during the school day and at home. In addition to our classroom resources, we have a computer lab that is used by all students weekly. In the lab, students receive instruction on how to utilize programs and applications. Lessons include keyboarding, research, skills practice, and the creation of various types of digital media. Our goal is that students at Strandwood will be able to use technology in a responsible, meaningful way that prepares them for a technologically demanding world.

We are fortunate here at Strandwood to have a dedicated space and credentialed teacher to enhance our science curriculum. First through fifth grade students visit the science lab weekly to participate in engaging hands-on activities that support the Next Generation Science Standards. Students are encouraged to think critically and problem solve collaboratively. This allows students the opportunity to practice working with others towards a common goal. In addition, fifth graders attend a week-long outdoor education camp in the Santa Cruz Mountains designed to inspire adventure and foster fun.

We also have a number of programs that support our literacy mission. Our PTA sponsors Read and Dream where students chronicle their reading minutes each month to earn a new book. We are fortunate to have senior citizens from our local community who volunteer their time weekly to read one-on-one with some of our first and second grade students. We also have therapy dogs that are brought in on a weekly basis.

Student love reading with these furry friends. Additionally, there are many after school activities offered through our PTA. To enhance the PE curriculum, programs such as dance, basketball, broom hockey, and tennis are available after school. The national program, Girls on the Run, empowers girls, third through fifth grade, and encourages them to find joy in running. Art, science, and Toyology classes connect to STEM standards. Chess is a popular after-school activity and we are proud to announce that our students recently placed at the regional level. Spanish classes are also offered weekly. We believe that our diverse educational opportunities and programs at Strandwood have helped us unite as a community of learners. We believe that our students benefit from learning opportunities that extend far beyond our core curriculum. We also believe that exposing students to technology, art, science, and physical education helps them develop into well-rounded learners who are fully prepared for fulfilling futures and big dreams.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

At Strandwood, we use rigorous classroom methodologies and inclusive differentiated instruction to support and propel our students. We believe everyone can excel. Ongoing active learning activities, hands-on science lab interactions, brain breaks, visual supports, and auditory classroom amplification systems support the kinesthetic, visual, and auditory learning needs of our students. Formative and summative assessments are merged with informal observational data and used daily to drive instruction. Lessons consist of explicit instruction, guided learning, and independent practice and are blended with structured student collaboration to reinforce concepts, identify misunderstandings, and clarify practices. Within this framework, differentiation occurs through small group and individual instruction. Technology is integrated into each grade level and subject area. Students visit the computer lab weekly and regularly use tablets, Chromebooks, and laptops in class. Universal streaming is used to introduce topics and compare sources. Accelerated Reader helps us monitor students' independent reading levels. Students also conduct research regularly in digital and print forms, and share their discoveries in a variety of formats. Tools like ClassDojo are also used to encourage engagement and promote enjoyable classroom experiences.

A range of assessments are regularly used including written responses and projects designed to spotlight student strengths and highlight opportunities for growth. Tools ranging from Google Apps for Education through Google Classroom to posters, slide shows, and models are consistently used to demonstrate proficiency. Our teachers also work in collaborative grade-level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These PLCs routinely collect and review student assessment data in order to share best practices and help support student learning. We are often able to address the needs of students in Tier I and Tier II through the use of small group instruction within the classroom setting. If Tier II small group instruction is unsuccessful, then Tier III instruction is provided by a specialized interventionist. Eligibility for Tier III instruction is determined by a team of professionals. The interventionist collaborates regularly with classroom teachers to monitor growth and address new needs as they arise. Grade-level content support is blended with basic skill remediation as needed. Additionally, students from special day classes (SDC) are mainstreamed into general education classes whenever appropriate and regularly complete individualized projects and attend grade-level field trips. Our SDC population is led by three veteran education specialists who use a range of research-based programs to meet the needs of these diverse learners.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Since the implementation of the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) assessment in 1998, our scores have improved virtually every year. In language arts, from 2011 to 2013, students scoring at proficient and advanced levels rose from 82% to 85%. In math our students traced a steady upward trajectory in the categories of proficient and advanced from 86% in 2011 to 92% in 2013. Two years ago, California transitioned to a new state test, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). Our scores for 2015 were promising. In grades three through five, 75% of our students met or exceeded state standards. In math, 70% of our scholars met or exceeded state standards. In science, 76% of our young scientists were in the advanced range. We are excited about our scores and eager to take on the challenge of assuring that every student at Strandwood can meet or exceed our rigorous state standards by 2020. Parents and the community shared our joy when the STAR and CAASPP test scores were released online and in our local newspaper, The Contra Costa Times. Families received the scores of their individual

students through the mail. As a staff, the news was immediately disseminated on our bulletin board and later dissected in staff meetings when we looked at the performance over time of individuals and student cohorts.

In our special day classes, our three special education teachers use the Biggance Inventory of Early Development to assist in developing goals and objectives for their students. During our annual state testing window, the California Alternative Assessment (CAA) is administered to students with severe cognitive disabilities. This assessment gives learners the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Common Core Standards by taking a test commensurate with their abilities. We are proud to report that many of our students make impressive gains while at Strandwood.

While we are excited about our school's state scores, the critical issue with testing is to inform instruction and target students who need extra help to achieve mastery of the standards. We give students multiple chances to succeed. In language arts we use computer programs such as iReady, Read Naturally, IXL, Language!, and Reflex Math to supplement teaching and assess progress. For example, in kindergarten during the first year of iReady implementation, in initial testing 44% of students scored on or above grade level. However, by the final assessment 83% scored on or above grade level. All students improved and our kindergarten gains were the highest in our district.

Although we continue to seek out innovative technology, we also use "old school" assessments such as the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) for reading proficiency. English language learners use A Developmental English Proficiency Test (ADEPT) and the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) assessments to measure language proficiency. Teaching tools such as Board Language/Board Math and Singapore Math are used to support class-wide learning if assessments show that many students do not understand a specific concept. Teachers also review key concepts with small groups of students who need extra help. When intensive support is needed, students attend the Learning Center or meet with our reading teacher. At Strandwood, we keep teaching until all students know what they need to know.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Strandwood Elementary our mantra is, “Every day counts, every kid counts!” Every day our winning team of educators work together, planning, creating, and problem-solving in order to bring out the best in each other. Professional development opportunities are used to identify, implement, and refine research-based kid-tested learning tools. We believe that collaboration is best cultured in a creative learning environment. We expect meaningful decision-making will be data-driven and grounded in the belief that everyone can succeed. Children thrive at Strandwood Elementary because they are honored and supported by both their teachers and the community. Strandwood families are eager to participate in and support a well-rounded cadre of school programs. For example, our PTA currently generates additional funding for school-wide weekly art projects, Fine Arts Mini Experience (FAME) classes, and hands-on science lab lessons specifically designed to encourage exploration and discovery.

Our school culture also benefits from the diversity of our student body. At Strandwood, we teach respect for cultural differences and inclusion of all individuals. We have created an environment where children learn from each others experiences and perspectives. Our classroom culture is one in which each child feels valued, cared for, and respected in a safe environment. Motivation to achieve at this school is nurtured through programs such as the “Blue Slip” reward program that recognizes children in the areas of life skills, including responsibility and honesty. Our “Read and Dream” program rewards students with new books for practicing daily reading at home. Teachers motivate students to master academic content in a variety of ways, including hosting luncheons, giving raffle prizes, and “classroom bucks.” School pride is also an essential part of Strandwood’s culture. On School Spirit days, you will notice the sea of blue and gold-dressed children proudly displaying Strandwood’s school colors. Students feel a great sense of being a part of something good and this pride fuels their motivation to do their best and be their best.

Students, staff, and community members work hand-in-hand at our school to support each others development. There is a synergy created when teachers help students, the community supports teachers, and we all agree that a high-quality education is priceless. Our culture is focused on supporting the academic, social and emotional growth of our students. Strandwood Elementary’s success proves that when we all work together for the good of children, we can achieve great things.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Strandwood Elementary and its community have benefited from many successful strategies and programs that improve student success while at the same time improving the school’s environment. Strandwood’s belief that a healthy school community must include parent involvement is embodied in the programs it endorses. Many of these programs are driven by Strandwood’s phenomenal PTA. Under its guidance, Strandwood has not only raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, but has garnered a rich parent community. A few of our stand-out PTA programs include Book Fair, the Fine Arts Mini Experience (FAME), and a popular speaker’s series designed to enhance school achievement. The PTA’s most dynamic school event is the production of the Nutcracker each December. This live theater production includes over 450 students and is entirely parent-run. It takes more than 150 parent volunteers to make this performance come to fruition. It includes countless rehearsals and teaching kids everything from Spanish dances to backstage technical work. The result is three brilliant productions performed to standing room only crowds.

Strandwood works hard at community outreach through a multitude of unique programs. Two of those programs focus on reading intervention. The first is a Senior Buddy program where local seniors come to read to foster confidence in struggling readers. The other is through the Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) where volunteers and their dogs create a positive and comforting environment for kids to practice their reading skills. In addition, the third grade has joined forces with the City of Pleasant Hill and created an annual mock city council meeting where students go before the mayor and her representatives to debate a school issue. Afterwards, the mayor comes back to the classroom to reinforce the importance of being

involved in the community. Strandwood teachers are also in constant and open communication with parents through emails, newsletters, Twitter accounts and blogs. Communication folders are sent home every day for parents to review and support academic progress. The PTA also runs a Strandwood email account and families sign up to receive weekly email blasts filled with special event information, volunteer opportunities and enrichment classes.

Strandwood has a true community feel that is felt by faculty, students and parents alike. For example, one of our teachers was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. Strandwood rallied behind her and her recovery by having each class make a banner with personalized well wishes. The banners were hung throughout the school for the month of October, which is Breast Cancer Awareness month. In addition, there was a donation basket to help support her journey. Next, one of our Strandwood families suffered a devastating fire while they were away on vacation. The Strandwood community stepped up to the plate and coordinated a necessities drive to help them through this difficult time. At Strandwood, we care about each other. We believe that open hearts and open minds create the best school experiences and the best academic outcomes.

3. Professional Development:

At Strandwood Elementary, we endeavor to create an environment that encourages a rich learning experience for both students and teachers. As a staff, we agree that in order to encourage our students to be lifelong learners, we must also inspire each other to grow as educators. United into a professional learning community (PLC), we believe that together we are more. The majority of our professional development opportunities are used to foster collaboration and share meaningful experiences. We meet regularly as grade level teams to openly share and discuss what strategies drive improvement and what beliefs limit potential. Our decisions are data-driven and grounded in best practices. Professional learning communities have taught us that we know what works. We believe that school improvement is an “inside job” and we are all accountable and empowered.

Committed to learning, we have invested time in many different professional development seminars such as: The Art and Science of Teaching, Response to Intervention, Singapore Math, the Next Generation Science Standards, STEM and a multitude of technology classes. For example, in a presentation last year, a Google specialist came to remind, encourage, and teach us about various applications and websites. Her ideas about Google classrooms, tips about using Google docs, and directions to make iTrailers and iMovies seemed innovative and attainable but many of us were worried about implementation. The experts always make it look easy! However, we challenged each other to use at least one new idea from her seminar. By the end of the year, one class had become “pen pals” with another class in our district and students were trading iTrailers featuring collaborative projects; another teacher started a Google doc that still keeps district teachers in her grade level in touch with each other; several teachers used iMovies to entertain and inform parents at Open House; and a class of fifth graders created Google slide presentations highlighting a Fine Arts and Music Experience lesson.

Additionally, several of our teachers have led symposiums to help prepare our school for the more rigorous Common Core State Standards by offering teachers collaborative time to unpack key elements and study exemplar lessons. Our common theme has been success for all students. Together we have created and refined effective tiers of intervention for students who need more help and ongoing challenges for those who are ready to go further. As a PLC, we also use instructional rounds regularly to observe implementation, inspire new perspectives, and encourage collaboration. We bring our findings back to staff meetings and select and adapt strategies that drive improvement. As a staff, we have benefited from trainings and collaborations that encourage us to be lifelong learners. In turn, we can then teach our students to become collaborative, productive global citizens who are ready to succeed in the 21st century.

4. School Leadership:

At Strandwood, we work together to bring out the best in each other. Our staff meetings are led by vital paradigms. We ask each other to thoughtfully create a synergistic environment designed to enhance the best we have to offer, prioritize meaningful conversations, share what works and love what we do. We also

encourage each other to laugh when we can. We know that we are most effective when we collaborate regularly, set meaningful goals, plan for implementation, use data reliably, support what works, refine as needed and discard what does not serve us. We use consensus-building as a foundational tool for relevant decision-making. We talk to each other. We listen too. Our grade levels meet weekly to maintain strong trusting relationships and ensure ample opportunities for reflection and problem-solving. We strive to be proactive, data-driven, and open-hearted. When change does occur, we know that we are most effective when we work as a team. Recent examples include the implementation of two new technology tools at Strandwood, iReady and Reflex Math. Concerned about persistent gaps in math and reading for some of our struggling scholars and committed to enrichment activities for high-performing students, our staff prioritized the identification and implementation of kid-friendly personalized instructional programs. A lead teacher was identified, learning stations were created in classrooms, ongoing assistance was provided by our site technology support staff, data was used to identify students in need, and expectations were set for regular practice. Our early findings are encouraging. Our data shows that students are developing and cultivating important literacy and math skills. They like more screen time and we love the results!

At Strandwood, our administration has a sense of purpose and practices shared leadership. They listen to stakeholders, re-envision possibilities, and get things done. They remind us again and again that teachers can inspire and programs can motivate. They ask that we stay balanced, happy, and hopeful. They ask that our policies and programs be dynamic, engaging and influential. Five weeks ago, we said good-bye to our beloved principal of fifteen years Strandwood-style with an ice cream social for over a thousand community members and former students. We proudly celebrated her uncompromising academic expectations and her unwavering commitment to students. We also proudly united to find our next school leader. Twenty-five stakeholders attended multiple candidate interviews until we found a principal who also believes that, "Every day counts, every kid counts!" We look forward to maintaining cherished traditions and discovering new ideas. We look forward to the next best version of who we can become.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Strandwood is successful because of one factor: high expectations. Everyone works very hard to ensure that all students master the end-of-year standards and feel ready to dream about big futures. Teachers, volunteers, and parents strive to provide students with the skills they will need for academic success. We all support each other and we stay focused on what matters. We want all students to feel successful. Teachers work with students before and after school, and during prep periods. They are available for questions and will often help children from different classes and different grade levels. Teachers also offer disengaged students opportunities to learn from teachers with different teaching styles as needed. At Strandwood, we work together and we never give up.

We are very fortunate to have an extremely active parent community. Parents and guardians are often on campus volunteering to work with students; in some cases in classes that do not include their own children. This high level of interest and generosity really propels our learners forward. Our students know we care. They also know that families and teachers work together as a team. At Strandwood, a child's academic journey is not limited to report cards at the end of each trimester. Parents are informed continuously through various forms of communication including teacher web pages, emails, phone calls, newsletters, and ongoing parking lot conversations. Our high expectations have also helped us create a variety of academic supports. Our PTA helps us fund intervention programs that include a full-time Learning Center and additional classroom instructional assistants. At Strandwood, all students are administered benchmark exams in reading and math three times per year. Our teachers use this data to develop differentiated lessons and ongoing assessments. Any student who continues to need more instruction will receive targeted interventions supported by smart strategies and ample opportunities for additional assistance and practice. In the classroom, our teachers use flexible grouping to bring the instruction from whole class to small group and/or one-on-one instruction as needed. We work hard to ensure that struggling students have multiple differentiated opportunities to grasp key concepts. What makes us special is that we follow through. Our philosophy at Strandwood is a simple one: We know every student can learn and we expect every student will succeed.