

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Floyd Athay

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

Official School Name Franklin Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 940 Lincoln Street SW

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

City Le Mars                      State IA                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 51031-1855

County Plymouth County

Telephone (712) 546-4185                      Fax (712) 546-4186

Web site/URL http://www.lemars.k12.ia.us/                      E-mail floyd.athay@lemarscsd.org

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook Page \_\_\_\_\_ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Todd Wendt                      E-mail todd.wendt@lemarscsd.org

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Le Mars Community School District                      Tel. (712) 546-4155

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Patrick Murphy

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

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

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. 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

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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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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	0	0	0
K	17	26	43
1	30	18	48
2	25	25	50
3	22	25	47
4	25	21	46
5	15	29	44
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
<b>Total Students</b>	134	144	278

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 10 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 85 % 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: 4%

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	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	11
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	278
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.040
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 38 %  
Total number students who qualify: 105

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %  
48 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	12
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 23:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	96%	97%	97%
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.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

Guide students in achieving the highest possible education by teaching basic skills, developing good character, and promoting life-long learning, through partnerships with students, families, school, and community.

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

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Le Mars is a city and the county seat of Plymouth County. It is located in northwest Iowa approximately twenty-five miles northeast of Sioux City, Iowa. Le Mars has a population of about 10,000 and is home to Wells' Blue Bunny Ice Cream. The Le Mars Community School District has one middle school, one high school, and Franklin Elementary is one of three elementary schools in the district. A preschool-12th grade catholic school also serves the community of Le Mars.

Education Agency (AEA) school psychologist, the resource teacher, and principal. This team brainstorms ideas to try and/or interventions to use with the identified student. The Care Team will meet regularly to discuss progress from the ideas and/or interventions and then determine next steps for the student that was identified.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

During the past several years, the elementary schools in the district have been reviewing and studying the standards of the Iowa Common Core. Teachers have incorporated these standards into lessons in both math and reading/ELA. We have finished unpacking both curriculum areas and continue to work to further develop instructional strategies in these curriculums.

In math, teachers at each grade level have identified “essential standards”, developed pacing guides, and created common formative assessments for these standards. Data is collected from these common formative assessments and analyzed to guide instruction and student learning.

Each grade level focuses on certain math domains of the Iowa Core, and these domains build upon each other at each grade level. Kindergarten through second grade sets the foundation by delving into and building upon the domains of operations and algebraic thinking, number and operations in base ten, measurement and data, and geometry. Third grade through fifth grade develop those same domains while adding fractions and decimals. The standards that fall under these domains have been studied and some have been identified as being critical to each student’s success for progression to the next level. These essential learning standards become the focus of each grade level team through the analyzation of data from the common formative assessments that are developed and given for each essential learning standard. Grade level PLC’s determine next steps for each individual student. Interventions are developed for students based on the data collected from these assessments. Students that are proficient are provided opportunities for enrichment, while students that are not proficient are provided learning activities that are aimed at attaining proficiency. Many classrooms utilize guided math as an instructional practice to meet the diverse needs of the classroom.

As was mentioned before, the reading/ELA standards have been unpacked. Our next step in the process is to identify essential standards, create a pacing guide, and develop common formative assessments. Although we have not gone through the aforementioned process, teachers at Franklin have been implementing the concepts of the Iowa Core standards in the classroom for the past few years.

Guided reading, The Daily 5, and CAFÉ have been utilized at all grade levels for the instruction of the Iowa Core ELA standards. The Daily 5 is more than a curriculum framework or management system. It is a structure that helps students develop the daily habits of reading and fosters independence. The Daily 5 is a structured alternative to reading centers. The 5 in Daily 5 stands for read to self, read to someone, listening to reading, word work, and writing.

CAFÉ is an acronym for comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expand vocabulary. Together these pieces make up a good reader. Reading skills and concepts that fall under these categories are taught in conjunction with the standards in the Iowa Core Curriculum. The Daily 5 is a structure and the CAFÉ is a teaching tool. Teachers are provided the flexibility to deviate from guided reading instruction by being allowed to teach from the basal and/or make use of novel units/literature circles. By allowing our teachers this flexibility, a balanced approach is utilized to meet the needs of our students through a variety of diverse experiences from the Iowa Core literacy standards.

At Franklin, emphasis has been placed on the reading of nonfiction texts and increasing the level of text complexity to what students are expected to read as students advance through each grade level. Students are expected to read a range of classic and contemporary literature as well as challenging informative texts from an array of subjects.

In addition to the Iowa Core, Kindergarten students at Franklin have focused on phonemic awareness, while students in grades 1 and 2 have focused on phonic skills through a program called VOWAC (Vowel Oriented Word Attack Course). The VOWAC phonics program uses sound/picture cards to help the kids remember the sound each letter makes.

For the past few years, there has been an emphasis placed on utilizing informational texts to aid the instruction of students in social studies and science curriculums. The utilization of close reading strategies at all grade levels have played an important part in the instruction of students in these curricular areas.

In the kindergarten science curriculum, students will be introduced to science concepts that build upon what children already know, which enables them to connect to new concepts and skills. These concepts are taught using age-appropriate interactive lessons with fun songs and characters.

First grade students distinguish between living and non-living things, begin to study earth science, and are introduced to solids, liquids and gases, the three most common states of matter on earth. Also, they are introduced to the basic systems of the body.

The second grade science curriculum focuses on studies in energy, with a particular focus on water energy. Students in second grade also study plant and animal life cycles as well as healthy lifestyles.

The third grade science curriculum introduces the concept of how buildings work and classifying living things from the animal and plant kingdoms. Students in third grade also study the support systems of the human body (muscular and skeletal systems), and effectively and appropriately using the land around us.

The organs and function of the digestive system is a part of the science curriculum for fourth grade students. Also students in fourth grade study using electricity, the solar system, and organisms and their environment,

Science for fifth grade students include a study in astronomy, changes in matter and various landforms, and the respiratory system. Students in fifth grade focus on the systems of the human body with emphasis placed on the respiratory system.

Our social studies curriculum builds in complexity at each grade level. Each grade level will study the terminology and content necessary for understanding map literacy. Religious beliefs of people, societal needs, and the values of different cultures are explored by each grade. Students at each grade will understand how human environmental interaction, natural resources, and forces of nature can affect the various cultures of the world. The social studies curriculum introduces and builds the understanding of the rights, duties, and responsibilities of being a United States citizen as defined by the Constitution. Students at each grade study the major political and economic systems of the world. Finally, the social studies curriculum at Franklin allows students learn about how patterns, decisions, events, and societal trends impact history.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Franklin Elementary offers its students music, physical education, art and technology to all kindergarten through 5th grade students. Grades K-2 will meet for 25 minutes twice a week, while Grades 3-5 meet for 30 minutes twice a week for music and physical education. Art in grades K-2 will meet once a week for 45 minutes, while art in grades 3-5 meet once a week for 60 minutes. Also, students in 4th and 5th grade may choose to participate in orchestra, while students in 5th grade may elect to join band.

The music program, including band and orchestra, in the elementary buildings supports the acquisition of skills in the core subject areas. Math is supported in music when students learn to count music notes, add and subtract musical notes, learn fractions by discussing whole/half/fourth beats, and learn about time signatures that encourage counting and the division of beats.

Music supports reading by helping students feel the cadence (rhythm) of language. Music encourages reading from left to right when reading rhythms, which aids in reading readiness. Many songs in the music program at Franklin encourage reading and counting.

Students learn about different cultures/countries through multicultural music that is a part of the music program. Students compare and contrast music from different states, regions, or countries in the world.

Grades 2-3 and grades 4-5 have a music program and performance, which encourages creativity, poise, and confidence in front of an audience, which is a lifelong skill. Band and orchestra students participate in concerts, which encourages what was mentioned above.

Physical education in the Le Mars Community Elementary Schools focuses on three main strands, which include physical fitness, social skills, and lifetime activities. The strand of physical fitness develops an understanding of the importance of safe, health enhancing fitness. Students are introduced to a variety of basic forms of movement in the lower elementary and each grade level builds to more advanced forms of movement that are done in a safe manner.

Students at each grade develop an appreciation for the benefits that are associated with participation in physical activity. Students demonstrate the ability to get along through positive participation in co-educational physical activities that are age appropriate, and students at each grade are provided opportunities to recognize the benefits of lifelong physical activities by demonstrating various age appropriate skills that carry over in lifetime activities.

Students learn math skills in physical education. Students often use dice and flashcards to determine throwing and catching games. Students also recognize numbers when being timed for various activities. Students learn about leverage when establishing a base. Students talk about heart health, leg and arm strength, and flexibility and how it can be improved. Exercises are discussed that can improve overall physical fitness. Students increase vocabulary and discuss the meaning of various terms as it is related to physical fitness and sports. Activities encourage knowledge gained in the various subject areas and applying this knowledge to physical education activities. For example, students will use spelling lists from class and spell out the word while doing a jump rope activity, catching a ball, or playing a game of spelling horse.

The visual arts at Franklin Elementary are connected to the core curricular area by concentrating on the students understanding and application of media techniques and processes. The art curriculum allows students to create and communicate a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas using knowledge of structures and functions of visual arts. Students are provided opportunities to recognize the connection of the visual arts in relation to history and culture, and make connections between the visual arts, other disciplines, and the real world. Finally, the art curriculum at Franklin allows students to assess, evaluate, and respond to the various characteristics of art.

Technology is addressed in each individual classroom. Currently, Franklin Elementary has a mobile laptop lab consisting of 30 computers, and a mobile lab of 25 iPads. Teachers sign-up for specific times that they wish to utilize these labs, and they may use the computers and iPads whenever they are available as well. Through the district's technology implementation program, teachers apply for technology to be included in their individual classrooms. Many teachers at Franklin have taken advantage of this opportunity and have been granted classroom sets or half sets, to be shared with their grade level partner, of iPads/computers in their classrooms. Le Mars Elementary Schools have been blessed with an outstanding technology coach. The teachers at Franklin have utilized his services greatly in the application of various programs in each classroom to supplement and enhance the learning of students in the different core subject areas.

One of the more popular technology apps teachers at Franklin use is Seesaw. Seesaw is a student-driven digital portfolio that allows students of any age to independently document what they are learning at school. Students are able to capture learning with photos and videos of their work, or by adding digital creations. Seesaw provides instantaneous feedback to students, teachers, and parents as well as can be shared with classmates, parents, or published.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

The Franklin Elementary teaching staff delivers a wide variety of instructional methods in the various subject areas to meet the individual needs of the students. The staff's dedication, hard work, and collaborative culture has led to what we believe is quality tier one instruction. Several years ago, the district as a whole decided to implement several major changes to the overall educational experience in the district's

elementary schools. Those changes included the implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum, the extension of guided reading to all grade levels, and the implementation of Professional Learning Communities.

Around 2002 the district started to convert from whole group instruction through the use of a basal reader to guided reading in the primary grades (K-2). About eight years ago, the district made the decision to implement the Daily 5 and Daily CAFÉ as a part of the guided reading process. The upper elementary continued to utilize a basal with an occasional novel unit or literature circle mixed in. Five years ago and after seeing the positive results from the primary grades, the decision was made to implement guided reading, Daily Five and CAFÉ across all grade levels in the district. Our elementary staff believed that the design of guided reading provided more differentiated instruction that supported students in developing reading proficiency

Teachers are provided the flexibility to deviate from guided reading instruction by being allowed to go back into the basal and utilize novel units/literature circles from time-to-time, but the primary source of instruction in reading is guided reading. By allowing our teachers this flexibility of utilizing a balanced approach, we believe that it provides our students with a variety of diverse experiences in literacy.

Our math instruction from class to class varies. Franklin has had a few teachers trained in Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), and these teachers apply strategies from their training in their individual classrooms. CGI is based upon a child's ability to solve math problems without direct instruction by drawing upon informal knowledge of everyday situations. Some of our staff has utilized guided math and math workshops as a part of their instructional practice, and continue to implement whole-class instruction as well. This past year, our professional development has focused on the development of pacing guides and common formative assessments at each grade level (which provides the basis of our Professional Learning Communities) as we start the implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum. Common formative assessments will serve as the catalyst to improve student learning and achievement by allowing teachers to work and analyze data collaboratively.

As we start to put into practice the Iowa Core Curriculum, each grade level team will identify essential standards in literacy and math, form pacing guides, and develop common formative assessments. Common formative assessments will further improve instruction and guide student learning through a collaborative team approach. Interventions provided to students are based upon the data gained from these common formative assessments. As these common formative assessments are developed and implemented, interventions will become more prevalent.

Currently, teachers in grades 2-5 provide whole group interventions in fluency every day. K-1 teachers provide interventions to students based upon results from the state required Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST). Individual classrooms provide interventions in math, according to the needs of the students.

Our teachers provide a wide variety of experiences in science and social studies to deliver both curriculum areas. Project based activities are used at all grade levels. For example, students have produced models of the solar system, the respiratory system, the rainforest, landforms, etc. Teachers at Franklin use various apps such as Timeline. Timeline allows students to create a graphical representation of an event or process by displaying items sequentially along a line. Teachers have utilized Full Option Science System (FOSS) kits in science. The FOSS program uses several instructional pedagogies: inquiry based learning, hands-on learning, and active investigation, student-to-student interaction, writing, and research/reading. Cross-curricular approaches to learning are a part of the strategies that teachers at Franklin have used for instruction as well. Close reading has been employed to nonfiction texts in science and social studies.

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

For the past few of years, teachers at all three elementary schools in Le Mars have been collaborating on the unpacking and implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum in math and literacy. The development and implementation of common formative assessments have been a critical component of this process.

First, teachers spent time identifying concepts and skills embedded in each standard for both math and literacy (unpacking). This fostered a deep understanding of the standard before determining if it was essential. After the unpacking of standards, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA) team decided to focus on the math standards of the Core. Teachers identified the essential standards (priority standards) and created pacing guides to determine when each math standard would be taught. Teachers at each grade level wrote high-quality common math assessments aligned to the essential standard. This same process will be followed next year for the literacy component of the Iowa Core.

At the beginning of each essential standard unit, teachers administer a common pre-assessment on the key concepts of the standard. Data from this assessment will be analyzed to determine student understanding of the identified essential standard. In their PLC groups, teachers will examine the results from the pre-assessment by analyzing for strengths and obstacles of the standard. Based on the results of the pre-assessment, PLC's will develop Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) goals on the key elements of the goal, select appropriate teaching strategies, determine the results indicators for the essential standard to be delivered during instruction throughout the unit of study. Teachers will implement appropriate teaching strategies and conduct formative assessments to monitor student progress towards the desired outcome of the standard. Teachers will implement intervention and enrichment strategies based on their own individual formative assessments. At the end of the unit, teachers will give the common summative assessments and measure against the SMART goals. PLC's will share and examine collected data, student work, and notes with PLC members. Once again, teachers will develop interventions and enrichment strategies based off the results of the common summative assessment.

Teachers will use data collected through formative assessments to guide instruction by specifically targeting skills that students struggle with or need enrichment. As we begin this process of implementing common formative assessments, data should reflect an increase in student skills, as well as an increase in Iowa Assessment scores, which will be reported to parents and the Le Mars Community Board of Education. Summative assessment scores will be collected and reported to the board in an end-of-the-year report. Parents will see the results of the summative assessments, as the assessment will be sent home.

For the past two years, teachers have administered the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST), which is designed for universal screening, progress monitoring, and program evaluation as part of a Response to Intervention (RtI) or Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model of service delivery. Iowa has recently adopted the FAST literacy suite of assessments to assist districts in the implementation of MTSS practices and in meeting the requirements of the Early Literacy Initiative in the state of Iowa. Results from these assessments are communicated to parents during Parent-teacher Conferences and through various letters sent home to parents after required testing periods.

Iowa Assessments are used to measure academic achievement and provides information to help our students succeed. The Iowa Assessments make this possible by providing detailed information about achievement in the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science. The Iowa Assessments measure student growth and progress from year to year. In addition, they provide information about students' academic performance relative to their school, the district, and the nation. Information gained from the Iowa Assessments helps Franklin teachers identify students' strengths and areas that may need additional emphasis. The assessment data enable sound decision-making and provide a focus for teachers to review and improve their instruction. The results of the assessment will help prepare our students for the next steps on their educational paths. Results from these assessments are reported to parents through published narrative documents supplied by the Iowa Assessments. Results are presented to the Le Mars Board of Education as well.

The District Level Instructional Impact Team (DLIIT) is another way in which the district provides information and gathers input from, community members, parents, students, teachers, board members, and administrators (all of which this team is composed). DLIIT meets quarterly to discuss the pressing issues of the district and information about the programs, functions, and assessment results of the Le Mars School District. Information gathered from these meetings is often reported to the board and help drive and direct the board on important decisions related to education in Le Mars.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

A dedicated staff of teaching professionals serves the students at Franklin Elementary. These teachers provide a safe and respectful environment where students are empowered and engaged in their learning and community. The Franklin staff meets students where they are and provides them the tools to succeed. Franklin teachers learn and grow together as they continuously develop ways to improve student performance. Teachers at Franklin believe high expectations in classroom practices and strategies improve student achievement.

Professional Learning Communities have played a big role in developing culture and climate of Franklin Elementary. Teachers obtain information and resources to improve classroom instruction by utilizing professional networks. The more teachers collaborate together to study and problem-solve our school's issues that impact student success, the more we build the trust and relationships that produce a collaborative culture.

Students having significant problems academically, socially, and/or behaviorally in their respective classroom are identified and brought to the attention to a group of educators at Franklin called a Care Team. Care Teams at Franklin are formed by the classroom teacher of the student, school counselor, the Area Education Agency (AEA) school psychologist, the resource teacher, and principal. This team brainstorms ideas to try and/or interventions to use with the identified student. The Care Team will meet regularly to discuss progress from the ideas and/or interventions and then determine next steps for the identified student.

The school counselor at Franklin plays a role in the development all students in the areas of academic achievement, personal/social development, and career development. The school counselor teaches classes to all grade levels once every two weeks. These classes are based upon the three areas mentioned previously. The counselor will meet individual students as well as small groups of students on a regular basis to promote personal/social development for those students who are in need of more intensive growth in this area. The school counselor assists and helps to promote DARE (which was mentioned previously) and aids in the development of the Big Brother/Big Sister program. DARE and Big Brother/Big Sister help tremendously in the personal, social, and emotional growth of our students.

Franklin teachers often plan special activities for the students. Some of those activities have been mentioned somewhere in this narrative. A couple of end-of-the year activities that teachers plan for students that contribute to the family-like atmosphere of the school are the all school water balloon fight and wellness day. Sometime during the month of May, students and faculty participate in a controlled water balloon fight that is led by our physical education instructor. Students and faculty enjoy this activity as it promotes unity and team building at school. On the next to the last day of school, the Franklin staff has developed an all-school wellness day. The students participate in various physical activity stations throughout the school grounds for the entire day. Lower elementary students are paired with upper elementary students and move from station-to-station participating in various activities.

Parents are encouraged to be apart of the school culture through Franklin's end of the year all-school picnic. On the last day of school, parents and relatives are invited to school to have a "picnic" with their child. The school provides a sack lunch to all students and parents/relatives come to school and spread out around the playground and enjoy the final afternoon of school before summer break with their child. Teachers mingle with the parents during this final day of school.

The philosophy that "kids don't care how much you know, until they know that you care" is conveyed daily at Franklin Elementary. The staff at Franklin provides a caring, safe, and respectful environment on a daily basis. During our end-of-the-year assembly, students are asked if they look forward to summer vacation and the vast majority do not want school to end. This speaks volumes to the dedicated staff at Franklin Elementary.

## 2. Engaging Families and Community:

For about the past twenty years, Franklin has celebrated student birthdays through the Birthday Breakfast Program. One morning during the months of September, December, March, and May, students and their families are invited to school between 7:30 am and 8:15 am to have juice and doughnuts to celebrate student birthdays. Students born in August, September, and October are invited to the September celebration, with each of the remaining three breakfasts following the same format. Community business partners pay for all costs of the breakfast and representatives from these businesses serve the doughnuts and juice to the families. Staff members are then free to mingle with all the students and their families informally. At the breakfast, a child's family may purchase a book that their child picks out. That book is donated to the library in honor of the child. A special certificate with the child's name that donates the book is glued on the inside cover of the book. The child is given the first opportunity to read the book and then returns it to the library when he/she finishes reading the book. Franklin adds around 150 books per year to the inventory of the library through this recognition program.

Franklin Elementary has a wide range of volunteers that come into the school to work with students. These volunteers range from retired people, parents, teachers' relatives, students from the middle school and high school, and various business representatives. The volunteers will work with individual and small groups of students, or may be involved with helping the teacher prepare various items for the classroom. In the lower elementary, various community readers from area businesses volunteer to read to students each week.

Parents at Franklin are encouraged to come and visit the school, their child's classroom, and to eat lunch with their children. During special events, parents are invited to the classroom/school to observe student presentations of choral readings, projects, and various student plays. In fifth grade parents and/or grandparents help students dissect pig lungs as a part of an end-of-the unit study on the respiratory system.

Technology plays a key role in engaging families and community. Teachers use many different types of apps that provide feedback and communication to parents. Seesaw (mentioned earlier) allows parents to view and comment on a digital portfolio of their child's work through any technological device. Remind is a communication tool that enables teachers to send reminders to students and parents via text and email. These are a few ways in which technology is used.

PowerSchool is a district wide web-based student information system with a centralized database. PowerSchool allows parents to access vital information about their children quickly and accurately. They can see the results of tests and assignments as soon as they are recorded, enabling them to intervene quickly, if necessary. Parents can check the latest homework assignments and offer their children help with their schoolwork. Day in and day out, PowerSchool helps parents help their children achieve their potential.

The elementary schools in Le Mars benefit from having an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). This organization is designed to provide support and assistance to teachers in the classroom setting, hold fundraisers for supplemental educational materials and experiences, support school and family social interaction, and provide a non-biased forum for sharing information on issues that impact our children. The Le Mars PTO has provided funds and support for field trips, quarterly birthday breakfasts, teacher resources, teacher appreciation week, parent teacher conferences, and fun family events.

Thursday Take Home folders are another way that families are engaged in the their child's education. Students at each grade level take these folders home every Thursday and are returned the next day. This folder is a way of maintaining effective communication between home and school. It aims to eliminate lost notes, newsletters, calendars, and homework as well as keep parents and students informed of important events and academic progress. Thursday Folders have been utilized for over twenty years, so many parents look for this information each Thursday.

Franklin Elementary participates with Big Brothers/Big Sisters in the Lunch Buddy Program. Each week, volunteer mentors from the community eat lunch and develop one-to-one relationships with selected children to help them reach their potential.

Parent-teacher conferences are held in November. These conferences are invaluable in providing parents information about their child. Around 97% of parents will show up for these conferences.

Progress reports done quarterly are another way in which achievement results are shared with parents. These reports are given to students' parents during the midterm of the quarter.

### 3. Professional Development:

Two years ago, Le Mars was one of the schools in the state of Iowa to receive the Teacher Leadership Compensation Grant, which has helped us to enhance and provide additional supports for all teachers. We have three instructional coaches (literacy, math, and technology), model/mentor teachers, and a curriculum, instruction, and assessment team. Each of these groups provides assistance in various capacities to the professional development plans of the district. Model teachers will provide not only opportunities for teacher colleagues to demonstrate effective practices learned during the theory portion of professional development but also content specific strategies in the areas of literacy, math, and science. The Curriculum and Professional Development Specialists (CIA Team) will assist with the planning of building-level professional development. The instructional coaches will assist with the planning of building-level professional development, provide training on effective practices during professional development classes, model effective practices through the co-teaching process, and provide specific feedback on implementation to colleagues during the peer review process.

Professional development for the Le Mars Community Elementary Schools has been based on board approved district goals. An ongoing board goal for the past several years has included decreasing the percent of students in the non-proficient category, as measured by the Iowa Assessments national percentile rank in reading, math, and science by 10% in grades 3-5. The professional development plans of the Le Mars Community Elementary Schools are working to address this goal through the use of specific instructional practices and implementation of the Professional Learning Community principles.

The full implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum is another board approved goal and the focus of district-level professional development. The Curriculum and Professional Development Specialists (CIA Team), under the supervision of the assistant superintendent, will provide leadership in the planning and delivery of district-level professional development designed to identify essential standards in the areas of literacy, math, and science to develop instructional units designed around the essential standards, and to develop common formative assessments that will guide instruction. Instructional coaches will also be very instrumental in this process and will work collaboratively with the CIA team on implementation of the Iowa Core with fidelity.

Effective integration of the technology with instruction and student learning is a newly adopted goal for the school district. While evaluating the current level of technology integration in the district, it became readily apparent that there is a need for technology integration specialists to facilitate both the learning of teachers and ultimately, the use of technology in instruction and learning. The technology coach plays a critical role in not only the integration of technology into instruction through training, modeling, and co-teaching, but also in collaboration with the other coaches to develop effective instructional practices that infuse technology in the areas of literacy and math.

Common planning time has been built into the schedule at each grade level. Teachers are asked to meet at least once a week during this time, or at a time that fits better in their schedules. Some classroom teachers choose to meet more often than once a week. Teachers can plan lessons, discuss classroom strategies, and develop interventions for their individual classrooms based on the Iowa Core Curriculum during this common planning time. They may also go through testing results to help guide instruction in the classroom.

### 4. School Leadership:

As the principal of two schools with approximately 600 students under my direction, I rely heavily on the shared decision making model that our district embraces. Therefore, my role is to try to continuously

empower, nurture, and inspire teachers to improve classroom instruction by providing the resources and the time to work collaboratively to create a positive impact on student learning and achievement. As was mentioned previously, Le Mars was one of the schools in the state of Iowa to receive the Teacher Leadership Compensation Grant (TLC), which has helped us to enhance the shared decision making framework and provide additional supports for all teachers and administrators.

The district's vision for the TLC plan is to encourage teachers to assume leadership roles in curriculum and instruction. Teacher leaders are paid commensurate with the professional training and preparation necessary to assume these leadership roles and promote collaboration with other teachers, both veteran and new to the profession, in a supportive, targeted, and focused manner producing increased student achievement results. This grant allowed us to expand our shared decision making framework by creating various teacher leadership teams.

One of those teacher leadership teams focuses on curriculum, instruction, and assessment (CIA Team). CIA Team members provide support and assistance to teachers as they implement the Iowa Core in the areas of Reading/Language Arts, Math, and Literacy. CIA Team members make up the elementary school improvement team (SIT). They work with the assistant superintendent and building administrators to plan and deliver district-level professional development, and provide leadership in the implementation of the Iowa Core and the development of common formative assessments.

Instructional coaches are another teacher leadership team that is provided by the district. Instructional coaches teach approximately 20% of the contract time and serve as a coach approximately 80% of the contract time. Teaching opportunities include co-teaching in all three areas of focus and small group intervention time with students in the areas of literacy and math. Coaching activities will include researching best practices, modeling effective practices, assisting with peer review opportunities, facilitating professional development classes, and assisting with building-level professional development planning and delivery.

The Le Mars Community School District has started the process of implementing the components of professional learning communities in our elementary buildings. The district is committed to building capacity among the staff by sending teacher leaders to trainings during the past several years. These teachers then lead and help put into practice the components of PLC's. It is believed that this collective responsibility through collaboration and the feedback PLC's provide help to improve teacher skills and ensure high levels of learning for every child.

Personally, I believe in being a proactive administrator. I do not want to be recognized simply as the authority figure in the school that is rarely visible. I am seen in the classrooms as well as throughout the school, and my door is always open. I believe this serves several purposes. First, it builds relationships that keep me connected with classroom subject matter and teaching methodology, and it helps me to get to know the students and staff on a more personal level. I believe that developing relationships with students and staff by showing a genuine concern for instruction, the work that teachers do in the classroom, and the overall well-being of staff and students will help to gain trust, confidence, and positive working relationships.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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As was mentioned previously, around 2002 the district started to convert from whole group instruction through the use of a basal reader to guided reading in the primary grades (K-2). About eight years ago, the district made the decision to implement the Daily 5 and Daily CAFÉ as a part of the guided reading process. The upper elementary continued to use a basal reader and occasionally utilize a novel unit/literature circle. Around five years ago, the decision was made to start implementing guided reading, Daily Five and CAFÉ across all grade levels (K-5) in the district. At that time, professional development was focused on studying and developing guided reading, Daily CAFÉ, and Daily 5 at the upper elementary, and sharing instructional techniques and ideas at all grade levels.

Most of the elementary staff believed that the design of guided reading provided more differentiated instruction that supported all students in developing reading proficiency. Teachers are allowed the flexibility to deviate from guided reading instruction by being permitted to go back into the basal reader and/or utilize novel units/literature circles from time-to-time, but the primary source of instruction in literacy is guided reading. Guided reading allowed teachers to meet the needs of all students at their reading level, work with students struggling with reading (focus on word work and basic reading skills), challenge the students that are reading above grade level, and keep them geared to learn more. Students are reading out loud which helps with reading comprehension, fluency, word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, and fundamental reading skills. The teacher is able to sit down with the students and actually read and are able to share the joy of reading with them. Also, technology is easily incorporated through guided reading assignments and presentations on the iPad.

By allowing our teachers this flexibility, we believe that it provides our students with a variety of diverse experiences in literacy and creates a balance approach to literacy instruction.

The CAFE breaks literacy into four components—comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expanding vocabulary. Strategies that support each goal are developed and posted on the classroom wall and built throughout the year, it serves as a visual reminder of whole-class instruction as well as individual student goals.

The Daily 5 is a management tool that allows students to select from five authentic reading and writing choices, working independently toward personalized goals, while the teacher meets individual needs through whole-group and small-group instruction, as well as one-on-one conferring. These choices include: Read to Self, Work on Writing, Read to Someone, Listen to Reading, and Word Work.

Guided reading, Daily CAFÉ, and Daily 5 will play a pivotal role as we start to put into practice the Iowa Core Curriculum. Next year, each grade level team will identify essential standards in literacy, form pacing guides, and develop common formative assessments, which will further improve instruction and guide student learning through a collaborative team approach, which was initiated about eight years ago.

Data has shown a trend that students in grades 3-5 at Franklin Elementary have benefited from this approach. The trend line has increased in all three grades at Franklin Elementary over a seven-year period. The move toward guided reading and Daily CAFÉ, and Daily 5 began in 2011, with full implementation taking place by 2013. When comparing the average National Percentile Rank (NPR) from the Iowa Assessments (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) between 2009-2012 (mainly basal reader/start of guided reading/novel units/literature circles) with the average National Percentile Rank (NPR) from the Iowa Assessments (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) between 2013-2015 (fully implemented guided reading/novel units/literature circles), a significant increase in scores have resulted in all grade levels. Third Grade at Franklin scored an average of 67.25 NPR between 2009-2012, but increased to 78.33 NPR between 2013-2015. Fourth grade's average NPR between 2009-2012 was 72% and increased to 76% average NPR during the years of 2013-2015. Fifth grade at Franklin has shown similar results. The average NPR for 5th graders between 2009-2012 was 65.5%, while the average NPR between 2013-2015 increased to 73.5%.

This data has indicated that this balanced approach of providing guided reading, Daily CAFÉ, Daily 5, basal reader, and novel units/literature circles have greatly benefited the students at Franklin Elementary.