

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 Mrs. Tara Jean Estep

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

Official School Name Helen A. Hansen Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 616 Holmes Drive

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

City Cedar Falls State IA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 50613-2043

County Black Hawk County

Telephone (319) 553-2775 Fax (319) 268-2347

Web site/URL http://hn.cfschools.org/ E-mail tara.estep@cfschools.org

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/Hansen-

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/TaraEstep 1434534303434485/?ref=bookmarks 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. Andy Pattee E-mail andy.pattee@cfschools.org

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

District Name Cedar Falls Community Schools Tel. (319) 553-3000

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 Dr. James Kenyon

(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

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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 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	9	11	20
K	45	47	92
1	41	45	86
2	41	39	80
3	35	51	86
4	41	37	78
5	46	37	83
6	40	34	74
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	298	301	599

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 5 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 84 % 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: 8%

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	26
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	44
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	549
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.080
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
German, Urdu, Russian, Arabic, Marathi, Telugu, & Amharic

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 19 %
Total number students who qualify: 114

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
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.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 0 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 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:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	26
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals	16
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.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	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.

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

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.

Hansen Elementary is a community of lifelong learners where students, staff, parents, and community are joined in a partnership towards a collective vision of: students and staff who are innovative, collaborative, and critical thinkers; a differentiated curriculum that engages all students in rigorous and relevant learning; and a safe, nurturing environment where all students are successful, well-rounded individuals who embrace diversity.

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

Hansen Elementary is located in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Cedar Falls is a community of approximately 40,000 people and is home to the University of Northern Iowa, which is one of Iowa's three state universities. Cedar Falls is a progressive community that embraces culture and educating youth to high standards. Cedar Falls Community School District (CFCSD) is a PK-12 system and serves 5,382 students. CFCSD has 398 teachers, 53% of which hold a master's degree. There are 19 native languages spoken by students in CFCSD. There are 15.8% minority students, 11.3 special education students, and 2.5% English language learners served. CFCSD has a free and reduced lunch rate of 24.7%. In 2015 CFCSD was recognized as a Model Professional Learning Community (PLC) at Work, one of only three districts in Iowa and one of 22 districts in the United States to receive this honor.

Hansen Elementary was first constructed in 1969 and has since had four additions and renovations. In order to support today's twenty-first century learners, collaborative spaces were constructed along with fifteen new classrooms that boast short-throw projectors, SMART board software, connectivity that supports our 1:1 chromebook efforts, and spaces designed to encourage creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

Upholding our tradition of excellence is a product of the collaboration between our families, community and schools. In continuing our charge to provide our students with a high quality education, we embrace change as it represents the world our students will enter as they continue their life's journey by emphasizing college and career readiness with the development of critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills.

We aim for our students to remain well-rounded individuals by providing them with numerous opportunities to excel in academics, the fine arts and athletics and other curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Students are held to a high academic standard and challenged with the curriculum. Our educators remain committed to student achievement each day and continually propel our students further after initial goals have been reached.

Our entire learning community remains dedicated to our vision of academic excellence for all students while remaining one of the best school districts in the state; with innovation, focus and rigor.

Our collective vision at Hansen is to empower students and provide them with the tools necessary to be successful in all areas of life, thus we provide our students with unique and exceptional learning opportunities.

Approximately six years ago Hansen staff embarked on a quest to improve the academic skills of all students. We noticed that our high achieving students were stagnant, thus we implemented Instructional Decision Making (IDM), which provides a framework for all students to achieve at high levels. This framework provided each student opportunities for growth and success through a systematic intervention and enrichment structure. Not only do students that need additional support receive small group intervention, but students who have mastered skills receive enrichment through small group explicit instruction where the goal is to take the skill/concept deeper. Over the years this framework has evolved into a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and focuses on student by student and skill by skill.

Our data has shown tremendous growth in our targeted area of our high achieving students. Although we celebrate this data, we also are thrilled with the benefits that are a bit harder to quantify. Our students in general have increased self-confidence because they are receiving instruction that is at their instructional level. Students that need intervention have the opportunity for a teacher to provide explicit instruction in the skill they need support with. In addition, our high achieving students feel challenged and are taking more risks than ever before. This self-confidence is pouring into all areas of our school day.

Although student achievement and academic success are of the utmost importance, we work tirelessly at Hansen to provide opportunities to cultivate social and emotional growth. Our school counselor is involved

on a daily basis with students through large group guidance lessons that focus on bullying prevention, positive self-concept, emotional health, and safe choices. In addition, she works with students in small groups and / or on an individual basis to support them both socially and emotionally.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The Iowa Core drives instruction at Hansen Elementary. The Professional Learning Community (PLC) process has been a key in creating a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Collaborative teams determine learning, goals, and criteria for success.

We are proud that Cedar Falls Community School District has been recognized as a model Professional Learning Community and Hansen Elementary teachers certainly have played a role in its success. Hansen educators work toward answering four critical questions that guide conversations about our curriculum, how we instruct students, as well as our assessment techniques.

The goal of literacy instruction in the Cedar Falls Schools is to develop lifelong strategic readers, writers, listeners, speakers, and critical thinkers. Learners must be empowered to access and interpret information in the 21st Century through constructing meaning from language through literacy activities done with shifting levels of support, including modeling to students (teacher responsibility), with students (shared responsibility), and by students (student responsibility).

Hansen Elementary has a balanced literacy framework. A balanced comprehensive literacy program includes high quality instruction for all children. A balanced program incorporates: Modeled reading and writing, shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing, content area reading and writing, and independent reading and writing. All are equally important and students are exposed to this balanced approach on a daily basis. Teachers have a deep understanding of the English Language Arts standards and work to provide rich learning opportunities that connect both reading and writing skills.

Instructional content for the five essential components of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension) is done through modeled, shared, and guided reading. Guided reading is a context in which a teacher supports students as they practice strategies that lead to independent reading with comprehension. The small guided reading group is flexible and dynamic and focused on strategies to gain independence.

Hansen's aim in the teaching of mathematics is to provide students with engaging, rigorous, and real world problems that support problem solving and conceptual understanding. We have several goals in mind when working to actively engage students in math:

We want students to be able to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. This allows for multiple entry points and solution paths and requires students to defend and justify solutions. This also encourages differentiation of advanced students to dig deeper.

We want students to be able to reason abstractly and quantitatively. This allows for relevant realistic context and requires students to interpret, model, and connect multiple representations. In addition, it requires students to explain their reasoning.

Finally, we want students to make sense of math and the world they live in through application; therefore, it is our charge to provide meaningful opportunities for students to apply their learning to solve real world problems.

Our goal is that Science and Social Studies be integrated through rich learning opportunities that provide value beyond school application. Although we have clear targets in Science and Social Studies, we work to embed those concepts into daily learning. For instance, we have a Farm to School program in which students are not only able to learn and try different produce, but also are educated about local growers. In addition, we have a garden bed for each grade level to coordinate plantings and work to care for the gardens. There are a number of science standards that are covered at various grade levels through this work.

Our Hansen teachers utilize district-directed resources in the teaching of science and social studies; however, we have found that students gain a much richer understanding of concepts through the integration of other subject areas. There are a number of specific examples of how educators design rich, meaningful units that not only directly support science and social studies standards, but enhance learning by linking skills across the curriculum:

First grade teachers have designed an animal unit linked to the following Science standards: Read texts and use media to determine patterns in behavior of parents and offspring that help offspring survive; Make observations to construct an evidence-based account that young plants and animals are like.

In this unit first graders research facts about animals, learn concepts and text features of nonfiction text, and write a non-fiction animal book based on their findings. It is clear a number of (ELA) English Language Arts standards as well as twenty-first century standards are addressed in this unit.

Another example is fifth grade's study of the American Revolution. The social studies essential concepts are: Understand the influences on individual and group behavior and group decision making; Understand current social issues to determine how the individual formulates opinions and responds to issues; Understand how to evaluate social research and information; Understand the role of individuals and groups within a society as promoters of change or the status quo.

Fifth grade teachers created a Revolutionary War investigation where kids use online resources to learn about various aspects of the war while utilizing the strategies of summarizing and determining importance during reading. In addition, students compare and contrast the British Army and the Continental Army through the writing of an argument piece on whether colonists should be a supporter of the Patriots or the Loyalists.

Similarly, fourth grade teachers have created a unit on the US regions, specifically the West and Southwest where the following standards are covered: Understand how geographic and human characteristics create culture and define regions; Understand historical patterns, periods of time and the relationships among these elements; Understand the role of culture and cultural diffusion on the development and maintenance of societies.

Teachers combine the study of the regions with mentor texts that are set in the same regions, which provides students the opportunity to compare and contrast points of view. Concepts in historical texts offer students the necessary background to compare firsthand/secondhand information and same topic/event similarities and differences. Finally, students write letters and opinion pieces to share findings.

It is important to Hansen that science and social studies skills are learned beyond the classroom walls. Our student ambassadors' (Hansen student leaders) main objective is a focus on service projects for a school and community. Giving back to our community not only meets a number of essential concepts, but is a life skill that we are proud to promote. For instance, our sixth grade students created artwork that was donated to a local charity, Art for El Salvador. This art was sold to raise money to build a school in El Salvador. They were able to promote the event, create artwork, learn about El Salvador, and discover the necessary steps needed for this charity to meet its goal.

These real-world and engaging opportunities provide our students with so much more than any lecture could. It provides them with meaningful experiences that we hope they will carry on through adulthood to become caring, contributing citizens.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

There are a number of non-core curricular offerings that we are proud to provide for our students. These areas directly support our district beliefs of fostering: complex thinkers, effective communicators, contributing citizens, lifelong learners, collaborative workers, competent in essential skills, and competent users of technology.

Hansen Elementary offers a number of curricular areas that K-6 students are exposed to: Physical Education, Art Education, Library, Guidance classes, Music Education, Orchestra, Band and Technology integration. All special area teachers are involved in a Professional Learning Community Collaborative Team. These teams work to identify essential concepts and skills that are to be taught then align the intended, enacted, and assessed CORE curriculum.

We are proud of all special area offerings, but will highlight our Music, Art, Technology, and Guidance programming:

Music: All Hansen students attend general music twice in every six-day cycle. Kindergarten students have 30-minute classes. First through sixth graders have 35-minute classes. In the general music class students participate in singing, the playing of instruments, theory instruction, and music appreciation as we focus on essential skills of creating, performing, and responding. All students perform in one grade-level music program each year. Learning music facilitates and enhances skills that children use in other subject areas such as reading, comprehension, reasoning, and communicating.

Additional music opportunities are offered at various grade levels. Fifth and sixth graders may join the Hansen Chorus which rehearses once a week for 20 minutes. Both fifth and sixth graders have the opportunity to audition for the All-State OPUS Honor Choir, which is a 180-voice choir made of students selected from across the state. Sixth graders may join “Mallet Masters” which are small Orff-based performing groups. Sixth graders may also audition for the 6th Grade Honors Chorus – a group comprised of sixth graders throughout the district that perform in our All-City Vocal Festival. New this year will be “Tiger Beats” – a small drumming group for select sixth graders from across the district. In addition, Hansen music students connect with the community by singing at our Partners In Education events – caroling at the hospital and providing entertainment for the Sartori Hospital holiday luncheon.

In addition, Hansen’s Music teacher utilized her knowledge of the MTSS model to provide support to a high-intensive group of students in fifth and sixth grade. The teacher provided a six week enrichment unit on composition where students were able to create and compose their own song.

Orchestra and Band are also offered to students. Students may join Orchestra in fourth grade. Students may join Beginning Band at the start of their 5th grade year. After going through the instrument selection process, students start lessons which are held once every 6 day cycle throughout the year. The band/orchestra performs a variety of light and traditional styles of music, along with standard lesson methods and materials. Students play music to provide an opportunity for development of skills in playing an instrument and becoming familiar with many types of music. Students develop skills of creativity, teamwork, personal goal setting, and responsibility.

Art: To encourage creative expression and problem solving through a wide variety of art experiences and media, K-1 students come to art once every cycle for 45 minutes and 2-6 come for 50 minutes once a cycle. Each grade level uses various media such as printmaking, ceramics, drawing, collage, mixed media, painting, and fiber arts to create their artwork. Children develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes about art a different rates and in their own individual ways. The Art teacher actively guides students through each lesson while allowing them to experiment and create with a variety of materials in a safe and responsible manner.

Additionally, we have structured our Art schedule to allow for one out of every six days to be dedicated to Art integration throughout the PK-6 setting. This allows for the Art teacher to collaborate with general education teachers to provide opportunities to incorporate creativity into lessons or projects.

Guidance: Guidance lessons are offered to all K-6 students. Counselor visits are scheduled regularly all year in each grade level at Hansen. Units focus on the social, emotional, and career needs of students. Lessons are developmentally appropriate and aimed at preventing social/emotional problems as well as supporting healthy living for each and every child. We work on building positive relationships within each homeroom and from there, skills for learning, self-awareness as well as self-regulation are emphasized. Units such as safety, bullying prevention, conflict resolution, problem solving, mindfulness, decision making, substance abuse prevention and career exploration are included too.

Technology: Our desire is to provide opportunities for all students to engage with technology. We work to integrate technology in support of a curriculum which will provide innovative, challenging, and effective learning experiences to enable all students to succeed in the global community. We do not provide an isolated technology class, but rather provide teachers with the tools to integrate technology into their classrooms, which will provide more opportunity for application and retention. Our students have the availability of I-Pads (1:3 Pads in PK-3) and chromebooks (1:1) for grades 3-6.

We believe the integration of technology into the learning process for all students will: Provide learning experiences that promote collaboration, questioning, and higher level thinking; Increase access to and manipulation of information; Facilitate differentiated instruction; Promote student responsibility for learning; Enhance teacher and student productivity; Improve communication between staff, students, and parents; Enhance curriculum goals and objectives; Create connections for students and staff with the global community; Foster skills which will ensure success in the workplace and the world beyond school.

The principal of Hansen Elementary sits on an innovative committee that is working to bring World Language opportunities to our students. There is a plan that has been adopted by the district that will allow for future opportunities for Hansen students in World Language.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

We continuously work to achieve our vision of providing exceptional learning opportunities to each and every Hansen student. We believe in a kids-first philosophy and an approach that meets the needs of individual learners. We achieve this through the design and implementation of SMART goals and our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

Hansen Elementary makes it a goal to first ask, “Is my Core sufficient?” Core is sufficient if 80% of students are proficient in the concept/skill. We work to provide a strong Core for each and every student that provides exceptional learning opportunities. We utilize characteristics of effective instruction to engage our students. These include: student-centered classrooms, teaching for understanding, assessing for learning, promoting rigor and relevance in our lessons, and teaching for learning differences. These components are necessary for optimal learning.

Hansen Elementary was the first school in our district to design and implement SMART (Strategic, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) goals. These goals have provided us with the opportunity to review data, research best practice, and construct meaningful and authentic goals, thus providing true instructional guidance focused on the needs of students.

We take an individualized approach to learning through our MTSS framework. This structure ensures that our instruction is targeted to the needs of each student. We practice a skill by skill and student by student approach to intervention and enrichment. Utilizing formative assessment results, teachers group students according to need and use the data to guide our instructional decisions. Hansen is unique in that it offers explicit instruction not only to students who require re-teaching of a concept, but to students who have also mastered the concept.

Teachers also engage students with 21st century skills, thus they infuse communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking into the design of their daily lessons. The use of the “4 C’s” encourages active participation and student centered learning and is achieved through project based learning, inquiry experiences, and innovative lessons.

Teachers also understand and utilize the Gradual Release method: Modeling – The teacher models, or demonstrates, how to apply the strategy, usually by “thinking aloud” while reading the text that the students are using. Guided practice – The teacher guides and assists students as they learn how and when to apply the strategy. Application – The teacher helps students practice the strategy until they can apply it independently.

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

Assessment drives our instruction. Hansen teachers have been exposed to Stiggins work of Assessment for Learning. Thus, they have a deep understanding of how to utilize common formative assessments (CFA) to guide their instruction. They utilize their Professional Learning Community Collaborative Team Meetings to review data from common formative assessments, create SMART goals, and guide their instruction so it is focused on individual skills that students need.

Through our staff professional development we have built background knowledge on the power of assessment and the direct relationship to student achievement. Our staff asks, “Will the assessments show evidence of learning and is there alignment of the intended, enacted, and assessed curriculum?” In other words, assessments need to measure the essential skills and align with the instruction and practice opportunities. Assessments thoroughly measure the essential concepts and skills and adequately align to the instruction and practice opportunities.

We have had a number of SMART goals surrounding assessment. One of our past building goals has been to ensure the alignment of our intended, enacted, and assessed curriculum. That goal has been achieved and currently we are working to align the Depth of Knowledge of our intended, enacted, and assessed curriculum. Due to this, we have teachers who are rewriting assessments to match the level of rigor of their instruction. Thus, our instruction and assessments are more rigorous and meaningful to our students. In addition, we noticed that our students were not always meeting expectations in the area of writing, thus we created a building SMART goal that encouraged the use of rubrics and explicitly taught students the expectations.

We have become more proficient at analyzing state screening results to determine skills that have been mastered since our state recently adopted a screener through the Early Literacy Implementation legislation. Not only do teachers have their common formative assessments to guide instruction, but now also understand how to utilize screening assessments to ensure their Core instruction is meeting needs.

Since our practice is to meet student needs skill by skill and student by student, it was important that our performance reports matched our philosophies, thus we have implemented standards based reporting system. This keeps the focus on learning, rather than earning for our teachers, students, and parents.

Through our research of John Hattie’s work of effect size, we also recognized the need for continuous, meaningful feedback and student ownership of learning and goals. Because of this, we developed and implemented student data notebooks. As a result of this, our students are more involved with their learning, parents have continuous feedback, and teachers have an individual and deep understanding of strengths and areas of growth of every student in their classroom.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The climate and culture of any organization is the glue, foundation, and typically a compass of its success. This holds true for Hansen Elementary. Nearly six years ago Hansen stakeholders came together to develop a shared vision of what we wanted to achieve for Hansen along with action steps of how to get there. Out of that vision was born a student-friendly language belief statement, which is imbedded in everything we do. Hansen PRIDE (Positive, Ready to Learn, Insist on our Best, Dependable and Respectful, and Encourage Others to do the Right Thing) is the foundation for our students and staff. This language is utilized to promote the high expectations we have for academics and behavior. Since the implementation of our vision, our office referrals have decreased and student achievement has increased, which we believe has a direct correlation to our successful climate.

Our student belief statement was developed to provide consistent expectations and language for our students, but has matured into a leadership framework for our students. We noticed that our student council structure did not match the goals and vision of our building, thus we dismantled the traditional model and created Hansen Student Ambassadors. The main objective of our student ambassador program is to provide service to our school and community, thus we have an organized student leadership system. Through our ambassadors we have implemented: student application for jobs (tour guides, recycling leaders, announcements, library leaders, greeters, etc), completed community service projects (food drive, coat drive, Art for El Salvador, etc), and provide a consistent message of kindness and PRIDE in our building through the promotion of positive character and recognition of individuals and classrooms.

Through the development of the shared vision the staff is devoted to providing students with rich learning opportunities while staying steadfast in keeping focused on only the initiatives that matched the Hansen vision. Meanwhile students began living the vision and slowly we have enjoyed both qualitative and quantitative results!

Each year our Building Leadership Team creates a SMART (strategic, measureable, attainable, realistic, and timely) culture goal. This year our goal is to improve the number of students who feel successful at school and that is measured through a yearly culture student survey. Our action steps surrounding this goal include: professional development around mindset and efficacy, developing a classroom nomination system, recognizing student achievements, and implementing the Great Kindness Challenge throughout the school.

Our climate, culture, and vision is the foundation for our success. Every staff meeting and professional development opportunity our staff reviews these principles, redefines our current state, and refocuses on what matters most, which is our Hansen students.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We engage families the minute they register their child for school with a welcoming greeting and an invitation to be a partner in the learning of their children. There is no doubt that a strong home to school connection has been a critical key to the success of our school.

Communication is central to developing a strong school to home link. Two years ago our Building Leadership Team mandated that all grade levels have consistent communication to families, thus most adopted a weekly news-flash practice that not only provides announcements to families, but also highlights the skills that are worked on during the week. In addition, the principal compiled all announcements into one weekly email to diminish the sheer number of emails parents were receiving from school and increase the chance of parents reading. The principal also manages a twitter and school Facebook page that not only includes information, but showcases student learning. Teachers and grade levels are also setting up Twitter and Facebook accounts to share with parents.

We have multiple events each year to engage our families in our school. We welcome families the night before school with a Backpack Night, which provides an opportunity for students and parents to meet the classroom teacher, find their classroom, and unpack their supplies. This alleviates anxiety for all members and sends a strong message to our families that they are welcome in our building and are partners in education! We also offer input conferences the first week of school where parents are able to visit with teachers regarding their child's strengths, areas of concern, as well as develop shared goals for the year. In addition, we offer Literacy Night (where we help to support parent efforts in reading with their children), Academic Fair (students present projects in their interest area), and Carnival in conjunction with our PTA that helps to celebrate our school. We have also offered student-led open house evenings that community members are invited to attend.

We are especially proud of the dedicated volunteers that spend their time to support our school. We have 160 volunteers on file to help support Hansen students. Our volunteers assist with interventions, enrich students in unique opportunities, attend educational trips, and support classroom teachers. We have also worked with volunteers and a local company of engineers to offer Lego League. We currently have four Lego League teams that are all managed by Hansen volunteers.

3. Professional Development:

Hansen Elementary follows the Iowa Professional Development Model, thus data, best practice, teacher leadership, and research are all components of our successful plan. We design staff development as a part of the district's Professional Learning Communities process; therefore, we develop, train, and support teams of teacher leaders at each level/building to assist with the delivery staff of development.

Data drives district and building professional development. SMART (strategic, measureable, attainable, realistic, and timely) goals are generated after an extensive review of multiple sources of data. Hansen Elementary was the first building in the district to implement SMART goals in both academic and culture areas. Multiple data points are utilized to derive the goals, such as: standardized assessment results, formative assessment results, culture surveys, Professional Learning Community surveys, Harris Poll Surveys, summative assessment results, and observational data. Hansen progress monitors these goals and adjusts them based on student needs.

Cedar Falls Community Schools practices distributed leadership, so we provide opportunities for teachers to play a key role in the adoption of new learning. We promote teacher leaders by empowering them to be part of the design, learning, and revising of action plans. Teachers sit on committees in all curricular areas that help guide decision making. Consequently, our leadership is job embedded and teachers learn by doing! Teachers are afforded the opportunity to learn from other teachers, district officials, the building principal as well as nationally known speakers that have been invited by the district.

Over the course of the past two years, there has been a concerted effort to ensure that professional development for using technology to enhance student learning is accessible to all teachers. All teachers are supported in their implementation of new learning through the BTIL (Building Technology Implementation Leaders) committee members, teacher librarians, and coordinators of instructional services and technology integration. The goal for all students is to move beyond being consumers of apps to becoming creators, collaborators, critical thinkers, and communicators.

The continuous improvement process is the foundation of learning at Hansen. Understanding the need to continuously research best practice, review data, create goals, execute/implement plans with fidelity, and monitor results to modify the plan is critical to the success of our school. We do not have all the answers, but we are constantly willing to learn new things, share ideas, and try!

4. School Leadership:

The Hansen Principal's philosophy of leadership focuses around the Iowa Standards for School Leaders. Visionary: The principal has built a shared vision.

with Hansen stakeholders. Instructional: The principal is an instructional leader who has a deep understanding of the Core, pedagogy, and instructional practices. Specifically, the Hansen principal excels at providing focused, engaging Professional Development and individual coaching with teachers. Management: The Principal understands that while the instructional leadership of a principal is critical to the success of the school, the day to day managerial tasks cannot be neglected. The school must run smoothly, teachers need resources, and the environment must be one where safety comes first in order to meet the fullest potential of the organization. Family and Community: The principal works hard to establish a culture where everyone's input is valued, including Hansen families and the Cedar Falls community.

Although there are a number of events that have already been detailed, the principal's open door policy is most notable. There is an open invitation for parents and community members to discuss their questions, concerns, and celebrations. Political: The principal and school district work with outside agencies to promote and better the Cedar Falls system. The principal serves as a Cedar Falls Community School District representative on a number of district and community committees. Ethical: Ethical leadership is the glue that holds everything together. Making sound, student-first decisions is the daily goal of Hansen's principal. The principal's yearly goals are focused around these six Iowa Standards for School Leaders in coordination with the data devised from a yearly survey given to staff regarding the principal's performance in relation to these standards.

As described earlier, a distributed leadership framework is utilized throughout the district. Hansen Elementary has a Building Leadership Team that supports the work of the district. This team is utilized in multiple capacities. They have attended PLC trainings, which they then bring back to train staff with. They work to analyze student achievement data and help to create building SMART goals based on that data. Teacher leaders are developed and utilized to support beginning teachers through our mentoring program. In addition, teacher leaders work with other teachers through peer coaching and informal discussions.

This school encompasses collective efficacy. The principal, the teachers, and support staff work to achieve the school's vision and are steadfast in their dedication to providing every student exceptional learning opportunities.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Without hesitation, Professional Learning Communities is the single practice that has been the most influential in Hansen’s success. Professional Learning Communities or PLC is an ongoing process in which educators work together in collective inquiry to achieve better results. The three big ideas, collaborative culture, focus on learning, and focus on results, is the foundation to this process. Our school board has made the commitment to this work by not only dismissing school early, but by also writing this into policy.

An hour per week is set aside for collaborative teams to collaborate and focus on learning by answering these ongoing questions: What do we want our students to know? How will we know they learned? How will we respond if students do not learn? How will we respond if students have mastered the learning? This empowers our teachers to fully understand the Core curriculum, assessment results and data to guide instruction, and meeting individual needs through intervention and enrichment. Our SMART goal work and MTSS framework fits seamlessly into the structure that Professional Learning Communities has provided our building.

Our student achievement trend (Iowa Assessment) would support this theory as we have decreased the number of students below proficiency and have increased the number of students above proficiency. This would support the individualized learning concept and intervention framework that is in place.

Although our enrollment data has increased, our Special Education numbers have decreased in Cedar Falls. We believe this to be, in part, because of the implementation of Professional Learning Communities in our district. One of the four critical questions is to ask, “How will we respond if students do not learn?” Hansen responds through our systematic intervention and enrichment framework, MTSS, thus general education students are receiving more support through intervention and are less likely to be over-identified for special education services.

Recently Iowa released a school report card where Hansen Elementary reached the highest recognition. Hansen was identified as exceptional in review of several categories. This is a direct result of the learning that has taken place in our building surrounding the PLC process. Teachers often say they know their students better than ever before. I am confident this is because of the extensive understanding they have of this process. This has shaped our culture and it is now a culture of learning where every educator is committed to high levels of learning for each and every student.