

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Judith A Tegreeny

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

Official School Name Vera Ralya Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5645 School Street

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

City Haslett State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 48840

County Ingham County

Telephone (517) 339-8202 Fax (517) 339-7359

Web site/URL http://haslett.k12.mi.us E-mail tegreeja@haslett.k12.mi.us

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*Mr. Michael Duda E-mail dudamc@haslett.k12.mi.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Haslett Public Schools Tel. (517) 339-8242

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 Mrs. Kristin Beltzer
(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):
- 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	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	44	51	95
3	55	51	106
4	48	62	110
5	47	63	110
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	194	227	421

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 91 % White
 - 0 % 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	11
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	421
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.043
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
16 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 24 %
Total number students who qualify: 102

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
47 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.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>12</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>16</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>32</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>7</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 16
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	16
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals	9
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 26:1

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	93%	95%	96%	96%
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.

Ralya learners improve tomorrow by learning today in a safe and engaging environment. We set goals, are kind team players and responsible decision makers.

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

In the spring of each year the Schools of Choice window is open for about 6 weeks during the month of May and June. The window closes in mid-June. The number of openings at each grade level is determined by the number of current students enrolled and the number of classroom sections at each grade level. The names of the students at each grade level are put in a lottery and a drawing is held to put the requests in priority order. Families are notified by the principal and given until the end of June to accept their placement. If families do not accept their placement and an opening is created the next person on the list will be offered the placement.

PART III – SUMMARY

The Eagles of Vera Ralya Elementary are “Improving Tomorrow by Learning Today” in academics, behavior and social interactions. As a community of learners, we are “Goal Setters, Team Players and Kind to All” in the classroom, on the playground, and throughout our school community.

Vera Ralya Elementary, originally called Central School, is located in Haslett, Michigan. Haslett is a suburban community located 10 miles from the State Capitol in Lansing. Haslett is a high achieving school district of approximately 2700 responsible, respectful students with committed and actively involved families.

Ralya was built in 1950 with eight classrooms, administrative offices, a kitchen and a multi-purpose/gym/cafeteria. Due to increasing enrollment, in 1954, an additional eight classrooms were added. At that time, the name was changed from Central School to Vera Ralya Elementary School in honor of the District’s director of Elementary Instruction. Further renovations were made to the building in 1976, 1995 and most recently in 2004 when a science project lab, an updated library, and playground improvements were added.

In 1997, the Haslett School District reorganized its elementary schools to include an Early Childhood Center and two second through fifth grade elementary schools. Ralya is one of the second through fifth grade schools with a population of 421 students; it is a Title One school with four sections of each grade. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the students attending Ralya qualify for either free or reduced lunch and twenty-five percent (25%) of the students are Schools of Choice. The majority of our students are Caucasian, with a small percentage of Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific, American Indian and Black. In addition 4% of our students are English Language Learners and approximately 11% have Individual Education Plans.

The Ralya staff is dedicated to providing a quality learning environment for all students to reach their fullest potential, preparing students to be college and career ready. In 2008, the Leadership team noticed performance on state assessments had reached a plateau in the core academic areas of reading and math. They explored a variety of professional development opportunities for staff which could lead to improved school climate and higher levels of student achievement. The Professional Development selected included: Responsive Classroom and Failure is Not an Option. In addition the staff participated in Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi), designed to assist schools develop Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS).

The impact of the Responsive Classroom philosophy, along with training in Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS), helped teachers and paraprofessionals consider student behavior in a different way. Behavior expectations and routines are explicitly taught to students and reminders are posted around the building. Routines are reviewed and practiced when expectations are not consistently met. This has resulted in improved student behavior and an increase in time on task.

The MiBLSi training helped staff implement the “Failure Is Not an Option” philosophy; meeting the learning needs of ALL students. Ralya implemented a block schedule including a 90-minute reading block, 60-minute instructional time for mathematics and a 30-minute targeted intervention time for struggling students. Common planning and collaboration time was also carved into our teachers schedules. MiBLSi training also led the staff to redesign Title I support for students with the inclusion of a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) using researched evidenced-based interventions.

We have a full-time interventionist who meets with grade-level teachers to review reading and math data minimally five times annually. Screening data and formative assessments determine student learning needs in reading and mathematics throughout the year. These learning needs include acceleration, as well as, supplemental support.

The staff also evaluated the core curriculums in Math, English Language Arts and Science with grade level partners from the district’s elementary schools. This evaluation, lead the district to adopt researched-based

programs aligned to recommended State of Michigan standards.

Ralya families, along with staff ensure student success in both academics and social-emotional areas. Parents are classroom and school event volunteers, accompany students on study trips and attend Goal-Setting conferences. In addition to parent support, Ralya enjoys community support through immersion learning at Impression 5 Science Center, Meridian Historical Village, a local farm, the Michigan Historical Museum and the DARE program. Parent-teacher partnerships promote other traditional activities that ensure student success such as: Science, Art and Mathematics Nights, Mileage Club, Music Concerts and Parent Instructional Nights.

We are proud of our accomplishments. Ralya is ranked in the 93rd percentile by the state of Michigan on the Top-Bottom list for student achievement and met all proficiency targets on Michigan's School Report Card (2015). Ralya fourth graders were distinguished as "Academic State Champions" by Bridge Magazine for their reading achievement on the Michigan Education Achievement Test (2010). In addition, the Michigan Department of Education recognized Ralya for "significant growth in proficiency as a Title One School in ELA and Mathematics". Another point of pride among the Ralya community is the fact that 90% of our students reached benchmark in reading and math by the end of the 2015 school year.

Ralya Elementary is committed to improving tomorrow by learning today. Our traditions, data-driven decisions, relationships with parents and community stakeholders, as well as, dedicated staff, are embedded in our culture.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Ralya's core curriculum is rigorous and aligned to Michigan's Common Core Standards in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. We have high expectations for all students to succeed and meet their needs through researched evidenced-based best practices. We pride ourselves on staying current with the most effective, cohesive instructional techniques. With growth mindset at the forefront, we are always adjusting how to teach the standards to meet student needs.

After implementing the MiBLSi training and researching a 90-minute reading block for all K-5 students, we chose Pearson's Reading Street program. It is aligned to the standards and provides direct, explicit instruction in the five areas of reading; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Daily instruction offers students opportunities to read and interact with engaging texts across a variety of genres. Comprehension strategies and skills spiral continuously to build upon the strong foundations set in previous units. Students are given common assessments at each grade level every six weeks. Teachers use this data, along with DIBELS screening data to differentiate instruction, creating instructional groups at student instructional levels. Online access also allows further practice of concepts and can be set to individual levels assuring that students are working at their instructional level. In addition, teachers utilize book clubs to engage, excite, and expose students to a variety of quality literature.

Aligned with the state standards, our writing curriculum units are organized by genre. Students are taught the writing process of brainstorm/plan, draft, edit/revise, and publish. After a yearlong study of best practice, curriculum maps were developed to include writing practices from Lucy Calkins and 6+1 Writing Traits. We also implemented the Four Square writing method, providing students with a consistent writing organizational tool. Opportunities for students to write with purpose abound. Students respond to writing prompts, write on demand within a given time limit, and communicate new ideas.

Our math curriculum requires students to learn strategies for problem solving in both computation and real-world applications. We teach using the strategies of McGraw Hill's Everyday Math (EDM-4) program. Our commitment is long running; allowing teachers to truly become experts in teaching mathematics in a logical sequence. Teachers utilize several instructional methods to accommodate different learning styles to help students achieve; large group, small group centers with differentiated activities, manipulatives, academic games, and web-based tools. Teachers intentionally teach problem-solving strategies where students are required to solve problems by constructing written and oral responses to explain their thinking. We updated to the EDM-4 in 2015 which includes an online component allowing students to watch tutorials, access homework, practice concepts through games at school and at home. Student achievement is monitored closely through formative and summative assessments to offer intervention and re-teaching experiences promptly, as well as challenge our highest achievers with cross-grade level curriculum.

With the adoption of the Next Generation Science standards, it became evident that we needed to evaluate our science instructional program. We were not satisfied with our science scores on standardized assessments and felt we needed to change our instructional approach. After a few programs were piloted, we adopted Bring Science Alive! by Teachers' Curriculum Institute (TCi). This program engages students in critical thinking, problem solving, communicating ideas, and reflecting on their learning and it aligns with many pieces of informational text in our reading program. Teachers differentiate the mode of instruction based on their students' previous knowledge of using scientific text, hands-on investigations, or multimedia presentations. In the spring, students demonstrate their knowledge of the scientific process by developing and presenting Science Fair projects. Students also participate in multi-day immersion study trips to deepen their scientific understanding.

Our district-developed Social Studies curriculum is resource-based and aligned to the Michigan standards. Students study history, civics, culture, geography and economics as related to the local community, state, country, and global community. Students participate in project-based learning activities such as: Kid Town, Elections, and Government Day. Citizenship skills are practiced on a daily basis. Students have the

opportunity to be school leaders by being morning announcers, Safeties, Junior LINKs. They give back to the community by holding a food drive for the local food bank and participate in the development of classroom and school rules. Immersion study trips along with current event discussions help Ralya students understand their civic responsibilities.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Ralya, all students, grades two through five, participate in a variety of enrichment classes on an eight-day rotation. These creative arts classes include: Art, Music, Physical Education, Technology, Spanish, Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling. These classes engage the multiple intelligences, allow for teamwork, make connections to core curriculum, and allow students to develop a long-term relationship with the teachers.

The students at each grade level have two, one-hour Art classes during the eight-day rotation. Students engage in a multitude of activities that involve not only creating artwork, but also the study of famous artists and a variety of artistic styles. Students begin the year by determining goals. They bring them to life creatively, and display them as a constant and beautiful reminder of what they would like to achieve during the school year. Second grade students learn foundational drawing and painting skills. These skills are applied to create colorful, visual art posters that advertise Art Night; a community event celebrating the arts. Third grade students participate in a poster contest giving them an authentic audience for their artwork. In fourth grade, a photography project brings together art, technology, and the science curriculum. Fifth grade students create art that connects too many aspects of social studies. The clay tile project, representing a student's heritage, is a school tradition. These tiles are displayed prominently throughout the building. Former students enjoy coming back to see their tile displayed as a part of Ralya's history.

Music provides students with an opportunity to learn about different cultures through music and dance. Each grade level has four, 30-minute Music classes in the eight-day rotation. Students learn traditional American folk songs, dances and song from other cultures, and learn to play a variety of instruments. Concerts are performed during the year by each grade level providing students with an opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned for family and friends. Performance pieces are selected based on alignment with core curriculum.

Each grade level has four, 30-minute Physical Education classes in the eight-day rotation. The focus of Physical Education is to expose the students to physical activities that can become lifelong pastimes, help establish a healthy lifestyle at a young age, and encourage cooperation. Community members are invited into class sessions to serve as expert teachers and demonstrate how certain skills have helped them remain active as adults. Students also have the opportunity to establish healthy habits by participating in a field day each year. Field Day is a celebration of skills learned throughout the year and brings together students and parent volunteers from both elementary schools in the district. Cooperation is a daily theme as students learn how to work as a team and demonstrate good sportsmanship.

Technology is used by students on a daily basis. They also have an instructional Technology class for one, one-hour session every eight days. Students learn basic programs and keyboarding, develop critical thinking skills, use technology to solve problems and make decisions, and learn to be good digital citizens by being safe, responsible, and respectful online. At each grade level, students apply their technology skills to complete cross-curricular projects that demonstrate their learning.

The students spend two, 30-minute classes in the eight-day rotation learning Spanish. In addition to conversational Spanish, students learn about the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries around the world, providing them with a global perspective on issues that impact elementary age students. By the time students have completed fifth grade they have been taught the Spanish words for numbers 1 to 1,000, colors, parts of the body, days of the week, months, seasons and weather, words to express emotions, common greetings, classroom objects, how to tell time, sports, food, clothing, and the question words.

Finally, Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling allows ALL students at Ralya to spend one, 30-minute class every eight days with the school guidance counselor. During this time, students learn about how to be

good citizens by being respectful, compassionate, empathetic, and assertive. They engage in role-playing activities and discuss real-life situations in which these traits are applied. Fourth grade students also have a unique opportunity to meet individuals from our community who come in to discuss their careers.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Seven years ago, Ralya launched the Response to Intervention (RtI) by implementing a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Our school-wide approach funded by Title I allows us to meet the needs of our diverse learners. All students are part of the Tier 1 instruction which includes a core reading (Pearson Reading Street) and math (Everyday Math-4) program, as well as differentiated small group lessons determined by assessment data to meet the unique needs of each student. Teachers utilize engagement strategies during whole group instruction such as pair-share, choral responses, individual whiteboards, and response cards. Responsive Classroom strategies are used to promote social and emotional growth. Positive behavior supports provide school-wide routines and expectations to promote a positive learning environment. Technology integration with Chromebooks, iPads, and the SMART Board, engages all students in learning through various modalities.

Tier 2 students receive core instruction and interventions provided by our full-time literacy/math interventionist based on their individual needs. Using the MTSS model, all students are screened using DIBELS for reading and AIMSWeb for math. Each grade level utilizes several data days each year to analyze the data from screeners, as well as classroom academic and behavioral data. The data days provide an opportunity for staff to collaborate on a variety of topics, including sharing strategies to meet the needs of their intensive students in the classroom, as well as those who are performing well above benchmark. Students receiving intervention support meet four-five times a week. Group time ranges from 20 - 30 minutes for Tier 2 and 30 - 55 minutes for Tier 3 groups. The primary evidenced-based intervention programs are research based and include: Read Naturally GATE Phonics, Read Naturally LIVE, Phonics for Reading, REWARDS, My Sidewalks, and Quick Reads. The skills emphasized in these programs include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency and comprehension. In math, Ralya uses the Everyday Math intervention components as well as Connecting Math and Math PALS.

At Ralya, MTSS does not end with the school day. We are committed to empowering families to actively participate in their child's learning. A webpage has been designed for parents to see core curriculum and interventions offered to students, along with links to many resources. Multiple opportunities are provided for parents to attend training sessions to learn about interventions and how to implement these with their child. The MTSS initiative has been serving our students well.

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

Ralya staff recognizes the importance of consistently collecting and using formative data to make academic decisions and drive instruction. Students are assessed in all academic areas throughout the year. Classroom teachers administer formative and summative assessments in the four core areas of instruction. Benchmark testing for reading and math is completed three times a year. The results are analyzed in grade level teams at data day meetings in the fall, winter and spring. These results help the team determine the need for student acceleration or intervention.

Our data teams consist of the classroom teachers, the interventionist, principal, school psychologist and special education teacher. The process in place for selecting interventions and/or enrichment opportunities is based on assessment data. The grade level data team meets to review progress, plan interventions, and share strategies to meet the instructional needs of students at all tiers. The DIBELSnet pathways of progress reports, the grade level reports, and the classroom benchmark assessments help teachers monitor which students are making adequate progress and which programs are most successful. For students who are not making adequate progress, a Child Study Team is available to help the parent and teacher further problem solve learning needs. This information also determines who needs to participate in the summer intervention program; Summer Learning Institute and student placement for the next school year.

Ralya teachers are part of the MTSS team- from teaching interventions to progress monitoring, to having

conversations with students about their goals. Tier 2 and Tier 3 students are monitored weekly and results are shared with the teacher. Every four weeks the data teams meet to analyze student progress and make decisions regarding changes in intervention program, group size, provider, or time. Students are made aware of their individualized reading goals; engaging in weekly conversations. Benchmark assessment scores, progress monitoring scores, and interventions are explained to parents at Goal-Setting Conferences. The interventionist schedules conferences and individual parent training, as well as includes progress reports with report cards to help parents see their child's progress.

We are fortunate to have excellent teachers for students with autism spectrum disorder, cognitive impairments, emotional impairments and learning disabilities who collaborate with general education teachers to provide instruction and intervention. This Tier 3 data team, consisting of the special education teachers, school psychologist, principal and interventionist, analyze benchmark results, progress monitoring data, IEP goals and curriculum assessments. They use the data to adjust interventions based on individual needs to continue to close the achievement gap for our special education subgroup.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

It is hard to miss the positive, friendly atmosphere at Ralya Elementary. Upon first entering, one hears soft music playing in the halls and finds a large photo display showcasing the celebrations of our students and classrooms. Walking through the halls, one is greeted by the warm, friendly faces of teachers and staff. Teachers stop to give hugs or ask about a student's day. Displays of student work line the hallways and one often finds someone complimenting the children responsible for creating such pieces.

Every Monday morning, staff and students gather as a school to celebrate our "Bravo Award" winners, upcoming birthdays, achievements in the classroom and outside of school, to share news, and sing our Ralya School Song. On Wednesdays, we start our mornings walking together as a school to get our blood pumping and enjoy friendly conversation before the day begins. Every Friday, we watch our morning announcements presented in a news show format with special segments celebrating student achievements from the week. We also enjoy a picture slideshow of the smiling faces of our school family learning and growing. Every morning, teachers use the Responsive Classroom morning meeting model to start the day with a greeting, sharing, an activity, and a message. Once a month, students from each grade level meet together with their Eagle Time group to get to know one another and enjoy a school related activity.

Family members of our students are welcomed into our school as support for teachers and students on a daily basis. Behavior expectations are taught in the same way to all students and are posted throughout the school as a reminder. Teachers employ a variety of strategies to keep students engaged. Technology is integrated throughout the day and across all subjects.

Teachers use differentiated lessons and station work throughout the day and students are grouped by ability level during our TAG time (Targeted Achievement Groups) to focus on specific reading strategies. Communication and collaboration are key to teacher success at Ralya Elementary. Block scheduling allows a common planning time for grade-level teams. New teachers are mentored by veteran teachers. Teachers learn from, support, offer feedback, and praise one another during teacher walk-throughs. The teacher's lounge is often filled with staff members laughing, sharing celebrations, or offering words of advice. A photo board in the lounge displays the families of staff enjoying fun times together.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Ralya is a school where teachers, staff, students, families, and the community unite as one. We work together to benefit the education and well-being of students and in return, the staff, students, and families work together to help our community. One way we engage our families is by participating in Goal Setting Conferences twice a year to review academic, behavior, and social progress. During conferences, families and teachers collaborate to set goals and determine strategies for reaching their goals.

One of our most successful events, Race for Ralya, brings together over 400 members of our community for a morning full of fitness and camaraderie. We also host other successful community events throughout the year to support our core curriculum and share learning strategies. At Math Night, families participate in a variety of math activities that prove how exciting and useful math can be. Art Night encourages students and families to participate in various activities while enjoying an evening full of creativity. Science Night showcases our students, who display their projects based on the scientific process and engages families in activities such as dissecting an eye, interacting with animals, and exploring outer space through a telescope.

Community groups not only participate in our school activities, but also help us meet the needs of our students in other ways. A local church donates knitted hats and mittens each year. The Weekend Backpack program provides meals for students to take home. A local family invites the second graders to their personal farm for a day filled with hands-on agricultural learning. Sparrow Hospital sponsors our annual Mileage Club, a seven-week recess fitness program. Consumers Energy representatives teach our fourth graders about energy efficiency. Parents, family members, and Haslett High School students are often

found throughout our school tutoring and mentoring students.

We want all students to feel loved and supported and also remind them of the importance of giving back. Second graders go to a senior citizen center to sing holiday songs and distribute holiday cards. Our school holds a food drive each year to help fill the Haslett Food Bank. Open House, Curriculum Night, Title I Parent Nights, End of the Year Picnics, Music Concerts, the DARE program, the Mobile Dentist, Classroom Parties, March is Reading Month activities and guest readers, Family Mileage Club Nights, and Field Days all engage the community and contribute to the success of our students.

3. Professional Development:

Ralya Elementary staff embraces our school motto: “Improving Tomorrow by Learning Today.” This motto guides classroom practice as it applies to students, as well as to our staff as learners. The educational staff at Ralya views themselves as adaptive experts and, as such, is engaged in continuous professional development focused on student achievement. We use multiple-source data including professional development needs, staff and parent surveys, student performance data, and current educational research.

With purposeful professional development, Ralya staff assesses the impact of instruction on student achievement and, from the evidence of this impact; we strive to improve student learning and engagement by adapting our approach to instruction. With the advent of the Common Core State Standards, the Ralya staff has worked hard to ensure alignment between our district’s curriculum and the new standards. By engaging in thoughtful discourse, both within our building staff and the greater district staff, Ralya teachers have adapted to these new standards and learned how to best meet learner needs while ensuring the standards are met. After analyzing the standards, we have adopted curricular materials which are closely aligned with the standards and, through content-area professional learning communities, have developed supplemental materials to improve alignment and best address the needs of our students.

In recent years, our staff has engaged in professional learning based on Visible Learning (John Hattie), Growth Mindset (Carolyn Dweck), Engagement Strategies and Teachers Learning Together (Kevin Feldman), Response to Interventions (George Batsche), Thinking Dispositions (Arthur Costa), Explicit Instruction (Anita Archer), Failure Is Not an Option (Alan Blankstein), and Teaching Children to Care (Ruth Charney). As we strive to make an impact on student achievement, teacher leaders attend conferences and workshops through the Ingham ISD, or other professional organizations. Several Ralya staff members have led district-wide professional development sessions, as well as building-centered sessions. Additionally, several cohorts of Ralya staff members have engaged in book studies. For example, this past summer, one group read the book *Dispositions: Reframing Teaching and Learning*, by Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick. Using Google Groups, the participants compiled their collective thoughts about each chapter. This fall participants brought their ideas about teaching thinking dispositions back to the rest of the staff and facilitated professional development centered on the dispositions. The Ralya staff truly believes that we are improving tomorrow for our students by learning about best practices for instruction today.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership is a shared responsibility in our school community, from administration, support staff, teachers, students, and parents. We have high expectations for student success and maintain a relentless focus on improving teaching and learning in our building.

Our principal sets the direction for our school by maintaining a focused vision of student achievement and keeping our improvement goals at the forefront of our daily operations. She has established a strong foundation upon which we base our educational program, an infrastructure that provides consistency, promotes constant collaboration and teacher development. For example, our school has operated for several years with block scheduling that allows for an hour of common planning time for each grade level team daily. Teachers collaborate as a grade-level to develop and deliver programming that best meets the academic and social-emotional needs of our students.

Our principal serves on the building leadership team, alongside the intervention specialist and teacher leaders from each grade level. This team meets monthly to plan professional development opportunities, evaluate progress toward our school improvement goals, and analyze data to determine appropriate actions to improve programming and curriculum. Our leadership team members are experts at analyzing assessment data and determining appropriate interventions and support based on needs of individuals as well as groups of children.

Leadership opportunities abound at Ralya, where we value our inclusive environment. Teachers and support staff understand that their perspective is valued and appreciated and that each of us brings valuable experiences to our roles as leaders. An overwhelming sense of community permeates at Ralya, a testament to the leadership of its staff. Families have opportunities to connect with the school through events such as Art Night, Science Fair, Math Night, the Race for Ralya 5K, Food Drive, and Study Trips. Through such events, we engage staff, parents, and other community members as leaders; relying on their expertise and organizational abilities in planning and facilitating these events.

Student leaders are engaged in these various events as volunteers and leaders of activities. In addition, students have opportunities to serve in leadership roles through groups such as Jr. LINKS, creating a morning tutoring program and our school Safety Patrol program. Student leaders are role models who follow-through and care about their peers at Ralya.

From our students to our principal, we embrace the concept of shared leadership. Leadership at Ralya has one purpose -- to inspire greatness in each other.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The indicators of student academic success at Ralya are summed up in the lyrics of our school song; sung every Monday by students and staff. “Ralya is a wonderful place to learn, there’s a friend at every turn, we’re here to grow, we’re here to see, just how great a school can be, R-A-L-Y-A Elementary. It’s a school where everyone really matters, it’s a school where Eagles learn to soar, it’s a school where everyone works together, a school where everybody does much more to make Ralya a wonderful place to learn.”

Ralya puts children first by focusing on the whole child. From using Responsive Classroom and PBIS to anchor our social-emotional expectations; to aligning our curriculum, assessments, and interventions to the Common Core; to creating a sense of community with parents, students and teachers, Ralya staff understands the impact that a supportive and caring environment has on student success.

As the foundation for our school culture, staff understands that the social-emotional needs of our students are as important as academic learning. By creating an environment where behavior expectations are taught, modeled and used daily, students know what to expect, and understand that Ralya expectations are in place to show we care about each other, and put students’ safety and security first.

Aligning curriculum, assessments and interventions to the Common Core is another factor in putting our children first. We continually make necessary changes in our curriculum to reflect the rigor and demand of the Common Core. Updating and aligning core curriculum is a group effort, with the continual focus of doing what is best for all tiers of students. Designing and choosing assessments that reflect the academic expectations of students is a process that Ralya staff values. Selecting appropriate, research-based interventions for students in Tier 2 and Tier 3, and teaching these interventions with fidelity is another example of how Ralya values the importance of meeting the individual needs of every student.

Creating a sense of community among parents, students and teachers is the final component of what truly makes Ralya a school that puts children first. Parents and community members volunteer in our school each day. Children are our top priority at Ralya Elementary: from meeting their social-emotional needs, to challenging everyone academically, to valuing a sense of community, to creating family partnerships. Ralya is a wonderful place to learn. We truly are improving tomorrow by learning today!