

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 [] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Scott Lempka

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

Official School Name Parker Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 500 School Street

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

City Elk River State MN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 55330-1341

County Sherburne County

Telephone (763) 241-3500 Fax (763) 241-3501

Web site/URL http://www.elkriver.k12.mn.us E-mail scott.lempka@isd728.org

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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

_____ Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Mark Bezek E-mail mark.bezek@isd728.org

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

District Name Elk River Area School District #728 Tel. (763) 241-3400

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 Ms. Holly Thompson

(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):
- 9 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

17 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	38	42	80
1	42	32	74
2	42	50	92
3	42	34	76
4	44	46	90
5	39	36	75
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	247	240	487

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 85 % White
 - 6 % 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: 11%

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	24
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	30
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	54
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	503
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.107
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
14 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 30 %
Total number students who qualify: 152

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
75 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>1</u> Deafness | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>33</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Mental Retardation | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>5</u> Developmentally Delayed |

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	20
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.	3

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

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	95%	96%	96%	96%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

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

Yes No X

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

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

Parker's mission is to create respectful, lifelong learners and thinkers.

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

1. Parker Elementary School is located in Elk River, MN and is part of Elk River Area School District #728. Elk River, MN is a suburb of Minneapolis with a population of approximately 23,000 residence. Elk River Area schools services approximately 13,000 students in grades K-12 and consists of 9 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, 3 high schools and one middle/high school serving students in grades 6-12. Parker Elementary is a K-5 Title I school with 30% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

2. Parker Elementary has had a strong tradition of academic success and community/family support. Despite having one of the highest percentages of students living below the poverty line in Elk River Area Schools, Parker has consistently led the district and state with regard to state Math and Reading assessment scores. Evidence of this is the fact that Parker was named a "Celebration School" by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) in both 2012 and again in 2013. In 2015, Parker was named by MDE as a "Reward School" for scoring among the top 15% of schools in the state who receive Title I funding. We were the only school in our district to receive this honor. In 2015, 89.6% of Parker Elementary students reached proficiency on the grade 3-5 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) for Mathematics, up from 84.2% the year prior. This place Parker Elementary 29.4% above the state average. Similarly, in 2015 87.7% of Parker students reached proficiency on the grade 3-5 Reading MCA, up from 74.9% the previous year. This was 28.2% above the statewide average.

Parker traditions include our annual Fall Carnival and winter Family Fun Night. In addition to these, Parker holds curriculum nights in the fall at each level with a goal of helping families better support their children academically. We also hold Title I Math and Reading nights that focus on strategies for reading with your child and building number sense at home. Parker has a devoted Parent Advisory Council as well as two part time Parent Liaisons. We leverage these groups to establish positive support from volunteers within our families and community.

3. Parker staff members have committed to meeting in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) a minimum of two times per month. PLCs are the framework our grade levels use to discuss students learning. In PLCs, staff members analyze student progress monitoring data, plan standards-specific core instruction, and design Tier II and Tier III interventions for students who need additional support. Interventions and supports are monitored and adjusted frequently based on student progress. We also conduct Data Days three times per year. During these Data Days, substitute time is provided so the school principal, Intervention Teacher, Title I Teachers, Special Education and grade level teachers collaborate to look at benchmark data and ensure supports are in place for struggling as well as accelerated learners. For the past number of years, Parker has applied for and received full time Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) tutors. MRC tutors provide research-proven reading interventions to at risk students in grades K-3. District-wide data has proven this to be an effective program to help ensure all students read well by 3rd grade.

The emotional and social needs of students are supported through one full time and one part time school social worker as well as a part time behavior interventionist. Our social workers provide large group instruction on positive social/behavior skills and also meet with individuals or small groups to support the ever changing emotional needs of the school. Parker is also a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) school. PBIS provides a framework for creating a three tier system of behavior support. PBIS relies on teaching and modeling desired behaviors for kids and recognizing them when they use positive behaviors. PBIS is part of our school-wide behavior and discipline plan. At Parker, we have also created a Tier II Attendance Team who meets monthly to review attendance data and work proactively with families to ensure students attend school regularly.

Parker has a part time Cultural Liaison who provides support to staff and students. This liaison provides staff provides staff with cultural competence resources and professional development. She also meets with students in many capacities including cultural clubs, in class lessons, and family nights that celebrate the cultures represented in our school and district.

Parker also has a Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program. This is a volunteer program aimed at

increasing the involvement of fathers, grandfathers, and other male role models within the school. Watch DOGS volunteers have become an integral part of our school culture. These individuals help monitor hallways and exits for safety, assist with supervision during lunch/recess and provide tutoring and academic support as well.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Reading/English Language Arts:

As part of Elk River Area School District, Parker Elementary School utilizes the Treasures curriculum for Reading/Language Arts. This curriculum provides a balance of whole-group instruction paired with guided reading instruction in smaller, leveled text groups. In this way, all students interact with developmentally-appropriate text to build a foundation of strong reading skills, deep comprehension strategies and critical thinking about text. Our core curriculum also ensures students experience a variety of writing, text genres, and language models. Our curriculum includes key components of literacy development including direct instruction for essential decoding and comprehension strategies, phonics and word work, vocabulary development, grammar and spelling. Teacher leaders along with district Teaching and Learning Department staff have created a defined scope and sequence for reading instruction that identifies power standards embedded within each unit of study. This year, teachers at Parker Elementary have taken this one step further to identify essential "promise" standards. These essential standards are the focus of our Tier II interventions. Teachers at Parker meet every two weeks in grade-level Professional Learning Communities (PLC) teams to review assessment data and plan for Tier II interventions. In addition to this, PLC teams meet after Fall and Winter assessment periods to review benchmark data and ensure interventions as well as enrichment are provided to identified students. At risk students receive additional reading support through Title I staff, and a building Intervention Teacher as well as Minnesota Reading Corps tutors who service students in grades K-3. PLCs are also used to identify students for these more intensive, Tier III interventions.

Mathematics:

Elk River Area School District utilizes the Math in Focus curriculum for elementary mathematics instruction. This curriculum is based on the Singapore method of mathematics instruction which places heavy emphasis on students being able to reason mathematically and explain their mathematical reasoning. We chose this curriculum because it is research proven and high in academic rigor. The philosophy of Singapore math is not just on understanding how to find the answer using an algorithm, but also understanding the why behind it. In this way, students are able to "mathematize" or apply mathematical thinking to solve new and different problems. Core math instruction at Parker is provided in heterogeneous groups, allowing students of all abilities to hear and participate in sound mathematical discussion. In some grade levels, additional instruction is provided in more homogeneous readiness groups that allow teachers to better tailor instruction to the individual needs of the student. Teacher leaders along with district Teaching and Learning staff have worked to provide pacing guides that identify power standards and guide year-long implementation of the curriculum. Again, Parker staff have worked together to understand the state standards more deeply and to identify essential "Promise" standards for each grade level. These essential standards are used to inform and drive the development of Tier II and Tier III intervention groups.

Science:

In Elk River Area School District #728 as well as at Parker Elementary School, we believe that science is a hands-on active process where students learn by doing. Our desire is that students pose questions, make observations, and think critically. For this reason, our district curriculum maps utilize a combination of FOSS kits and on-line tools like Science A-Z to provide students with hands-on science experiences that are closely tied to state standards. Our curriculum allows students to experience a mixture of physical science, life science and earth science.

Social Studies:

At Parker Elementary School, teachers aspire to be highly effective instructors who incorporate technology and inquiry-based, experiential learning to ensure that all students: 1. Grow in their critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills. 2. Understand their civic responsibilities at the local, state, national and global levels. 3. Make connections and see relevant relationships between the past, present and future. In an effort to align Social Studies curriculum as closely as possible with state standards, we utilize a variety of resources including Scott Foresman Social Studies text, relevant, high-quality children's

literature and online supplementary resources. These resources are written into district level curriculum maps for each grade level. In this way, we are able to tailor the curriculum to specific standards rather than relying on a single text. At Parker Elementary, our staff have gone out of their way to provide opportunities for students to live out their learning about civic duties by volunteering for Feed My Starving Children and fundraising for various charities including Pennies for Patients.

Early Education:

Research has demonstrated that high quality early learning experiences can close achievement gaps for at-risk children before they begin their K-12 careers. In Elk River Area Schools, a priority is made of ensuring all preschool children have access to rich learning environments prior to their entrance into Kindergarten. Parker is fortunate to be part of a system that has a number of high quality, research-proven programs in place to support students as they transition to Kindergarten.

Prior to ever being enrolled at Parker, our district provides free Early Childhood Screening (ECS) to preschool children ages 3 and older. ECS can provide early detection of vision, hearing, speech and language, cognition, fine and gross motor and social and emotional issues. Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is also made available to families in Elk River Area School District. ECFE combines parent and early childhood education through classes, home visits and other services. ECFE enhances and supports parent competence through parent education and quality early learning environments for children birth to age 5. Fees are charged to participants, with provisions for fees to be reduced or waived based on need. School Readiness preschool provides preschool education for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds as well as parent education and involvement. There is the option of a more intensive (half-day programming for 4-5 days per week) for targeted at-risk 4-year olds with bus transportation included, all at no cost. Finally, in addition to the above programs, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) is provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 serving children ages birth through 6 with identified special needs. Children birth to age 2 are served through a home-based program. As children reach their third birthday, they transition into a center-based setting. Each of these programs is essential as they create a bridge for students to a successful introduction to Kindergarten at Parker Elementary. Through these programs, students have access to support for school readiness, academic support to learn prerequisite academic skills, and social/emotional support.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Specialist classes (Art, Music, PE, Media/Technology) are on a six day cycle. All students at Parker Elementary receive one hour of Art instruction per cycle. Students in primary grades K-2 receive two hours per six day cycle of Physical Education, two hours per cycle of Music instruction and 1 hour per cycle of Media/Technology. In the intermediate grades 3-5, students receive one and a half hours per cycle of Physical Education, one and a half hours per cycle of Music instruction and two hours per cycle of Media/Technology instruction. Healthy nutrition is included as a component of Physical Education instruction for all grade levels.

The K-5 Music Department of the Elk River Area School district believes that elementary music engages students in active learning and provides opportunities to explore and experience music through movement and sound. We utilize K-5 Making Music by Silver-Burdett. During elementary music instruction, Parker students attain and explore musical skills, develop cognitive and creative thinking, psychomotor skills and a knowledge of music as a universal language which connects history and fosters cultural competency. Through these essential experiences students gain a lifelong appreciation of music as well as the foundation for deeper vocal and instrumental instruction as they progress into middle and high school.

Our district's Art curriculum balances understanding of essential art elements with instruction focused on appreciation and response to art. Students have many opportunities during their K-5 career to create and display art as well as to critique art. Our district's scope and sequence ensures students experience balanced exposure to all art elements. Again, these experiences provide students the platform they need to pursue a deeper study of art as they enter middle and high school.

Technology/Media Literacy, students in grades K-5 receive instruction related to responsible digital

citizenship, research and information literacy as well as technology operations and concepts. These learnings are essential for students in our ever changing digital age. Students receive weekly, hands-on instruction using relevant technology including iPads and Chromebooks as well as desktop computers. Additionally our school has nearly 200 iPads as well as 120 Chromebooks available as a resource to students in the classroom environment. At Parker, rather than simply considering technology a class, it is woven into social studies and science curriculums as a resource that supplements and improves learning opportunities.

In addition to the Health instruction they receive through their Physical Education classes, students at Parker receive Health and Nutrition instruction from their classroom teachers. Our district's curriculum maps provide a comprehensive scope and sequence for health skills and topics taught during grades K - 5. At Parker Elementary, Health instruction focuses on each of the four elements of health: Physical, social, emotional and intellectual. In addition, students learn how to identify and choose healthy behaviors. Additionally, students in the primary grades receive instruction from the Second Steps curriculum focusing on healthy social/emotional development. This portion of our Health curriculum is taught by Parker's School Social Workers. Providing students in the primary grades with teaching for healthy social/emotional growth is essential because it ensures students will be able to access learning to their fullest potential as they reach higher grade levels.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

At Parker Elementary, our teachers are committed to meeting the diverse needs of all learners. The foundation of this work happens in our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers meet every other week to review relevant benchmark and progress monitoring data and to plan interventions for students who need both remediation as well as enrichment.

Strong core instruction is the foundation of an effective tiered instructional model. Our teachers use research-proven curriculum and balance whole group as well as need based readiness groupings to meet students individual learning needs. At Parker, we have designed our schedule to provide a 30 minute intervention block for every grade level. Title I staff as well as our building Intervention Teacher, ESL and Special Education staff are flooded into grade levels, joining classroom teachers during these intervention blocks. This allows us to provide small group Tier II and Tier III interventions to students who need them. This time is also utilized to serve students who are showing advanced skills with enrichment experiences so that all students are able to realize their full potential. For example, during an intervention block, Title staff may take students in groups of 3 to 4 to provide Leveled Literacy Intervention. Instructional assistants may supervise a group of students as they use an online resource such as IXL or Study Island to complete math or reading practice at their instructional level. Meanwhile, classroom teachers are able to form reduced-size groupings to provide extension to students who have mastered grade level material or to support students who need Tier II reteaching of grade level standards.

The administration at Parker Elementary provides teachers with substitute teachers three times per year so they can meet to review benchmark data. These "Data Days" occur after benchmark data is collected (fall, winter, spring) and are an invaluable resource. During these, grade level teachers are joined by Intervention, Title I, ESL and Special Education teachers. Established protocols for data driven dialogue are followed for reviewing the data and using it to drive future instructional decisions. Attention is given not only to students who are academically at risk, but those who have already mastered grade level expectations. In these cases, enrichment groupings are formed to allow the child to experience learning at their instructional level. Each Data Day ends with the creation of a spreadsheet noting the instructional supports provided across each grade level. This information allows us to evaluate how we serve students systemically and ensure no students are slipping through the cracks. After the Data Day, staff continue to monitor students during PLCs and make adjustments to instructional groupings and interventions.

Parker Elementary has applied for and received Minnesota Reading Corps and Minnesota Math Corps tutors through Americorps. These tutors focus on providing research proven, daily reading interventions to students in grades K-3 and math interventions to students in grades 4 and 5. The work of these tutors has been invaluable and the data has consistently shown that students who receive these services display desired gains year after year.

This year, our teachers spent PLC time focusing on identifying essential standards for each grade level in the areas of both Math and Reading. Teams are now using this information to drive the planning of their Tier II interventions, further ensuring that all students are provided the support they need to be academically successful.

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

Parker Elementary School completes math and reading benchmark testing three times per year fall, winter and spring. In recent years, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) data has been the assessment used. In 2015-2016, Parker and Elk River Area School District transitioned to using the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) which was developed by the University of Minnesota. These assessments provide teachers with data about students' letter recognition, phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and comprehension. Similarly, the mathematics portion of the assessment provides data on number identification and ability to compose/decompose numbers in the primary grades as well as computational automaticity and ability to carry out grade level appropriate mathematical processes in the intermediate grades. In addition to benchmark testing, grade levels also complete ongoing progress monitoring of students who are at risk. Teachers also utilize unit tests and teacher developed grade level assessments to monitor student progress as students learn various skills.

After each benchmark testing period in fall, winter and spring, building administration provides teachers with a half-day release from the classroom to review data and make instructional decisions. These "Data Days" involve Special Education, Title I and Intervention staff in addition to grade level teams. The building Intervention Teacher along with the building principal, lead staff through a data driven dialogue noting areas of perceived strength and areas for improvement. This process starts with each member of the team analyzing the data individually and noting trends or areas of interest. Next the group shares their findings together before transitioning to a discussion focused on possible factors causing or contributing to the noticed trends. Finally, as a last step, the team determines how we will respond. Informed by this data, discussions are held to determine changes to instruction. Staff members work together to form Tier II and Tier III and enrichment intervention groups based on specific student needs. For instance, while looking at Kindergarten benchmark data, the team noticed that there were students who were still struggling with letter identification while others struggled with letter sounds. This allowed the team to create instructional groupings to remediate these specific areas. Sometimes, the data leads staff to make changes in whole-group instruction if there is a perceived need affecting most students. The building principal has worked with grade level teams to design a schedule with 30 intervention blocks at each grade level. At Parker Elementary, we use this schedule to flood grade levels with Title I and Intervention support during their intervention times.

Assessment results are also used to provide parents/guardians with an accurate picture of their child's progress. During conferences held in the fall and winter, teachers share benchmark data and in some cases, progress monitoring data with parents. Teachers help parents to interpret the data and understand their child's academic strengths as well where they can help their child to improve. Teachers also use this time to share classroom assessments as evidence of the progress their child has made in class. This is made easier by the fact that Parker Elementary School utilizes a standards based report card which breaks subjects such as Math or Reading down into essential standards taught throughout the year. In this way, parents get a more accurate picture of their child's learning not just on the subject as a whole, but on individual skills and standards.

In 2015, Parker Elementary was named a "Reward School" by the Minnesota Department of Education. This was partially due to the fact that our scores for achievement gap reduction are among the best in the state. The scores the Minnesota Department of Education uses to determine Reward School status include ratings based upon overall proficiency, individual student growth from the previous year and achievement gap reduction. Not only did Parker Elementary receive a nearly perfect score, but we received 100% of the possible points for achievement gap reduction.

We are not taking our success for granted and have continued to move forward this year with improving on

our success in previous years. Specifically, we have increased the number of PLC meetings held each year. Within grade level PLC teams, staff at Parker have worked to determine essential "Promise Standards" for each grade level in the areas of reading and math. The goal is for these essential standards to drive intervention planning. Finally, Parker Elementary has applied for and been accepted to Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) cohort training. This means that over the next two years, a team of teacher leaders will attend training related to full implementation of school-wide PBIS practices to enhance desired behaviors and further improve the overall positive culture of our school.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The most effective way to engage and motivate students is through high-quality, engaging instruction. Parker Elementary teachers meet regularly in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to design, monitor and adjust instruction to meet students individual needs. Research proves that one of the most high yield strategies for engaging students and improving learning is involving students in tracking their own progress relative to learning goals. It is a common expectation at Parker that students be provided with student friendly learning targets. Teachers at Parker use these targets to engage students in monitoring their own learning progress. In many cases, staff meet with students to set goals related to the learning targets and celebrate with them when students have been successful.

Parker Elementary School has also taken steps to implement Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies building-wide. As part of PBIS, staff and administration at Parker have worked together to identify positive, desired behaviors for each of the key areas of the school including the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, recess, etc. Because the Parker mascot is the puma, we have named these positive behaviors "Puma Pride". When students at Parker demonstrate Puma Pride behavior, staff members recognize this by giving them a Puma Paw. This is simply a slip of the child can take home to celebrate their behavior with their family members. Bus drivers also encourage Puma Pride with "Ride with Pride" bus tickets. School Patrol staff also recognized our walkers with "Puma Pride Walker" tickets. When students have reached their goal of earning a set number of these paw points and bus tickets, the school holds a school-wide Puma Pride celebration. At Parker Elementary, we have seen the positive results PBIS strategies yield. For this reason, our school has applied for and been accepted to PBIS cohort training with the Minnesota Department of Education to continue refining our use of these strategies.

In addition to Puma Pride positive behavioral supports, Parker also recognizes student academic success. Each fall, Parker holds an "E-Club" assembly to recognize students who achieved "Exceeds Standard" on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment for Math, Reading, and/or Science. This year, we also recognized and celebrated all staff and students for the fact that Parker was named a "Reward School" by the Minnesota Department of Education for scoring in the top 15% of schools that receive Title I funding. At the end of each trimester, every grade level teacher recognizes one student at the Parker "Breakfast of Champions." To be chosen for this honor, students must demonstrate success or significant improvement in the areas of academics, personal growth, or civic accomplishment. Chosen students and their families attend a before school breakfast where the award is presented and both the students and parents are celebrated. These events have been a positive force encouraging students to strive for personal improvement.

One of the things that makes Parker Elementary special is the culture of positive community that exists among not only teachers but all staff. The strong collaboration present in PLCs allow staff to support one another. Teachers are empowered to take leadership on a number of building committees focusing on PBIS, positive communications and RTI. Each of these reports to the Instructional Leadership Team which has a representative from each PLC. Throughout the year, we take time to recognize and appreciate teachers as well as all staff with appreciation days. To have an environment where all staff feel valued and supported it is also important to take time to have fun together. At Parker, we are purposeful about taking time to hold staff barbeques and get-togethers. This year we devoted a week to having the "Best Week Ever and scheduled fun contests and school spirit activities focused on staff only. Parker is not only a school filled with adults dedicated to doing great things for kids. It is also a fun place to go to work! All of these measures ensure that the work we do for students is a collaborative and positive experience, leading to greater staff buy in and a quality experience for students.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parker Elementary is proud of the positive relationship we have with our community. We begin each year with a fall Open House held at the end of August before students arrive. During this event, families get to

tour the school, meet their child's teacher and learn about our school. Shortly after school starts, each grade level also hosts a curriculum night. This is a time where families receive a presentation from their child's classroom teacher detailing how learning will be structured for their child. Teachers use this time to share curriculum as well as resources to support parents with helping their child be successful at home. Teachers also use this time to establish expectations for homework, nightly reading practice, etc.

Parker has a very active Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The PAC is comprised of parent volunteers who organize fundraisers, staff appreciation events as well as school-wide community events. One of these events is our annual Fall Carnival. This event is well-attended and acts as an opportunity to build and enhance the positive culture present at Parker. Our PAC also collaborates with teaching staff to provide a winter Family Night. This free event includes fun science experiments, book bingo and family sledding on our hill. Parker also holds an annual Veterans Day assembly which is extremely well attended and has become a community favorite. Each year we receive a great deal of positive feedback and appreciation from family and community members. These events are a big part of the positive community pride that is a part of Parker's heritage.

We believe parents and guardians are children's first and best teachers. For this reason, Parker also holds three Title I family nights each year. One of the nights serves as an informational meeting for parents to find out more about why Parker receives Title I funding and what this funding provides to students. In addition, we also hold a Family Reading Night as well as a Family Math Night. These focus on providing families with strategies and resources to support their child's academics at home. For example, at a recent Reading Night, families were provided with a sight word card game and letter block manipulatives. Our Title staff modeled for parents how to use the resources to support phonemic awareness. Families were encouraged to take the resources home to use with their children. One of our goals for each of these events is that families leave with a few practical things they can do right away to help their child succeed.

Finally, we feel it is important to take time to celebrate student success with families. For this reason, we hold an annual "E-Club Celebration" with families each fall to celebrate the work of students who earn an "E" or "Exceeds" on their Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment. Each Trimester, we also celebrate with a "Breakfast of Champions" where students are chosen by staff to be honored for their civic, academic or personal achievements.

3. Professional Development:

Elk River Area School District has a Teaching and Learning Team that plans and organizes district level staff development opportunities. Guided by our district mission to educate, inspire and empower, they work to determine staff development needs that are relevant to the work teachers are doing in their classrooms. Staff development often focuses on supporting staff with new curriculum adoptions. During district staff development days, the Teaching and Learning Team tailors professional development to supporting individual grade levels with successful implementation of district curriculum, giving careful attention to helping grade level teachers understand the scope and sequence of the curriculum as well as how state standards are woven into related curriculum maps. This Teaching and Learning Team also works with grade level representatives from each building to map power standards for each subject and grade level.

On a building level, administration at Parker Elementary works with teacher leaders to ensure that all professional development is 1) student focused and 2) relates to building goals as identified in our Strategic Action Plan. Parker's Instructional Leadership Team, a building team of grade level and department representatives, meets regularly to review staff requests to use building staff development monies to attend trainings and or conferences. The team uses the above criteria to determine which professional development opportunities fit well with our goals and our district mission to educate, inspire and empower learners.

Professional development can sometimes be led from within the building as well. After our Response to Intervention (RTI) committee attended the RTI at Work conference through Solution Tree, members of that committee designed a building staff development day focused on developing a deeper understanding of

essential state standards. This work by our RTI committee drove the work of Parker's PLC teams to dissect standards and determine those in each trimester that are of the highest priority. This work has had a positive impact on our intervention blocks, allowing teachers to be more purposeful and focusing on providing focused intervention for the most essential skills in reading and mathematics.

Because one of our building goals this year focuses on improving use of instructional technology, we have built a component into our staff meetings called the "Tech Tidbit". A survey was conducted at the building level to determine areas of technology that staff were most comfortable with and areas where they require the greatest support. Using this data, our building's Technology Mentor (a stipended teacher leadership position) designs brief professional development trainings for each of our staff meetings. These are relevant to both our building goals and our staff identified needs for technology learning.

It is also vital that the building Principal engage in professional development opportunities alongside building staff. Doing this ensures building administration is able to remain knowledgeable while modeling professional life-long-learning. In addition to facilitating and/or taking part in all building-level staff development, Elk River Area School District's Teaching and Learning Team also provides staff development offerings tailored to administrators. Most recently, Schoology was utilized to provide an in depth book study using George Couros' book *Innovator's Mindset*. This study was thought provoking and has led to discussion and collaboration between staff and administration focused on adding a maker's space to our media center. In recent weeks, district elementary principals have worked together to develop a principal's PLC as well to allow principals a venue to focus on professional growth as well as purposeful implementation of instructional practices that benefit all students.

4. School Leadership:

Our district mission is "To educate, inspire and empower our diverse learners to shape their futures, to accomplish their dreams and to contribute positively to our local and global communities." This mission trickles down to drive the work we do at Parker Elementary School. Parker utilizes a shared leadership model starting with the oversight of the building Principal. Strong principal leadership is important and Parker's Principal is responsible for setting a vision for the building that mirrors the district mission and supports learning for all students. The Principal manages resources to ensure staff and students have what they need to be successful. Most importantly, the Principal is a curricular leader in the building and provides oversight to the important work of the building's Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

Parker also has an Instructional Leadership Team comprised of teacher leaders from each grade level and program. Facilitated by the building Principal, Parker's Instructional Leadership Team collaborates with the building Principal to set annual goals as part of Parker's School Improvement Plan. They also drive the work of our PLCs and building correlate teams which are based on Lawrence Lezotte's *Correlates of Effective Schools*. These teams are the: Safe and Orderly Committee, Positive Communications Committee, Intervention Team, and the Response to Intervention (RTI) Committee. Each of these committees is made up of teacher leaders within the building who meet monthly to focus on different areas of school effectiveness. The committees each report to the building principal and the Instructional Leadership team.

An example of this building leadership model can be seen in our recent focus on enhancing our RTI practices. Feeling the building was ready to take the next step in our RTI practice, Parker's RTI committee attended the Solution Tree RTI conference in October of 2015. After attending and collaborating, the team felt that Parker Elementary teachers could benefit from a stronger focus on essential standards. In the weeks following the conference, the RTI committee along with the building Principal met to plan staff development for the building focused on drilling deeply into the state standards and determining essential "Promise" standards. Next, during a building staff development day, the committee modeled for PLC teams how to take the district power standards and drill down to determine which are of the highest priority. A template was provided to each PLC team. Finally, the PLC teams were given time to meet and determine each grade level's essential "Promise" standards. This is just one example of how shared leadership between the building principal and teacher leader teams has impacted Parker Elementary in a positive way.

The success of Parker Elementary School's shared leadership model is evidenced by our consistent success on district and state assessments. Parker has consistently outperformed the district as well as the state on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The practice that has had the greatest impact on both Parker Elementary Schools Academic success as well as our professional growth as a staff would be our commitment to meeting regularly in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Each grade level team meets every other week from from 8:15 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. A common expectation that we hold ourselves to is that this time must be focused on one of four questions: 1) What is it we want all students to learn/know? 2) How will we know if they have learned it effectively? 3) What will we do if they don't learn it? 4) What will we do if they have already mastered it? Parker has also created a schedule that allows other important stakeholders such as Title I, Special Education and ESL staff to work with the grade level teams they serve.

At Parker PLC meetings focus on student data and using this data to inform the development of interventions as well as high-quality, Tier I instruction for all students. Staff at Parker have made a commitment to using this time consistently and effectively. Our staff uses a building PLC Google Doc file to record the minutes from these meetings, allowing staff members who cannot attend to remain connected to work focused on student needs. The consistency of these meetings has allowed our interventions to become more timely and adjusted more frequently to better meet students' changing needs.

PLCs have also been the tool we have used to dig deeper into state reading and mathematics standards. By doing so, we have better understood what the standards require students to do. This year, we have further focused our conversations on determining essential standards for each grade. PLC teams have met cross grade level to determine essential prior learning students need when they arrive to be successful in each grade level. This year, our PLCs have also worked hard to determine what we call "Promise Standards". These are the highest priority, essential standards that all students must master. These conversations have led us to a higher commitment to the belief that all students can learn.

Our focus on the development of high-performing PLCs has brought our staff closer together and contributed to our positive and student focused culture. Staff buy-in has allowed us to approach student learning from a more systems-based approach. It has also helped to support the continued development of our staff as a lifelong learners teaching lifelong learners.

The effect PLCs have had on student learning can be seen in our consistently high test scores. In 2015, 89.6% of Parker Elementary students reached proficiency on the grade 3-5 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) for Mathematics, up from 84.2% the year prior. This was 29.4% above the state average. Similarly, in 2015 87.7% of Parker students reached proficiency on the grade 3-5 Reading MCA, up from 74.9% the previous year. This was 28.2% above the statewide average.