

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 Roby Johnson

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

Official School Name Warner Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address P.O. Box 20 110 1st Ave SW

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

City Warner State SD Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 57479-0020

County Brown County

Telephone (605) 225-6194 Fax (605) 225-0007

Web site/URL https://warner.k12.sd.us E-mail roby.johnson@k12.sd.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 Kroll E-mail michael.kroll@k12.sd.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Warner School District 6-5 Tel. (605) 225-6194

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. Angie Bakeberg
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	5	5	10
K	12	11	23
1	8	16	24
2	8	7	15
3	15	13	28
4	7	15	22
5	16	8	24
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	71	75	146

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 92 % 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: 7%

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	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	11
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	148
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.074
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %
Total number students who qualify: 16
8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
19 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.

- 1 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 2 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 5 Other Health Impaired
- 3 Specific Learning Disability
- 6 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 1 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	4
Classroom teachers	7
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals	3
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 21:1

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	98%	98%	98%	97%	98%
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.

"Building character for lifelong learning and achievement"

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

Warner School District shares a unique combination of rural, small towns (Warner and Stratford both serve as “bedroom” communities to a larger neighboring town) and city (some attendees live in the larger neighboring town of Aberdeen) students. We have a combination of students from agricultural families, local business ventures, and commuters that travel to work in neighboring towns. This setting provides an appreciation for various opportunities South Dakota provides while still maintaining a strong connection to the traditional Midwestern values and culture. The Warner School District was initially founded in 1899 and provided a 1st grade through 8th grade education; they started offering high school level courses in 1904 with the first graduation taking place in 1933. We have proudly carried the Monarch mascot since the 1930s and adorned the school colors of royal blue, red and white. Over the years the district has expanded, Stratford was merged into the district in 1956, and other areas of land have been added as neighboring schools have closed. Demographically we provide some diversity within our walls; we count Native Americans, African Americans, Filipinos, Latinos, and Caucasians as members of our school population.

Our current building looks much different than the original which only lasted a few years before a fire destroyed it. A new building was constructed in 1918 that housed the entire K-12 student body until 1998 when a new building was constructed to better meet the needs of the district. The building went from a traditional looking, multi-story structure with stairs, long hallways and old plumbing to a single story, handicap accessible, modern amenities (including computer networking, and efficiency features such as motion sensors for lights and geothermal climate control heating/cooling). The construction project was funded with a publicly approved bond that received wide public support. Another addition using a bond was proposed and approved in 2010 that added an additional two classrooms, office space, and industrial technology shop. A third project was completed in 2015 using capital outlay certificates to construct two additional classrooms, a new gymnasium and locker room facilities; this project also used a public vote that was approved by a wide margin. The community support is displayed attending many of the district’s activities; our concerts, plays, athletic events, class project and conferences always draw strong attendance. We have received state recognition by garnering a ‘Top 10’ ranking in various media outlets, test score rankings and various competitions.

The school district takes great pride in supporting many different opportunities for all students; we offer ‘Title’ services, art, drama, band, chorus, athletics, and a summer reading program to name a few. Our staff and community take great pride in providing these various options to allow students to grow academically, emotionally, socially, etc. We offer a Lego Club, a Before and After School Program to help support social and academic growth. Local community groups provide many great programs from a Bingo and Spaghetti Supper Night, Post Prom and Post Graduation Activities, playground improvement projects, and movie showings just to name a few. Parental and community involvement evolves yearly depending on the needs of the district and community; they are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to enhance many of the great aspects of the districts. Our high school students provide tutoring and mentorship for our elementary students by actively supporting our younger students through local clubs, organizations and athletic teams. Our teaching staff continually challenges our students to reach for a higher standard of achievement. Staff members diligently look for ways to supplement standard curriculum with various learning models and teaching strategies to reach the various learning styles. They go the extra mile when seeking those methods that will reach all learners and help all students achieve successful academics but also build self-esteem by having academic success in academic areas that may have been extremely difficult in the beginning. Establishing a high level of performance and exposing students to various teaching and learning styles early in an individual’s school career creates a long standing motivation for increased success and enjoyment of learning and school.

When we look at the history, culture, and traditions of our school; we notice how things have evolved over time. Buildings have changed shape and size, student population has ebbed and flowed, course offerings have changed and returned, staff faces have changed, technology has modernized our world and classrooms are not immune. We have maintained a knowledge and appreciation for where we have come from; built on those strong community pillars and enhanced our programs to meet the ever-changing demands of today’s society. As school leaders we can only thank the many wonderful staff members who show up to work with and improve our student’s abilities and our large community who support our students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Warner Elementary curriculum is based on the South Dakota State Content Standards and the International Society for Technology in Education Standards. It is designed to provide rigor for all students. As standards continue to change and get updated, Warner Elementary is committed to reevaluating current available resources to provide students with a rich foundation based upon sound educational research. When the state of South Dakota makes changes to the current content standards and the recommended course pathways, Warner School, in-turn, mirror those changes to best reflect sound, current educational practices.

Reading and Language arts are at the core of our focus in the early primary grades at Warner Elementary. After an exhaustive two year examination of available reading and language arts curricula, the staff made a decision to adopt the Pearson Reading Street series across the entire Junior Kindergarten through fifth grades. Early grades of Junior Kindergarten through second grades focus on letter recognition, phonemic awareness, sight words, phonics, decoding skills, and early reading strategies. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, ie DIBELS, assessments are given at regular intervals and any student having deficits or not meeting grade level benchmarks are identified for a variety of specific intervention strategies. Instructors in third, fourth, and fifth grades enrich their instruction with fiction and nonfiction reading opportunities, while focusing on authors purposes, cause and effect relationships, comparing and contrasting and writing to prompts. Journaling, leveled readers, along with creative collaborative projects helps target instruction at a student specific level.

Warner Elementary's core math curriculum is Harcourt Math. Although its use is simply one piece of the puzzle. Teachers supplement their instruction with a variety of products that allow for a mass customization for students. Products and strategies like Rocket Math, Moby Max, IXL, and Accelerated Math are used to challenge students at their level. Teachers also use these tools as progress indicators and can structure support and interventions as needed. In the early grades of Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and first grade students focus on number sequence, number order, grouping and counting to 100 by 1's, and also by 10's. Grades two and three work with mathematical models and introduce one and 2 step problems along with the concept of number arrays. By the time students are in the fourth grade commutative properties of multiplication, number factors, inverse operation and identifying number patterns are added to their mathematical toolbox.

Science standards in South Dakota went through a vast revision process and were recently approved for implementation. The paradigm shift from a traditional science classroom to a more hands on inquiry based format utilizing a three dimensional approach of instruction, is a significant shift in practice. The National Research Council's findings in "A framework for K-12 Science Education" were the foundation for The Next Generation Science Standards which ultimately provided the structure for South Dakota's state science content standards. Utilizing a Science and Engineering Practice along with a Crosscutting Concept and the Disciplinary Core Idea provide students the opportunities to interact with science at a deeper level. This shift takes time to implement and Warner Elementary began taking steps in 2015 to shift to the three-dimensional instructional process.

Social studies is taught at all grade levels. Student standards in early grades begin with skills such as reading maps, understanding what citizenship means, American symbols, and cause and effect of historical events. Later grades focus on factors of growth and expansion of South Dakota and combine third and fourth grade classrooms to put on a play for the community known collectively as "The South Dakota Play". Students take the study of historical presidential figures to another level by giving a speech to the first grade classroom dressed as their president or first lady. These types of hands-on activities give students ownership in the learning process and bring history to life.

Warner Elementary offers a Junior Kindergarten program for any student that reaches age 5 by the beginning of the academic year. The core curriculum of the program include: Social/Emotional

Development and Approaches to Learning Additional Strategies for Children with Social/Emotional Challenges Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Development, Creative Arts and Social Studies. Which follows the SD Early Learning Guidelines. Early education increases school readiness and exposes children to academic language, literacy and mathematics which in turn allow students to develop the skills needed to be successful in an academic setting and also later in life.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Art, Vocal Music, and Physical Education are taught at Warner Elementary.

Students in Junior Kindergarten to fifth grade all receive visual art instruction for sixty minutes a week. The visual arts develop the capacities of our children to explore personal expression and interpersonal communication. In the younger grades of Junior Kindergarten up through second grade students focus on the understanding that art shares ideas, conveys ideas and expresses moods. Students are challenged to explore a variety of media in which to express themselves through their individual creativity. In the later grades of third, fourth, and fifth students expand those foundational skills by developing an understanding of compositional elements, utilize various techniques which give artwork definition and apply compositional elements and principles to their work. Student artwork is displayed throughout the school and students often admire each other's work.

Physical education instruction is provided for sixty minutes per week to all students in the elementary. Students focus on fundamental motor skill proficiencies through a variety of activities. Units of study include volleyball, basketball, frisbee, soccer. In early grades student focus is on developing the foundational gross motor skills, following rules, taking turns, good sportsmanship and spatial awareness. In later grades the focus also includes teamwork, strategic game play, and developing skillsets. Choosing a healthy lifestyle and making healthy food choices is also supported in the classroom and at lunchtime. Teachers take advantage of the track around the football field where the "Walking Classroom" allows students to get a vigorous walk in while they listen to a lesson with a special mp3 player and headphones.

All students participate in music class sixty minutes per week taught by a highly qualified, certified teacher. Students learn about elements of music including pitch, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, timbre, texture, form and style by the fifth grade. Another component of the music classroom experience are two public performances. Students perform a number of musical pieces that include vocal performances with occasional instrumental accompaniments. The holiday concert is one of the most well attended functions of the entire year. Community members pack the gymnasium where student art is displayed and leave with smiles on their faces.

Technology skills are integrated into the regular classroom experience. Warner students and teachers use technology to enhance lessons. Online research skills are taught by utilizing data bases during classroom projects such as the animal ecosystem project or the presidential posters. Students use QR code readers on an Ipad to solve problems in hallway scavenger hunts. Students solve math problems and explain their reasoning with the help of Promethean boards and online programs such as IXL where individual student profiles allow customization of math skills to the meet individual student needs. Students use the Ipad camera to capture real life examples of simple machines and hang their informational picto-posters in the lunchroom for everyone to see. Computer literacy is becoming more and more important and so to introduce students to programming, the school hosted an "Hour of Code" event where each student in first through fifth grade experienced an introduction to computer science through a variety of online programming puzzles.

All Warner Elementary students experience library classes for thirty minutes a week. After a short story, students learn how the library is organized, how to check out books and the major genres of literature among other library skills. The librarian challenges students to read books at their individual reading level and students are motivated to use the Accelerated Reader program to test their comprehension skills and earn points towards recognition awards. Awards are handed out by the principal during the Elementary assembly, two times a semester, where student achievements are celebrated. Students are also encouraged to check out books that follow along with classroom topics of study. The librarian works with individual classroom teachers to align book displays to a specific topic of study.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Teachers utilize a variety of methods to determine the level of comprehension each student is achieving on a regular basis. These small formative assessments shape the daily lessons and ultimately the classroom as a whole. Along with formative assessments, student reading skills are assessed on a regular basis utilizing the DIBELS program. Starting with the Junior Kindergarten students, a variety of age appropriate literacy skills are assessed and individual student growth is documented. These snapshots allow staff to monitor and make targeted changes based upon individual student need. For example, during a small group reading time in the kindergarten classroom, students who need more time to master consonant, vowel, consonant words get small group instruction with a paraprofessional on that targeted skill. The program allows grade level targeted growth along with student specific skill growth as well. This shared longitudinal data allows teachers on day one, to know the specific needs of each one of their learners.

The technology based support found in the various mathematical programs that are utilized by Warner Elementary in grades 1-5 allow for specific class and individual learner profiles. The IXL program breaks down specific skills into their component parts and requires students to master said skill before allowing them to move on to another skill. It may take one student 15-20 problems to achieve the mastery score with very little reteaching but it may take another student 40-50 problems to master the same skill. The program has built in features that ramp up, or tone down the mathematical skill for each child individually. These features along with a teacher and a paraprofessional answering immediate student questions and reteaching or alternative problem solving strategies allow all students to reach the goals set.

The aforementioned methods and interventions are in addition to the Title Reading and Title Math programs that are utilized by students who need even more help with targeted reading or math skills. Small group instruction by a highly qualified, certified teacher in addition to regular classroom instruction gives students extra time to master foundational concepts needed to be academically successful.

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

Assessment for instruction is closely related to instructional interventions used for instruction. It is difficult to make adjustments to instruction without first assessing the instruction. Warner Elementary utilizes six assessment components of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills; first sound fluency and letter naming fluency for the Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten grades. Phoneme segmentation fluency and nonsense word fluency for later kindergarten and first grade. Also included is an oral reading fluency second semester of first grade up to fifth grade with a comprehension piece added second semester of second grade. These long term, grade specific goals make tracking early reading skill acquisition very measurable. Using this data to make informed, student specific decisions in real time insure that students get the instruction they need to get caught up before the missed skill becomes a deficit.

Conversations regarding assessment for learning and shared results in South Dakota revolve around the state standardized assessment given to all students in grades 3-5 known as the Smarter Balanced assessment. Students are assessed in English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 3-5 and additionally Science in grade 5. The Smarter Balanced testing is an opportunity for our students to demonstrate their proficiency in a variety of areas. The culture is one of high expectations and students continually give their best efforts. Results get released over the summer and teachers are eager to delve into the specifics. Overall class results are measured against individual student scores and any achievement gaps are identified and strategies to close those gaps are implemented. Our students generally start their education with the school and continue all the way to graduation. This long term relationship allows for a greater understanding of targeted needs and strengths of both classes and individual students.

Results of the Smarter Balanced assessments are disseminated in a number of ways. Teachers receive electronic copies of the results and are able to sort and explore details with a few clicks. Results are mailed home to parents and posted to the school website. Conversations are held at parent teacher conferences and during the open house. The results are shared in the school newsletter that goes out to over 300 addresses. The school board is kept up to date with testing schedules and results are shared during the October board meeting. This multi faceted approach allows us to keep all stakeholders informed.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Everyday teachers greet students by name at the door and welcome them to school. This small gesture gets the day started on the right foot and ensures students feel a sense of belonging. The daily routines are established and children get busy right away with their seat work that is already on the board waiting for them. When the first bell rings at 8:20 everyone enjoys three minutes of a song of choice from the principal. The taste in music is diverse and some days may feature Adele while other days include Beethoven or Chicago. The second bell rings at 8:23 and students are given a quick daily briefing where the lunch menu, birthdays, and student achievements are shared. The pledge is led by a new student every day and it is a treat to hear the different ways we all share the pledge. A quick reminder to “Have a good day!” completes the morning announcements. In the process of a very short time, students feel socially welcomed, psychologically included, scholastically informed, personally cared for and academically engaged.

Students feel comfortable with the administration and many times will wave hello on the trip to the computer lab or heading out for recess. Occasionally an extra birthday treat or story is shared as students pop in. The door is always open. This open door policy helps students feel empowered to be a responsible reporter should the need arise. Bullying awareness and prevention is one of the many lessons the school counselor presents in his 30 minute weekly visits to all classrooms. Kindergarten children enjoy the goat puppets while older children use other techniques such as role playing or group discussions to understand important social issues. Everyone on staff is committed to provide a safe, positive environment for all children.

Since we are a small school, all staff members know the names of all the children and everyone is responsible for adhering to playground and hallway expectations and using good manners. Lunch time expectations are clear and transitions happen swiftly and safely. We celebrate student success whether it be from announcing the students of the week on Fridays, sharing names of students who passed to the next level of the math program or at the quarterly all elementary Accelerated Reader celebration where reading milestones are met with applause and occasionally a trophy, medal, or t-shirt. These small tokens and recognition motivate and remind students to make personal goals and keep working to meet them.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Warner is a very small community that at the very heart lies its school. The school has been a source of pride for many years and that tradition of success has continued to foster positive relationships within the community. The Parent Teacher Community organization is very active within the school, its members hold fundraising opportunities where all the funds are funneled back to school beautification projects such as the fence art project behind the school, or used to promote opportunities for students such as a reward for reaching a reading goal or scholarships in the high school. The local chapter of the 4-H plays an active role in supporting the school in various ways. The playground got a fresh coat of paint on a large planet earth mural with cardinal directions and continents and two four-square play spaces thanks to a grant that was awarded to the school. The community came together to help erect a massive playset which came to fruition after many years of community support purchasing pastries at the elementary fundraiser. Students use it throughout the day and community members utilize it after hours. This idea of shared space can also be seen in the fitness room that is also open to community members who wish to stay fit during the long Dakota winters.

Parents volunteer to bring healthy snacks when the Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes read a story together in the afternoons. A partnership with the Junior Achievement group places a community business volunteer with a classroom to provide students a pragmatic look at how the skills they learn in school equate to local business and commerce. This past year Warner Elementary successfully paired four Junior Achievement members with grades three, four, and five. The DARE partnership with the local police department, a visit by the local fire department and a lesson taught by a local energy company all

show the level of commitment the community shares with the school, and the positive relationships such commitment brings.

3. Professional Development:

Warner School District believes in optimizing staff development opportunities to custom fit a specific need. We employ a strategic decision making process in the selection of curricula and in doing so adopted a new ELA curriculum. The Pearson Reading Street series was a large deviation to the curriculum staff members traditionally used in their classrooms. A need was identified and a local practitioner with Reading Street experience was brought in as a consultant to work with teachers individually to optimize the features of the program and strategize creative solutions to fit student needs.

The state of South Dakota employs the program Teachscape for its teacher effectiveness rating system. This was a large change from the system teachers were evaluated with in the past. To better streamline the process and bring everyone up to speed, the state offered trainings over the summer to work with teachers and administrators to develop targeted plans. These plans incorporate student learning objectives along with specific observable classroom components and use the Teachscape program to tie it all together. This was an ambitious undertaking and one that took a considerable amount of time and effort. Warner School District continues to use the program today and the shared language the Danielson model gives us allows for specific conversations regarding student goals.

Along with trainings, providing access to opportunities that build a Professional Learning Community are an important component to any schoolwide professional development plan. Warner will be hosting a regional professional development day where regional cooperative school districts will come and engage in regional level planning and trainings. Staff members will network with their counterparts in neighboring districts and help facilitate educational conversations that will help gain insight and consistency. These conversations and experiences allow teachers who are the only grade level teacher in their buildings to share ideas and problem solve with another teacher who teaches the same aged learners.

Lastly, the local university offers a number of opportunities teachers can take advantage of on a regular basis. Northern State University has made a commitment to bring in national level speakers and offer outreach classes as an extension opportunity. The Technology in Education group also offers a number of online professional development classes that are utilized by a number of teachers in South Dakota. These classes continue to be a valuable resource for staff members.

4. School Leadership:

A collaborative student centered approach lies at the heart of Warner school's leadership philosophy. Decisions are made with input and feedback from staff members and the question of what is best for students is always at the forefront. Collaboration happens daily as we are a very small school that is completely contained within one hallway. A quick morning trip by the principal up the hallway is a time that teachers ask quick questions, provide a reminder of timeline or events or simply touch base to wish a pleasant day ahead. These small communication snapshots keep everyone on the same page. In addition, daily announcements, regular face to face conversations and bi-weekly informative electronic communications keep everyone up to date with the comings and goings of a very busy school. Communication is a cornerstone to ensuring positive relationships, building trust, offering support, and expressing empathy.

The entire K-12 administrative team meets weekly to collaborate on the week ahead. These conversations help with uniformity and ensure policies and procedures and being followed the same way. Another opportunity for communication happens with staff members who make up the Advisory Council. This sage group is made up of the most veteran teachers. They are tasked with sharing ideas and offering feedback to the elementary principal. This feedback loop has been very instrumental in providing creative solutions to problems and ideas for making school improvements. If a wider pool of thought is required on a specific topic, feedback is gathered through online sources such as a Google form or a survey monkey. Staff meetings are also held after every board meeting.

One of the leadership pieces that add to our success is that staff members are empowered to try innovative teaching strategies without risk. Instructors are tasked with covering the standards but all have complete autonomy in the delivery of instruction. Successful practices are shared during elementary staff meetings a practice which invites dialog and sparks new ideas other classrooms can utilize. There are high expectations for professionalism, a shared vision, and a team mentality. An African proverb once said “It takes a village to raise a child.” Indeed it does, a village of caring individuals with a shared purpose. Our village just happens to be named Warner Elementary School.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Warner Elementary is a school whose positive culture and climate is apparent when walking through the door. The community support and communication between staff and the families we serve is admirable. There is a cultural expectation of best efforts and high performance from our students and staff. The old adage of success breeds success is readily apparent. There are so many aspects that make the school a place that children enjoy attending and put forth an incredible effort to reach their potential everyday. To distill the essential component which sums up the single practice that makes the school successful is difficult.

Pride is a word that is thrown around in our society. A sports fan may declare a sense of pride in his team but is this the intended use of the term “Pride”? There is no onus in the entity. To use the word pride to describe Warner Elementary there are a number of fundamental differences. All stakeholders take their role very seriously. From custodians taking pride in keeping the school clean and safe to support staff members who work tirelessly to optimize student opportunities and provide assistance wherever they are needed. Teachers take pride in providing world class education to all students, not just the group of students on their roster. Teachers work together on projects, they provide support for one another and they share ideas and successful practices. Teachers care about the students lives beyond the classroom and the school and in doing so expect students to put forth their best effort.

Students take pride in the quality of their work and in celebrating the success of their peers. Students challenge each other’s thinking and share personal thinking strategies they utilized to solve complex problems. Through group work and a competitive spirit students push themselves and others around them to do their best work.

This collective pride in our school manifests itself into an untold number of educational and community facets and is the bedrock from which the culture of the school is built. To look back at the weeks end and reflect on personal growth while singing the school song declaring you to be a “Monarch” is something special.