

U.S. Department of Education
2017 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. Craig M. Allen

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

Official School Name J. Russell Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 119 N. Adams Street

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

City Moscow State ID Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 83843-2830

County Latah

Telephone (208) 882-2715 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://msd281.org/russell/ E-mail allenc@msd281.org

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. Greg Bailey E-mail gbailey@msd281.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Moscow School District (281) Tel. (208) 882-1120

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. Dawn Fazio
(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. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. 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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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 (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 7 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, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	34	32	66
4	28	33	61
5	26	38	64
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	88	103	191

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 9 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 79 % White
 - 1 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 12%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	22
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	187
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.118
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 46 %
Total number students who qualify: 87

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
18 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects	9
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	95%	94%	94%	95%	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 2016.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No
If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

Russell is a team of students, teachers, and parents working together to build an excellent place to learn through respect, responsibility, cooperation, 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

Russell School is an elementary school with one hundred ninety students enrolled in grades three through five. We serve students from the rural university town of Moscow, Idaho. While Moscow claims approximately 24,000 people, that count drops dramatically over the summer months when University of Idaho students return home for summer break. The University of Idaho is the major employer within the city, but we are also the home of Northwest River Supplies (NRS) and nearby Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories. There are exactly ten traffic lights in Moscow. The closest larger urban center is Spokane, Washington, located about two hours north of town. Fields of wheat, legumes, and canola grow in abundance throughout the Palouse Region where Moscow resides. Within Moscow, there are four elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and a small alternative regional school. The Moscow School District serves approximately 2,400 students. There are also two charter schools and several private religious schools of various sizes within the city.

While Russell's ethnic diversity is low compared to other areas of Idaho and the nation, we do enjoy the greatest diversity in the Moscow area. Eighty percent of our students self-identify as Caucasian and twenty percent of our students identify with a racial minority group. Our largest minority group identifies as Asian and makes up nine percent of our population. African American students comprise five percent. Russell's English as a New Language program currently serves eighteen students. Thanks largely to our proximity to the University of Idaho and rural setting, our school has vibrant Christian, Muslim and Confucius populations. Russell Elementary also has the most economically diverse student population in Latah County. Of Russell's enrollment of just under two hundred students, forty seven percent of our student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch. These numbers are high for a county currently reporting an unemployment rate of under four percent.

Established in 1884, Russell School is the oldest school in our region. The current building was constructed in 1926 with a major addition added in 1946. Our last remodel was done in 1973 which provided upgraded wiring and flooring. While walking throughout the building, you can reference early photographs of the school and see patched holes in the walls where oil lamps once hung. Our half-size gymnasium, small classrooms, sparse electrical outlets, and lack of ADA accessibility are testaments to the age and history of the building.

We are a school that prides ourselves in a sense of community, academically rigorous curriculum, and a socially diverse student population. Effective utilization of frequent and focused collaboration enables Russell staff to gain a well-rounded picture of students' social and academic needs. It also allows us to continually reflect on how to adjust practices to best meet those concerns. Russell Elementary School's focus on working together to meet the needs of our students fosters a positive learning environment where students can grow as learners and become productive community members.

Russell's staff has spent the past several years defining what our goal is within Moscow community. Through this reflection, we have developed the motto, "Continuing a tradition of excellence, John Russell Elementary School is a great place to learn". To better define this motto, Russell's staff developed the mission statement of, "Russell is a team of students, teachers, and parents working together to build an excellent place to learn through respect, responsibility, cooperation, and achievement". The foundational beliefs of this mission statement revolve around teaching students to be independent thinkers, valuing diversity, providing a nurturing environment, insuring students have the tools needed to learn in a Twenty-First learning environment, and using best teaching practices. Each of these beliefs is put into practice to meet the needs of our student population.

At Russell Elementary, we have recently focused our efforts on increasing student learning by providing the most timely, targeted intervention and enrichment possible. Since moving to a School-Wide Title I system a year and a half ago, we have seen assessment scores, student engagement, and community satisfaction increase dramatically. The key to this success has been moving emphasis away from strict fidelity to an adopted curriculum toward trusting teachers to make instructional decisions based on the frequent monitoring of student achievement and research-based instructional methods. When we moved to School-

Wide Title I, we established reteach and enrichment classes where students are placed into leveled instructional groups based on results of frequent formative assessments that supplement the core instruction. These reteach and enrichment groups have enabled students to feel challenged and successful working with leveled instruction while still getting exposure to grade level standards in the primary classes. While we continue to adjust our system to meet the demands of shifting student needs and population shifts, our focus on timely and targeted instruction is now at the heart of how Russell School operates.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The Moscow School District has adopted a shared core curriculum for each of our subjects taught. Both math and language arts have recently received updates. Through a rigorous adoption process, teachers analyzed researched-based curricula from numerous reputable publishers. Teachers, administrators, and the Board of Trustees based their purchasing decisions based on how closely the curricula aligned with the Idaho Common Core Standards as well as how well those curricula met the learning styles and needs of our students. Through this curricula review, the Moscow School District adopted McGraw-Hill's Wonders curriculum for Language Arts and Eureka Math by the Great Minds publishing group.

The Moscow School District's language arts curriculum is focused on students reaching a satisfactory level of proficiency on the Idaho Common Core Standards. As a district, we outlined learning targets based on those standards and grouped them by competencies. When planning an instructional unit, grade level teams start by looking at the standards and assess how well the Wonders curriculum meets the identified learning targets. Teachers then find additional resources to supplement their instruction where the adopted curriculum is weak or their students need additional support. As the class moves through a unit of instruction, formative assessments are given to students to monitor their understanding of the learning targets. Students who need additional assistance on specific skills are placed into small intervention groups outside of their primary instruction time. During that same time block, students who have shown advanced levels of mastery are placed into small enrichment groups where they focus on extending their learning through project based learning. Competencies that teachers focus on for language arts primarily revolve around reading comprehension and fluency at lower grade levels and more toward literary analysis and identifying key details of nonfiction text.

Russell School, in concert with the rest of the Moscow School District, has developed a strong math curriculum. Much like in language arts, math instruction begins by identifying the learning targets and competencies students need to master before moving on to the next level. Teachers then unpack the units of study in the Eureka Math adopted curriculum for strengths and weaknesses in how they address the identified learning standards and how well its delivery matches the learning needs of our students. Students are given primary instruction at their grade level in heterogeneous classes of students. Through frequent formative assessments, students are then placed into additional reteach or enrichment classes based on the results of those assessments. Students who did not meet mastery are retaught the information in a different way than they were first instructed by another grade level teacher. Those students who have reached a higher level of proficiency are placed into homogenous groups of students who carry out enrichment activities based on their proven abilities. For the handful of students who are too far below grade level to keep up with primary instruction there are a few Tier Three instructional groups that are provided a more heavily modified curriculum and are instructed at their identified ability levels. This ensures the curriculum is accessible to all of our diverse learners.

The science curriculum at Russell School relies even more heavily on Idaho's identified science standards as there is not a fully adopted curriculum. In our lower grade levels, science is integrated more heavily into reading instruction. Through nonfiction reading, students are exposed to the various fields of science. The scientific method and habits of scientific inquiry are introduced and reinforced through the use of Foss Kits that provide laboratory style explorations and lessons. Our higher grades have integrated specific science classes into a rotation that includes science, social studies, and writing. Within these classes, the scientific method is taught in further depth, more complex scientific observations and experiments take place, and subject matter is focused on more closely.

Russell's approach to social studies is similar to that of science. Early grade levels integrate much of their instruction into reading and focus heavily on supporting details, providing evidence, and exploring historical eras through fiction and nonfiction literature. Higher grade levels delve deeper into history and social studies as they go into further depth with geography, civic involvement, economics, regional history, and American History. Social Studies instruction at Russell is also a place where math and literacy skills are applied

toward research projects, business proposals, debate, and problem solving projects.

Civic learning and engagement are concepts integrated throughout Russell School and explicitly taught in language arts, science and social studies classes. Russell has a student council program where two students are elected from each classroom once per semester. This group discusses concerns facing the school and its students and solutions to meet those needs. They have been involved in spearheading events such as a Valentine delivery to a local assisted living home, an animal supply collection for the Latah County Humane Society, participation in the International Day of Service by cleaning Russell's playground, and numerous other civic engagement events.

Russell School also supports the democratic processes occurring outside of our school. During each election year, Russell classrooms participate in discussions about candidates and issues facing the state and our nation. These discussions and debates build up toward mock elections where we discover which candidates our students support, what issues are most important to them, as well as receiving student input on school-level improvements to be made.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Outside of the core curriculum, Russell School also engages students in the fields of physical education, music, art, and technology. While classes integrate weekly art lessons into their homeroom classes, students at Russell also rotate through three specialist courses offering physical education, music, and our Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) class. While core classes focus on targeting instruction to the Idaho Common Core Standards, our specialist classes work on pushing student learning outside of the traditional thinking and empower students to more freely pursue their areas of interest.

Every Friday, teachers lead their classes through an art lesson. They frequently tie the subject of their art lesson in with that of a language arts unit, but focus on a specific artistic skill. They also highlight the overlap in skills between art and their other subjects. Classroom teachers identify learning targets revolving around things like shading, line styles, and vanishing point. While some of the art students create focuses on drawing, teachers typically integrate a variety of media into their lessons.

The Moscow School District recently received a major grant to update its instruction and equipment. This grant has been the catalyst for overhauling physical instruction in the district. Thanks to the grant, PE instruction has moved away from learning games and rules to focusing on lifelong fitness and healthy learning styles. Units of study include circuit work, healthy eating, obstacle courses, and other challenges that allow students to set goals and monitor their own progress. Teachers use pedometers to track student activity and give students strategies for staying fit outside of the school day. There is a strong emphasis not just on staying active, but in make healthy choices regarding meals, snacks, and substance abuse. The PE department is starting to provide opportunities outside of the class time as well by providing running clubs and wellness opportunities for district staff.

Among the most impressive instructional programs at Russell School is the music program. Much of the music instruction at Russell revolves around singing and developing foundational musical skills to our students. There is also heavy exposure to different kinds of instruments and an integration of movement. Students spend units learning the basics of keyboarding, percussion, and recorders. University and high school students are brought in with brass and stringed instruments for students to play and familiarize themselves with. Our music program also offers several after school music opportunities with a district orchestra, band, and two choirs. The Jazz choir based out of Russell School has won the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival for their age group five of the last six years.

The newest addition to the Russell School's curriculum is our STEAM class. Thanks to a series of grants awarded to our STEAM room, we are able to provide an extremely enriching and engaging experience to our students. While only in its second year, the STEAM room's original vision was to take the exploratory curriculum offered through our Gifted and Talented program and offer it to all of our students. The STEAM curriculum is essentially split into three units of study. During the first technology unit, students spend time practicing daily keyboarding skills. As they wrap up their keyboarding lessons, they move into computer

programming where they get to work on creating their own video games and instructional videos. The second unit in STEAM is an exploratory science and engineering unit. Students are able to explore the field of their choice. Frequent options include building and programming robots, diving deeper into astronomy, building different kinds of electrical circuits, or exploring other ideas that pique their interest. The final unit of study in STEAM is the art unit. Students are encouraged to create projects in either performing or visual arts and they draw, paint, and produce skits and plays for other classes.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Our school mission statement indicates that Russell is a team of students, teachers and parents working together. More than just a statement, the concept of team is at the core of Russell's instructional philosophy. At Russell, each student is taught to take ownership in his or her own learning. Students work closely with teachers to monitor their own progress, reflect on success and needs indicated on formative assessments, and plan strategies for future success. Teachers also rely heavily on student collaboration, teaching children to support each other and work together toward common goals and lessons in the classroom.

While direct instruction is sometimes used when introducing a new topic, even that time is infused with numerous opportunities for student collaboration. When exploring new topics, students are frequently confronted with a question they must work with their "elbow or nose partners" before turning and sharing their conclusions with the class. Nearly every classroom's primary instruction revolves around strategic grouping where students are either paired homogeneously or heterogeneously by ability level, depending on the context of the lesson, and encouraged to work together to support each other's learning. This inter-reliance helps students hold each other accountable and support each other as they work toward mastery. Teachers also work closely with students in small groups in primary instruction classrooms to best differentiate to the diverse student needs.

With the belief that reading and math are at the heart of every student's long-term success, Russell has established a systematic approach for differentiation in those two subjects. At Russell Elementary, all students participate in Language Arts and Mathematics content specifically identified for each student's grade level through Idaho's Common Core Learning Standards. For approximately fifty minutes each day, students work toward deeper understanding of these learning standards in classes with students of mixed abilities. Vast amounts of education research has shown that this grouping strategy benefits students of all ability levels at much better than grouping students of similar skill sets. However, this can make it difficult for teachers to provide challenging material that push students master skills more quickly while providing the needed support for students who need additional assistance. These concerns led to the development of Russell's reteach and enrichment periods.

Russell's reteach and enrichment periods were developed as a way to provide targeted academic assistance to students in the areas of math and literacy. During these times, students will move to classrooms of smaller class sizes to focus on lessons designed to meet their specific learning needs. The class a student moves to will depend largely on results of frequent formative assessments, provided about every other week, given by their homeroom teacher. Each grade level runs these supports slightly differently but the general vision remains the same for the whole school. While each grade level has three homeroom classes of about twenty three students, our additional support resources spread out into as many as nine groups of approximately four to eight students. These additional staff members include Title I aides and a teacher, our Gifted and Talented teacher, our Special Education staff, and our English as a New Language teacher. Each group has a different staff member assigned to lead it with higher need intervention or enrichment groups having fewer students.

Student assignment to a reteach or enrichment classroom is short term. Students move from a level as they show they have met their learning goals. Also, students take each formative assessment with a clean slate. Their placement into a reteach or enrichment class occurs every two weeks or so depending on their success of skills targeted during homeroom classes. Previous placement is not taken into consideration. While students strengthen their skills during these support classes, they continue learning new skills in their homeroom math and Language Arts classes. Even this model, however, is fluid and subject to change in timing, time frame, and focus as we adjust to the needs of our students.

Embedding assessments into the learning process is integral for our instructional programming. While formative assessments are used for identifying timely instructional decisions, teachers and students at Russell also rely on summative assessments and progress monitoring tools to reflect on student learning. The more frequently a student struggles in a subject area, the more frequent they are given short progress monitoring assessments with external normative data. While all students are given similar common assessments several times a year, those having continued difficulty could participate in short progress monitoring measures weekly. Additionally, summative assessments are analyzed by teams of teachers to monitor the effectiveness of their units of instruction and as a basis for collaborative discussion and problem solving.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Russell Elementary is made up of teachers and staff members who entered the field of education because they want to help every child succeed. The idea of needing to support each other to achieve success is a major part of who we are and a philosophy that is shared between staff and students. No staff member at Russell School feels they can even come close to meeting the needs of their students alone. Because of the frequent shuffling of students between instructional groups, staff members rely heavily upon one another as they collaboratively review assessment information, plan interventions, and identify specific student needs. This mindset carries into how students operate at Russell School. Students are taught and supported to work collaboratively when problem solving and trying to learn new information. Classrooms at Russell are rarely silent. During the majority of learning activities, students are highly engaged as they debate and discuss how to solve math problems, determine an author's point of view in a shared reading assignment, or how to best get their Lego robot from point A to point B in STEAM class.

The Growth Mindset movement has caught on like wildfire at Russell School. The idea that learning is a process that takes time and mistakes are part of the learning process mirrored our own philosophy when we created our reteach and intervention programs. Students and teachers are both encouraged to take risks knowing that not every risk is going to work out perfectly. We have developed a culture where it is not intimidating for a student to need multiple practice attempts before achieving proficiency when other students catch on quickly. Students are rewarded more for their persistent efforts than they are for initial achievement. Placing students into small reteach and enrichment groups that provide instruction at their ability level ensures students who have traditionally struggled with a subject will feel successful and those who frequently disengage because they work at a higher level to enrich their learning through complex projects and extended learning opportunities. While a few students with higher behavioral needs may have an extrinsic reward system in place, most of the students at Russell School are primarily motivated by the successes they experience.

Teachers internalize similar attitudes with their instructional risk taking as they are supported and encouraged to try new methods and approaches from building administration. Teachers are recognized and celebrated at staff meetings by their peers for risks and actions taken to improve our school climate. As our teams have moved from collaboration toward professional learning communities, they have found an increased level of support from each other in meeting the needs of their students as well as their own development as educators.

A team approach to learning also helps students' social and emotional needs not associated with academics. Through interdependence, no student feels isolated and the feeling of not fitting in is greatly reduced. We further strengthen our sense of belonging and community through structured practices. Each month we participate in the monthly Russell Roundup where students are paired into mixed grade level groups to work collaboratively on a creative project tied to major events of the month. We also have different groups led by our school psychologist who meet together during lunch to connect students who would not otherwise interact. Assemblies, monthly character trait activities, and social and emotional supports provided through our psychologist's office heighten our sense of community.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Being from a small university town, Russell enjoys strong support from our community. We frequently work closely with different groups from the University of Idaho to support student learning, we have many parents who believe in the value of education, and we establish numerous opportunities throughout the year for our community groups to interact.

Russell classrooms are blessed with a great deal of community assistance. University of Idaho education students from three different practicum levels visit to help in classrooms. We have close ties with a literacy instructor who brings her own students to Russell to help give individual student support and help monitor

student progress. This same group has also helped establish an after school reading club, in which one third of our students participate in, and helped run our literacy night.

While a core group of parents are actively involved in Russell's parent teams, our community nights have extremely high turnout. Early in the year, our open house and back to school nights fill the building. We have a special evening each year where we promote a clothing drive and hand out donated clothes, jackets, and shoes to students who cannot afford them. This year we had over twelve tables overflowing with items. Celebratory nights such as Bingo Night, the annual Russell Carnival, and Math Night all bring in high percentages of Russell families.

Several community groups help keep Russell connected with the greater Moscow community. The Safe Routes to Schools group meets with school representatives regularly and plans events that encourage our students to walk or ride their bikes to school. The League of Women's Voters typically helps us run mock elections each election year. The Latah County Human Rights Task Force presents to us each year and helps bring in nationally-renowned speakers. We even have a number of community groups and businesses such as the local animal shelter, business leaders, and university instructors from different areas come into our classrooms to interact with our students.

Russell also likes to show our appreciation for the support we get from our community. This year we have sent get well letters to police officers injured in the line of duty, a student led a major effort to deliver Valentines to our local assisted living home, and we sent cards to the Moscow Police Department to thank them for their support. Russell School even spends the day before winter break caroling the mayor at staff at City Hall.

3. Professional Development:

Over the past four years, professional development in the Moscow School District has made major improvements in focusing its resources in areas that promote the vision of its schools. Starting with ideas sparked by our teachers, reinforced through our district accreditation process, and supported by our district's administration, mastery learning reform has taken root in Moscow. Our focus on mastery-based learning has sent teachers to conferences as far away as New Hampshire and Minneapolis and as close as Portland Oregon. Russell School has been well represented within groups of administrators and teachers that traveled to assessment institutes, mastery learning conferences, and professional learning community workshops. Our monthly trips to Boise for the Idaho Mastery Learning Network have kept us connected with other schools in the State undergoing similar philosophical shifts. Our Curriculum Director has even been able to bring such nationally-renowned education leaders as Tom Guskey, Troy Gobbles, and Tom Schimmer to Moscow help train our staff. All of these guests and conferences have helped shape our vision and developed teacher capacity around mastery learning.

Professional Development around mastery learning has had a major impact on instruction. Mastery Learning Maps are being created at the district level to help guide our curricular decision making. In classrooms, students are now allowed multiple attempts to show mastery and are supported and encouraged show persistence in their learning. Some classrooms provide students with homework options that let students choose how to practice skills they are working on in class. Learning targets are not just posted in classrooms but reviewed with students and embedded into instruction. Thanks to professional development around mastery-based education, students are no longer allowed to take the easy avoidance strategy of accepting a zero on an assignment. Students are now held accountable for mastering skills instead of completing homework assignments. We are only a few years into this process and it is already paying major dividends.

Teachers are also provided professional development support through our district's professional learning funds. When teachers identify their own development needs and find ways to improve their practice, they are able to apply for district professional development funds. Their requests are reviewed and approved by a committee of teachers from throughout the district. These resources allow more individualized development for teachers. When university credits are offered, the Moscow School District even reimburses up to three credits per staff member each year.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy and structure of the school revolves around the idea that, through a shared vision and support from the district, teachers are the primary decision makers and the driving force behind the success of the school. The building principal's role is to lead the creation of a common vision, build support around the vision, then help put structures and systems in place that support the needs of the teachers to bring the vision into fruition. The building leadership team is the largest decision making body and frequently discusses and debates topics that are sometimes brought to the full staff for discussion.

The most obvious example of this leadership style in action is the initial development of our School-Wide Title I program two years ago. The building principal, with the encouragement of the district curriculum director, made the decision to move to the school-wide format. The principal then spoke with the full staff about the process and how it would allow us to redefine how the school operates. The principal started with concerns about how traditional school-wide programs can lead to tracking and haven't shown great strides in improving student achievement. He also shared the concern that differentiation and supporting students should not be placed squarely on the teachers' shoulders. After several weeks of frequent discussion, a teacher came forward with a model she found online. The principal did some research and shared out with the building leadership team. That team supported the ideas that were presented and decided to bring it up to the full staff for discussion. After several months of revisiting the ideas and adapting them to meet our needs, Russell had its first reteach and enrichment periods. Throughout the first year, each grade level made significant changes to the program, as they were encouraged and empowered to do by the building principal. At the end of the year, the full building reviewed our progress and designed improvements and changes for the next year. Now, each quarter our program is evaluated by our teachers to decide what adjustments need to be made to meet the changing needs of our students. Having teachers play such significant leadership roles in the building, they are much more nimble in their ability to help students and more accurately support each other.

Because Russell only has one administrator and no school counselor, teachers are given a stronger voice in decisions to be made. Several paid leadership positions are provided to teachers such as our building leadership team, Response to Intervention team, community events coordinator, technology coordinator, as well as several teachers who serve on district level committees. Each of these positions helps with the delegation of duties throughout the building.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Russell's key to success is in taking teams of outstanding teachers and empowering them to make decisions that align our school's systems and supports to provide the most timely and targeted intervention possible to students. At the heart of this mindset is the idea of institutionalizing the use of formative assessments. Formative assessments, as opposed to summative or externally normed assessments, are our most accurate source of student data we can collect while learning is still taking place. The instructional implications of those formative assessments are how we adjust our instruction. Because we have created a system that provides school-wide support to teachers responding to the results of formative assessments, teachers are pulled into professional learning communities where entire teams of teachers are analyzing assessment results to plan future instruction.

With eight teachers leading intervention and enrichment for three primary instruction classes of students, there is shared ownership of student achievement. This provides teachers with the ability to share best practices and have peers to problem solve issues with. Since each teacher only takes one group of students with very similar learning needs, they are able to provide much higher levels of supports that are more targeted to every student's needs than if they had to plan several intervention lessons for a heterogeneous class. Frequently analyzing the results of common formative assessments also allows the intervention to be timely. While many intervention systems are reorganized each semester, most groups at Russell go through a reshuffling process about every other week. Because three primary instruction classrooms are split between eight staff members, intervention instruction can focus very specifically on what students were struggling with on their formative assessments.

Without our reliance on formative assessments, interventions could not happen until after students were already expected to have achieved proficiency and we would not be able to pinpoint their learning needs in time to impact their learning. Building school-wide structures that support the implications of formative assessments leads to increased interdependence throughout the staff. Frequent formative assessments have been the vehicle that has driven our staff and students closer together to ensure that every student and staff member is able to reach their full potential at Russell School.