

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

Official School Name Horseshoe Bend Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 398 School Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Horseshoe Bend State ID Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 83629-8099

County Boise

Telephone (208) 793-2225 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.hsbschools.org E-mail larsonc@hsbschools.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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Dennis Chesnut E-mail chesnutd@hsbschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Horseshoe Bend School District (073) Tel. (208) 793-2225

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Chris Hall
(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.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

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):
- 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, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

| Grade | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| PreK | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| K | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| 1 | 11 | 6 | 17 |
| 2 | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| 3 | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| 4 | 12 | 6 | 18 |
| 5 | 11 | 6 | 17 |
| 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 | 56 | 43 | 99 |

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 88 % White
 - 8 % 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: 29%

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 | 13 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year | 11 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 24 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015 | 84 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.286 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 29 |

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 78 %
Total number students who qualify: 70

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
9 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
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 3 Other Health Impaired
- 2 Specific Learning Disability
- 0 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 3 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 | 6 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc. | 1 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 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 15:1
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% | 95% | 95% | 97% | 96% |
| High school graduation rate | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 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 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.
We foster a challenging educational environment where students become responsible, contributing citizens and life-long learners.
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

Horseshoe Bend Elementary's story is one of overcoming. Only three short years ago, we were rated a 2-star school, among the lowest in the state. We were facing adversity on many fronts. State funding was decreasing and Idaho found itself ranked 50th in the nation for per pupil spending. Our town, population 770, had been on a slow economic decline since the closing of our largest employer, a lumber mill, in 1998. Attempts to pass a supplemental levy for the district were lost at the polls and the town felt disheartened and divided. The position of the sole administrator, superintendent/K-12 principal, turned over 5 times in 3 years. Our business manager was charged and convicted of embezzling funds from the district. The obstacles seemed almost insurmountable.

Dysfunction at the administrative level left our school with very little leadership. Staff members and students were working hard, but with no common focus or direction. Amid trustee turnover, the school board appointed our long-time high school social studies teacher to be our superintendent/K-12 principal mid-year. He enlisted the first-grade teacher to fill the newly-created position of lead elementary teacher for leadership support at the elementary level. One of the first decisions made was to institute an assessment tool that would provide consistent, relevant data to analyze and help us assess our school's needs moving forward.

Because of our 2-star rating, the state department provided us with the support of a capacity builder to help guide us through the process of improving our school. Our capacity builder's suggestions came fast and furiously; she had a sense of urgency that was intimidating, yet compelling. She convinced us that large-scale change was necessary and would require a tremendous amount of work and buy-in from everyone on staff. She found a strong ally in our third grade teacher who taught at Holualoa Elementary School in Hawaii when they were recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2008; she displayed a high level of teacher efficacy and insisted on equity for all students. This helped the drive for school improvement gain traction among the staff. Our capacity builder promised that our students could and would show incredible growth if we committed to making changes. We had been trying fervently to crack the code for student achievement and growth with uneven results up until this point so, with trepidation and optimism, we followed her lead.

One advantage of a small school is the ability to make major changes in a short period of time, and that is just what we did. With only one teacher per grade level and only five additional instructional staff members, our vision did not have to move through the ranks and risk getting lost in translation. We were all present at the meetings where decisions were made and we all had opportunities for input and feedback along the way. Together, we committed to the process of improving our school.

Our first round of data analysis with our capacity builder was like baptism by fire. All the numbers and graphs and names and goals whirled through our heads as we tried to get a hold of something and create a frame of reference. She assured us the process would get easier, too. We took a hard, unflinching look at our student data compared to national norms. By the end of the day, we knew that, heading into the following year, we needed to create an infrastructure that would support a system to intervene and move our school in a more promising direction.

Many changes were made. We pledged to teach our ELA and math curricula to fidelity. We moved to a trimester system to coincide with our testing windows. We made student data and goals the focus of our parent teacher conferences. We created daily intervention for all students in ELA and math. We initiated weekly progress monitoring to allow for timely intervention changes. We scheduled a full day of group data analysis after each testing window and used the results to drive intervention, instructional, and curriculum decisions.

And, as our capacity builder promised, we started seeing results right away. At the end of our first full year of implementing these changes, our classes were showing very high conditional growth percentiles, some classes averaging above the 90th percentile, on the nationally normed MAP tests. Along with our students, their families, and our community, we began to come together as believers in the process and ourselves.

Things are looking up for Horseshoe Bend Elementary and the small town of Horseshoe Bend, aptly named after the horseshoe-shaped bend in the river that circles the town. The patrons, many of which live on limited income and commute fifty miles round-trip each day to work in the city of Boise, overwhelmingly voted in support of a recent supplemental levy that will help the school continue with our existing programs. Our students are feeling confident and proud of their newfound success as they begin to embrace a growth mindset and work hard to reach their goals. Our turnaround continues to gain momentum as we realize the potential for continued growth and achievement. Being recognized as an Idaho Blue Ribbon School and having the opportunity to apply for National Blue Ribbon School status is an honor that is breathing new life into the pride and efficacy of our students, families, and community.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

English Language Arts. Journeys ELA Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2012 with Common Core Companion. We teach all components of the Journeys curriculum to fidelity. This comprehensive curriculum includes daily instruction in comprehension, fluency, phonics, vocabulary, spelling, and writing, all of which are aligned to the Idaho Core Standards. Journeys is designed for schools who attend five days a week so our teachers double up on lessons one day each week to accommodate our four day school week. The Journeys curriculum has an online component, Think Central, that provides weekly progress monitoring and also gives teachers, students, and families unlimited access to all instructional resources and assessment results. Students in grades K-2 complete the curriculum in its entirety by the end of the school year while students in grades 3-5 finish prior to the start of our annual Idaho Standard Achievement Test. A new pacing guide is developed each spring for the following school year to ensure timely completion by all grade levels. In addition to Journeys, as soon as our students become emergent readers, we utilize Accelerated Reader (AR) software to encourage daily reading practice in self-selected AR books from classroom and school libraries. Our librarian works closely with students to encourage the selection of books that fall within each student's zone of proximal development in order to ensure their practice is at a level that is just right for both growth and challenge, with a balance of literature and informational texts.

Math. Eureka Basic Curriculum Files Great Minds 2015. We teach Eureka math curriculum to fidelity. Eureka is a comprehensive curriculum that sequences math progressions into 6-8 modules, depending on grade level, and is fully aligned to the Idaho Core Standards. The Eureka curriculum includes daily fluency practice, application problems, guided instruction, a problem set, an exit ticket, homework, and mid- and end-of-module assessments. In 2014-15, our second and third grades piloted the Eureka math program and our pilot teachers were impressed with the curriculum's rigor and emphasis on the mathematical practice standard that emphasizes reasoning, modeling, and communicating with math while encouraging multiple pathways to problem solving. A full school adoption took place in 2015-16. We work to create complex thinkers who are fearless and willing to reason through challenging problems without a thought of giving up. Peer- and self-assessment on daily math application problems using Eureka's 4-point rubric is highly engaging for students. They are taught how to analyze and judge each other's work with a high level of inter-rater reliability between students and teachers. A score of 4 on the rubric indicates mastery with evidence of solid reasoning and a correct answer. Through this ongoing process, the teachers and fellow classmates ensure that nearly all of the students are able to achieve a score of 4 by the end of the school year. As with our Journeys curriculum, we create pacing guides each spring to ensure we teach the entire curriculum to fidelity the following year.

Science. Our science is embedded in our Journeys curriculum in grades K-5. Teachers in grades 4-5 develop additional science units that align to Idaho's Science Standards, including the Nature of Science, Physical Science, Biology, Earth and Space Systems, and Personal and Social Perspectives/Technology. Students in 5th grade enjoy the tradition of attending Outdoor School where they spend a week learning directly from experts in the field in multiple science-related subjects. Our 5th graders also participate in the Adopt-A-Pilot program. Each week, their adopted pilot shares lessons in which the students build rockets, study wing design, and learn about physics and engineering.

Social Studies/History/Civic Learning and Engagement. Our Journeys curriculum incorporates social studies concepts through the ELA lessons for the duration of the year in grades K-5. In addition, our 3rd grade class enjoys a partnership with the local historical society as they facilitate historical walking tours of Horseshoe Bend and history treasure trunk presentations throughout the year. Students develop a sense of pride in their community and think about how their lives will add to the town's proud heritage. Our 4th grade class does an in depth study of the state of Idaho and participates in an annual Wagons Ho field trip that allows them to experience several aspects of Idaho frontier living. Our 5th grade class looks at history through a broader lens as they take in the entire United States. They do an extensive study of the founding documents and events of our country with a focus on the Preamble to the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. They create a classroom constitution to guide their interactions throughout the year. They also closely

follow the elections each year and learn about the Electoral College. We take very seriously our responsibility to prepare our students to be civically engaged, fully participating members of our democratic society. To that end, we put daily emphasis on our General Learner Outcomes, which include being a: Self-Directed Learner, Community Contributor, Complex Thinker, Quality Producer, Effective Communicator, and Effective/Ethical User of Technology. Developing these habits and skill sets allows our students to be civically engaged inside and outside their classrooms, now and into the future. Each year, our students write meaningful letters to leaders in different capacities around the world (i.e., POTUS, mayors, superintendents, leaders of other countries, leaders within government agencies, etc.) to express concerns and present ideas to encourage positive change. Many of the leaders respond and our students learn that, even though they are in elementary, they have a voice, it is powerful, and it can affect change.

Preschool. At Horseshoe Bend, we believe that an early foundation is one of the keys to future academic success. Though Idaho has yet to provide funding for preschool, we fully fund morning preschool four days a week for our community's four-year-old students and three-year-old special education students. For English Language Arts, we utilize Foundations Level K 2012 curriculum by Wilson Language Training Corporation to thoroughly teach the foundational skills of the Idaho State Standards and help ensure readiness for kindergarten and beyond. For math, we use Eureka Math by Great Minds which aligns perfectly to our K-5 program and is a vital part of our students' math foundation.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Art. Throughout decreased state funding and failed levy attempts, we have continued to support and place a high value on our art program and the positive impact of the creative thinking taught within. Each class, grades K-5, receives 80 minutes of art instruction each week. The art lessons are highly differentiated and student choice is respected and encouraged. When given the chance to explore their own ideas, passions, and interests, the students tend to find greater meaning and relevance in the work they plan, make, reflect upon, and share with others. Artworks exploring geography, history, music, science, philosophy, and biology are frequently chosen by students which complement and support the learning in the core curricula areas. Student artists reflect upon their work and share it with others. This methodology directly supports the Artist Habits of Mind which include: Develop Craft, Engage and Persist, Envision, Express, Observe, Reflect, Stretch and Explore, and Understand Art World. Students have the opportunity to showcase and sell their artworks each year through an art gallery showing located in a neighboring town. In addition to the visual arts component, students are also exposed to musical pieces and musical history that are woven in throughout the year as they are relevant and complementary to the visual arts lessons.

Physical Education. All elementary students enjoy 30-60 minutes a week of structured physical education time where they learn about various team sports and individual athletic activities. They also have an additional 50-60 minutes of unstructured physical play each day on the playground with access to basketball courts, foursquare courts, swings, jungle gyms, a Frisbee golf course, and open fields for football, soccer, and volleyball.

Technology. All elementary students receive 30-60 minutes of individualized keyboarding instruction each week using the Type to Learn 4 program which helps students improve their typing speed and accuracy and provides diagnostic, formative, and summative keyboarding assessments. In addition, they have access to mobile Chromebook labs and desktop computer labs for research, individualized learning, and assessments. The students experience cutting edge technology combined with art through the use of our 3-D printer and iPad animation applications as they get the opportunity to be innovative creators and problem solvers. Additionally, our 5th grade teacher advises a robotics club that is immensely popular with our students. Students meet after school to build and program robots and have begun competing in state competitions.

Library. All elementary students visit the school and town libraries for 30-60 minutes each week for organized lessons delivered by librarians. They are exposed to various books, authors, genres, reading strategies, and research steps and sources. They usually have at least one major author visit each year where they learn about the act of writing and craft of storytelling. They get support in finding books that are just right for their reading levels and interests in order to have optimum reading growth and enjoyment.

Character Education. Every other year, our counselor provides a series of character education classes for 30 minutes each week to each grade level. The students learn about a variety of character traits, including integrity, kindness, respect, and friendship through engaging stories, discussions, and activities. Our elementary character motto is: “Have Integrity. Show Respect. Be Kind.” When a staff member “catches” a student showing integrity, respect, or kindness, the student is recognized with a “Cream of the Crop” award and entered into a weekly drawing for a special treat. The time spent focusing on character education helps create a caring, inclusive, and responsible community of students in our elementary.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Instructional Methods. Our teachers are committed to teaching each piece of our ELA and math curricula to fidelity in order to expose every student to the entirety of the grade level content. Both curricula utilize the structure and sequence of direct instruction with stated learning goals, modeling, independent practice, checking for understanding, and various other methods. In addition to those methods enlisted throughout the curricula, our teachers encourage students to use each other as resources when asking questions and clarifying their understanding. Our teachers also facilitate the use of self- and peer-assessment with math application problems and the writing process. Students are shown grade level exemplars and rubrics to provide objectivity and roadmaps for improvements. In cases of peer-assessment, students have an opportunity to challenge and defend the assessment scores by holding student evidence up to the language in the rubrics and the grade level exemplars to support their claims. This results in a rich and deep understanding of the content.

Assessments. Every fall, winter, and spring, we assess our students using Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Aimsweb, CORE Phonics, and SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words). We schedule three days each year, one following each assessment window, for a thorough data analysis by the entire instructional and administrative staff. What we learn from the data on each of those days drives the majority of our decisions throughout the year. At the school and classroom levels, we are able to analyze big picture issues, like curriculum, instruction, and scheduling. At the individual student level, we use the data to set and monitor achievement goals and create action plans for students, teachers, Title I staff members, and families to support achieving those goals. In addition to the three major assessment efforts, we use Aimsweb and CORE Phonics for frequent progress monitoring so we can be quick to respond to changing student needs through intervention modifications and differentiation within the core instruction times. We also track and analyze assessment data from the Journeys ELA and Eureka math curricula in order to have triangulation of data and ensure we are acting on accurate information in our decision making. We keep our data on display in the teacher’s lounge and the lead teacher’s office as a point of quick reference and a reminder of our goals.

Interventions. When creating daily schedules, interventions are scheduled first as a priority to ensure that each class gets 30 to 40 minutes of intervention time for reading and math each day. Using the assessment data, specific intervention lesson plans are created for each student, regardless of achievement level, that focus on skills that will support growth, whether for closing identified learning gaps or emphasizing enrichment beyond grade level. During each scheduled intervention time, Title I staff members join with the classroom teacher and, often, high school student mentors and community volunteers in an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to allow the students to be divided into small, skill-specific groups that are appropriate for their individual needs. Title I staff members meet weekly with the Title I director to analyze progress monitoring data and adjust intervention plans of Title I students, as needed. Classroom teachers meet individually with the lead elementary teacher every three weeks to analyze progress monitoring data and core classroom assessment data and adjust intervention plans for all other students. The fluid nature of this process allows for flexibility and responsiveness in quickly meeting student needs.

Additional Foundational Skills Reading Intervention. After our first round of data analysis two years ago, we saw a pattern of low foundational reading skills almost across the board. We decided to implement the SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words) program for our entire elementary. SIPPS is a research-based intervention program that begins with an assessment that places students in groups according to their current level of proficiency in phonemic awareness, phonics,

and sight words. For 30 minutes each day, our students go to their SIPPS groups where a certified teacher or Title I paraprofessional provides instruction on the foundational reading skills. Students are frequently re-assessed and placed accordingly.

Care Team. Our classroom teachers, lead elementary teacher, superintendent/K-12 principal, school counselor, speech and language pathologist, and special education director meet weekly during lunch to discuss students who have been referred to the Care Team by the classroom teachers due to concerns of an academic, social, and/or emotional nature. The Care Team discusses potential methods of support for each student and creates action plans to eliminate as many hurdles as possible through school resources and connections in attempt to support student success.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Building Classroom Communities. We are a small school and we use it to our advantage when it comes to building community. We have only one teacher per grade level so a high percentage of our students attend school with the same classmates from the first day of kindergarten through high school graduation. Our students have the unique opportunity to get to know each other well and build the kinds of relationships that come from growing and learning together over the span of several years.

Growth Mindset. Our students and teachers, alike, embrace the growth mindset. Our students often assess their own work and that of their peers using detailed rubrics which give them the opportunity to see, specifically, ways in which they can improve. This method is explicitly taught and modeled by teachers with an emphasis on persistence in the quest for mastery of the material. Teachers continually go through a similar process, themselves, using Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (2007) rubric in order to grow as instructors. They allow themselves to be vulnerable through the instructional coaching process; they regularly analyze the evidence collected through classroom observations and reflect on their levels of performance with the goal of honing their craft for higher student achievement. At a recent professional development session, one of our newest teachers was expressing his appreciation for the support he receives in our school and he said, simply, “I can grow here.” That phrase captured the spirit of our culture.

Equity and Efficacy. We believe that all students should be afforded the same opportunities and high expectations for learning. We do not accept lower expectations for students who have difficult circumstances outside of the school setting. We work to combat those challenges, when possible, and intensely focus our efforts during the school day where we are able to control the setting. We believe that all students should be exposed to the same rigorous curriculum and that they can and will learn the material if we all put in the time and effort. This simple belief, although it requires a tremendous amount of deliberate effort, is one of the strongest influences of our high level of student success.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Goal-Setting Conferences with Families. Our teachers meet with each student’s family at least twice each year. In the beginning of the year, our teachers meet individually with each student and their parents in order to analyze fall assessment data and set year-end goals for the student. At this meeting, the group puts together plans for the families, teachers, and students that help support the student in meeting the goals. All parties agree to do their parts. At midyear, the groups meet again to analyze the progress made toward the goals, according to winter assessment data, and adjust plans as needed. The groups can also meet again, after spring assessments, in order to discuss summer plans, if necessary. This process ensures that families are aware of the achievement and growth of their students and it provides concrete ways for families to engage in partnership with the school in order to support their students throughout the year.

Communication. In addition to our goal-setting conferences with families, we communicate frequently via email, phone calls, mailed letters, weekly/daily communication folders, Facebook, and our district website to ensure our families are kept up to speed regarding their students’ academics, activities, and athletics. We also make ourselves available before school, after school, and other times by appointment for parents who request a meeting.

Community Partnerships. Although our town’s size lends itself to having a relatively small number of organizations, our school is fortunate to have some strong community partnerships. The local Placer Lodge sponsors a reading incentive program called Bikes for Books that awards six bicycles each year to students whose names are entered into a drawing based upon meeting and exceeding reading goals. The drawing assemblies are eagerly attended by students and the bikes are sometimes awarded to students who would otherwise not have an opportunity to own a bicycle. Our school also enjoys a partnership with the Horseshoe Bend Historical Society (HBHS). Members of the HBHS take the third grade class on an

historical walking tour of Horseshoe Bend every spring. Students are given booklets that show pictures of locations throughout the town as they looked 100+ years ago and how they look today. The guides share stories about locals of the past who have positively impacted the town, state, nation, and world in various ways; they encourage the students to have pride in their hometown and to contemplate how they might add to its rich history.

3. Professional Development:

Capacity Builder. Due to our 2-star rating in 2015, the state department of education gave us the opportunity to have a capacity builder work with our administration and teachers in order to improve our school. She came every week and was instrumental in helping us learn how to analyze data and use it to drive our instruction and interventions. She also encouraged us to teach our curricula to fidelity and trust that our students would show greater achievement as a result.

Reading Instruction. At the time of our 2-star rating, our students' reading scores were generally low. In an effort to improve, we received a year of professional development about the process of successfully teaching reading. Our teachers and Title I paraprofessionals learned, in depth, about each of the five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Our presenter told us about the "Matthew Effect" (the rich get richer and the poor get poorer) as it relates to students developing their reading skills. Those students who fall behind early on in the process of learning to read typically get exponentially further behind as the gap between those students and the higher achieving readers gets wider. She also helped us look specifically at our student data in order to structure our intervention lesson plans to best serve our struggling students and close the reading gaps. We continue to use what we learned through that professional development series every day in every classroom.

Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching and Instructional Coaching. Because "teacher quality is the single most important factor in a student's achievement" (Darling, 2000), we have dedicated much time and effort toward using Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2007) (FFT) to improve instruction. Our staff dedicates time each month to learn about the FFT and develop a common language and understanding of the FFT rubric and levels of teaching performance. This learning is then applied in the classrooms with our instructional coaching model. Our instructional coaches observe teacher instruction, type up evidence as it aligns to the FFT rubric, and provide it to teachers for reflection. Teachers then make adjustments to their instruction in order to ensure greater student achievement.

4. School Leadership:

Superintendent/K-12 Principal. Our superintendent/K-12 principal has a wide range of influence in our district. His clarity of purpose to ensure student success is visible in every decision he makes. He is very responsive to the needs expressed by the staff and carefully allocates our limited resources to ensure we have the manpower, programs, and supplies necessary to set the stage for student success. His clear, consistent, and focused leadership has created an atmosphere of positive morale and trust throughout the district that allows staff members to focus their energy on the task at hand of educating our students.

Lead Elementary Teacher/Title I Director/Instructional Coach. Our lead elementary teacher/Title I director/instructional coach provides various aspects of leadership in the elementary school. She creates schedules for all classes with a priority on providing 30-40 minutes of intervention in both ELA and math each day in every classroom. She ensures that progress monitoring of student performance is ongoing and oversees the Title I paraprofessionals in making sure the interventions received by the students are specific to their needs and positively impacting student achievement. She collates the data collected during the fall, winter, and spring testing windows and leads the staff in a thorough data analysis that drives goal setting, instruction, and future interventions. She also provides a professional development series about Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT) with the overall goal of improving instruction. In tandem with the professional development series, she works as one of two instructional coaches who observe in classrooms, collect and align evidence according to Danielson's FFT, and facilitate reflective conversations with teachers in order to support a growth mindset in improving teacher instruction.

Instructional Coach/Mentor Teacher/3rd Grade Teacher. Our third grade teacher plays several leadership roles as well. In addition to teaching third grade, she works alongside the lead elementary teacher in the process of instructional coaching and also provides intensive mentoring to our teachers who are new to the profession. She previously worked at Halualoa Elementary School, in Hawaii, at the time when they were honored as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2008 and she brings from that a sense of efficacy and equity along with a relentless drive for student success that is inspiring.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Bell to Bell Teaching to Fidelity. Our school operates on a 4-day week, so we all share a feeling of urgency in making the most of every minute and teaching “bell to bell.” We have made a commitment to teach our math and ELA curricula to fidelity and to create pacing guides each year in order to keep us on track to finish before the year end. Our curricula is designed for schools who function on a 5-day week so our teachers create weekly schedules that often include teaching 2 lessons a day, one day a week, in math and ELA.

Frequent Assessments and Data-Driven Decisions. Our comprehensive assessments take place in the fall, winter, and spring. In addition, we administer other forms of assessment that tease out very specific foundational skill gaps for individual students. Administrators, teachers, and Title I paraprofessionals, together, gather to analyze all student achievement data from various perspectives, ranging from district-wide aggregate data, classroom- and teacher-level data, and individual student-specific data. In analyzing this data, we reflect on the effectiveness of our programs and use the results to drive our instruction, curriculum, and intervention programs moving forward.

Daily Interventions for All. Every day in each classroom, all students receive 30-40 minutes of intervention in both ELA and math according to their specific needs as identified through our comprehensive and foundational skills assessments. The classroom teacher and the Title I paraprofessionals work with small groups to close the gaps of struggling students and to challenge those students who are already solid. We create schedules with these interventions as a priority; the rest of the instruction is then scheduled around the time remaining.

Goal Setting and Parent Partnerships. In the fall, we meet with parents to review student assessment data and end-of-year goals. During this meeting, we put together plans for the parents, the school staff, and the student that will help the student meet his or her goals. In the winter, we meet again with the parents to check on the progress toward the end-of year goals. At this time, we make adjustments to the plans, if necessary. At year end, we look at the summative data and make determinations regarding program recommendations for the summer and/or following school year. This helps all of us to speak the same language and support our students on every front.