

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Dr. Christine L. Pfaff

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

Official School Name Prairie Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1530 Brandywyn Lane

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

City Buffalo Grove State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60089-1003

County Illinois (IL)

Telephone (847) 634-3144 Fax (847) 821-7571

Web site/URL http://www.kcsd96.org/p/ E-mail cpfaff@kcsd96.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\*Mrs. Julie Schmidt E-mail jschmidt@kcsd96.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Kildeer Countryside School District 96 Tel. (847) 459-4260

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 Mr. Marc Tepper  
(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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 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	38	28	66
2	44	30	74
3	51	51	102
4	44	47	91
5	35	55	90
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
<b>Total Students</b>	212	211	423

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 43 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 47 % White
  - 5 % 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: 5%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	14
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	8
(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	431
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.051
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 23 %  
98 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Albanian-Tosk, Bisaya (Malaysia), Bulgarian, Cantonese (Chinese), Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin (Chinese), Marathi, Mongolian, Oriya, Panjabi (Punjabi), Polish, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu (Telegu), Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3 %  
Total number students who qualify: 12
8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %  
40 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
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 2 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 8 Other Health Impaired
- 8 Specific Learning Disability
- 17 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: 7
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	20
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 22:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	97%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**  
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2016.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.  
Ensure every child achieves his or her maximum potential. Become the premier elementary school district in the nation.
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**

---

Prairie Elementary School is a positive learning environment where rigorous curriculum and best practice come together making student learning the priority. Prairie is one of seven schools in Kildeer Countryside Community Consolidated School District 96 in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. The District includes one early childhood/kindergarten center, four elementary schools, and two middle schools and serves residents from Buffalo Grove, Hawthorn Woods, Kildeer, Lake Zurich, and Long Grove. Students come from middle and upper-middle income families residing mostly in single-family homes representing wide cultural diversity and family backgrounds.

The faculty is comprised of veteran and new teachers who collaborate to challenge students daily toward higher levels of achievement. Collaboration between parents, school, and the administration contributes to making Prairie a world-class school, visited often by educators from other districts who come to see a model Professional Learning Community.

Prairie has been at the forefront of numerous awards within the District and state. The Illinois Those Who Excel program has recognized Prairie staff as a part of the District 96 Technology Team and, in 2014, one of our Teachers was a finalist for Illinois Teacher of the Year. Prairie is recognized as an Apple Distinguished Program school and has been cited as a Top 50 Chicagoland school six times and a Lake County Top 50 school twice, in 2010 and 2014. The Illinois State Board of Education awarded Prairie Academic Excellence in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, and the IAHPERD Physical Education Blue Ribbon in 2009.

Prairie students demonstrate high levels of achievement in literacy, math, science, and social studies. Physical education is instructed daily to promote healthy living. Music and art classes create opportunities for creative expression. The 1:1 iPad program allows students on-going technology use in all classes with access to numerous online applications. Exploration Lab provides students with a collaborative workspace where they can make and explore topics using low-tech materials. Social-emotional learning is embedded into instruction each day where students continue to learn and practice the CASEL Five Core Competencies. Band is open to 4th and 5th graders with orchestra starting in 4th grade. After school, students can participate in a variety of clubs such as photography, Student Council, After School Sports, Choir, Rhythm Band, Girls on the Run, Newspaper, Sign Language, Creative Coding, and STEAM. The Talent Show offers students the opportunity to showcase skills developed in and outside of school and is one way Prairie embraces its rich cultural diversity. For students in need of academic support in literacy and math, a tiered system of interventions is delivered during a daily 30-minute intervention block period, which also provides non-intervention students opportunities for extended learning.

While proud of the aforementioned accomplishments, Prairie faculty and staff continue to be focused on continuous improvement. Teacher leadership is fostered through a Leadership Team comprised of teachers from grade level and specials area teams. The Leadership Team meets weekly to determine staff needs, design professional development, and create learning opportunities that align with building and District goals with a focus on state and local assessment results and input from staff regarding desired learning. Staff and administration also continue to develop leadership skills and work to build leadership capacity in other teachers. Grade level teams conduct a one hour literacy and a one hour math meeting per week attended by coaches who provide professional development and guidance. Additionally, teams meet at least one more time each week to review other content areas. Our co-taught ELL or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) classroom teachers/language development coaches meet weekly to design differentiated instruction for all students while honing in on learning needs of CLD students.

The district mission is to ensure that every child achieves his or her maximum potential. The district values support the mission: model for others what we expect from others; every child, every school, every day; best practice, not first practice; learning has no boundaries; and celebrate success.

A rigorous curriculum assures that the mission is honored every day and, when needed, a rigorous four-stage interview process, conducted by teachers and administration, ensures that we employ candidates with the

same philosophy and dedication. A growth mindset ensures that Prairie staff is never satisfied with their performance. Continuous improvement is evidenced by becoming a Kagan Engagement and Thinking Maps school, and by building the capacity of coaches to differentiate professional development for all staff members including paraprofessionals. Additionally, parents and community members are actively involved in school events and district discussions.

Prairie's greatest strength is its positive atmosphere, where students feel welcome, safe, and challenged to take risks and strive for excellence. The entire staff prides itself on collaborating to ensure that each student succeeds. True partnership among home, school, and the District 96 community facilitates this collaboration and serves to benefit students every day.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

---

### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Prairie is committed to consistent, vertically-articulated curriculum for all 1st-5th grade students. This goal is pursued with Common Core-aligned programming, best-practice instruction, and common assessments. Classroom teachers, specialists, support staff, and Administrators share a common vocabulary and expectations during collaboration focused on continued growth for all children.

Prairie engages in ongoing professional development around the common core-aligned literacy program, ReadyGen 2.0. This research-based curriculum was chosen for its lesson structure and balanced literacy approach. The pacing of fiction and nonfiction texts allows for spiraled instruction of learning targets. ReadyGen crafts lessons wherein the writing component is aligned to the reading objective(s) it follows. Writing also spirals through various genres to support text-dependent writers. All genres are supported with The Write Tools as structures for building and organizing writing. The Write Tools structures are prime examples of how students at Prairie build upon prior knowledge.

To complete the literacy block, teachers design data-driven differentiated learning stations mirroring the skills modeled in shared reading of complex text. In order to meet the needs of all learners, small group reading instruction may be comprised of homogeneous groups, students with similar reading levels or target proficiency, or heterogeneous groups to foster a positive classroom and support metacognition via peer modeling. Small group instruction may also be guided by Words Their Way, our word study curriculum. First and second grade students are also supported with additional teacher and paraprofessional guided reading and writing groups through the Team Read and Team Write programs for 30 minutes four times each week.

The school is well-equipped with supplemental learning materials such as leveled texts, online libraries, and more to support each child in literacy acquisition. A guaranteed and viable balanced literacy block is achieved with the collection of ReadyGen, Words Their Way, Write Tools, and quality Teachers working together for the benefit of all students.

The math curriculum centers around the Common Core Mathematics Standards of Numbers and Operations in Base Ten, Numbers and Operations-Fractions, Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Measurement and Data, and Geometry and the district-approved curriculum of Everyday Math is used as a resource. Instruction focuses on conceptual understanding so students understand the “why” behind the “how.” Through the use of specific mathematical vocabulary and multiple models and strategies, students become problem solvers and critical thinkers. Other resources such as Eureka, Envisions, Hands2Mind, and our math coaches are used when planning for differentiated instruction.

In order to plan differentiated instruction, students are given a pre-assessment before the start of a unit. This provides data on each student’s target entry level. Math targets are paced at three levels: Developing, Mastery, and Extending, providing focus for small group instruction and independent activities. Students who Extend engage in target-based extension activities, which challenge students to “dig deeper” within the target rather than immediately accelerating. The Mastery targets address the end of grade expectation and the Developing targets focus on building conceptual level knowledge. All leveled learning targets are written using Marzano and Kendall’s Taxonomy as a guide, which arranges the rigor of cognitive tasks from low to high-order thinking. The pre-assessments lead to data discussions and allow teachers and coaches to plan whole and small group instruction. Finally, instruction is planned using the Standards of Mathematical Practice, ensuring that students are thinking as mathematicians and challenging themselves.

The Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science are the foundation for Prairie’s social studies instruction. The targets in grades K-5 include content about students’ community to the global world, and include geography, economics, civics, and history. Social studies content is also the focus in our Learning Center class where students engage in inquiry-based learning using the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework from NCSS, to teach global awareness and civic responsibility. Additionally, Prairie’s reading curriculum is

closely tied to Social Studies concepts where students read and write based on topics related to civic responsibility.

In Science, all classroom teachers use the NGSS-aligned program, TCI Science. Students are regularly involved with inquiry-based science lessons where they examine scientific relationships, theories, and understandings through investigative experiments and engaging scientific reading. This program was chosen after a committee of teachers, coaches, and administration examined the standards to find a hands-on, well-organized, vertically articulated science curriculum.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Prairie's non-core curriculum classes, taught by the Specials team, include art, music, physical education and health, Learning Center, Exploration Lab, and optional band and orchestra. Orchestra is offered starting at 4th grade and Band at 5th grade; all other classes are instructed 1st - 5th grades. Art (60 minutes), Learning Center and Exploration Lab (30 minutes) are offered once per week. Music class is offered twice per week for 30 minutes. Physical education is offered daily. Band and Orchestra conduct weekly sectional lessons and whole group practices.

Though the Specials team does not have common learning targets, they do have common students; therefore, they meet weekly to discuss professional development, best instructional practices, and the social-emotional needs of students. We develop SMART goals based upon data in each content area. The critical friends process is used to assist in honing instructional strategies to improve student outcomes. SMART goals are reviewed at the beginning, middle, and end of the target's instructional time frame.

Prairie's literacy coach works with teams to develop skills around best instructional practices for Literacy and vocabulary development. This professional development is complimented by the assistance of the Language Development Coach (LDC) who further broadens understanding of how English language learners acquire language and the supports these students need. The LDC also reviews the ELL students' ACCESS data to inform understanding of students' current development in the English language. Additionally, the LDC expands knowledge of the WIDA: Can Do Descriptors grade level documents, adding to the understanding of what students can do at each level of their listening, speaking, reading, and writing development. The social worker visits team meetings twice monthly to provide updates on students, including students with new IEPs or 504 plans and any changes to students' existing plans. This time is also used to discuss ways in which to support students regarding behaviors and social-emotional learning.

In art, students study various artists and create projects using artists' styles and techniques. Many projects include the use of digital tools further developing students' digital literacy skills. Students publish their artwork online and create artist statements. Students learn the basics of line, symmetry, form, shape, color, space, and texture. The art teacher frequently highlights students' work on the District 96 twitter feed #inspire96. In music, students learn to sing and perform using proper vocal techniques and creative movement. They also develop an understanding of the history of music, composers, and instruments such as recorders and ukuleles. School musicals are performed by second, fourth and fifth graders along with a recorder caroling concert when third graders visit classrooms to perform. Through the music curriculum, students learn to appreciate creative endeavors as an audience member and participant.

Prairie's Blue Ribbon Physical Education program provides rigorous activities and skills for students to develop high standards of physical fitness, team building, and health. This well-balanced curriculum is progressive in nature and increases the rigor and opportunities for physical development. PE teachers differentiate instruction based upon students' strengths. Illinois state health standards are embedded into PE every trimester with the school social worker joining class to assist in teaching the human growth and development unit, which includes Erin's Law. The social worker's presence in class during these units of instruction further develops relationships with students and provides a bridge making it easier for students to reach out if needed. Traditions play a big part of our PE program too including an all school and community Fun Run, Jump Rope for Heart, and Field Day.

Through visits to the Learning Center, students learn basic library skills and nurture an appreciation for reading and research. Grade level informational literacy learning targets focused on social studies themes are taught in the Learning Center class. Digital citizenship is explicitly taught to all grade levels during Learning Center time throughout the school year. In addition, Prairie's Exploration Lab introduces and practices the engineering design process through a variety of projects and technology. Technology is embedded into classroom and specials instruction following the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards and Common Core State Standards through 1:1 iPad use for every student. Additionally, 4th and 5th graders have the opportunity to participate in band and orchestra through instrument and sectional lessons and concert performances.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

At Prairie, the goal is to provide all students with a curriculum that meets their diverse learning styles and needs as well as challenges them to achieve their maximum potential with teachers employing a myriad of research-based instructional strategies. Prairie teachers worked collaboratively with faculty from across the district to develop learning targets that scaffold students' knowledge and understanding and utilize a set of standards for each grade level that contain Developing, Mastery, and Extends level targets. Developing targets identify pre-target skills, Mastery targets indicate grade level expectations, and Extends targets strive to extend the target.

To determine student needs based instruction, teachers meet in collaborative teams several times a week to analyze student data and determine instructional methods. Prairie's literacy, math, technology, and information literacy coaches attend these meetings to lend content area expertise, model instruction, serve as a resource, and assist in analyzing patterns of errors and areas for extension based on pre-assessment and common formative assessment data (CFA). Focus is also given to special education and CLD students' data and progress during these discussions.

In a math meeting, for example, pre-assessment data is used to determine the level of Mastery students have for each learning target. On the pre-assessment, if a student has demonstrated Mastery of a target, that student will work to achieve the Extends target while other students receive instruction to gain Mastery. To accomplish this, whole class instruction is provided at the start of lessons for reinforcement and reteaching, followed by teacher-led, guided math instruction where students are grouped based on learning needs. These groups may change daily, as informed by pre-assessment and CFA data. In this way, students are all able to receive instruction at their instructional level. When not engaged in teacher-led instruction, students work independently on differentiated, target-based activities.

Additionally, Prairie has a significant ELL or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) student population. Ten CLD classroom teachers are paired with a Language Development Coach (LDC). Co-teachers use students' cultural and linguistic assets to co-plan and co-teach lessons, which ensure that students have access to grade level curriculum. Co-teachers support CLD students' academic language acquisition by using the student portrait, which includes their level of language proficiency. CLD communication expectations are aligned to grade level standards, as well as WIDA's "Can Do" descriptors to provide CLD students with opportunities for success and growth.

Students who struggle with core content are provided Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions in the areas of literacy and math. Need for these interventions is determined by universal screeners conducted three times a year including: NWEA-MAP test, curriculum-based measures (AIMSweb), ISEL, and QRI. Classroom based assessments are reviewed as well, along with Teacher input. Tier 2 interventions are provided 2-3 times weekly in groups of four or less and instructed by a trained paraprofessional. Tier 3 interventions are provided in a 1:1 setting daily by the math coach or reading specialist. Student progress is monitored regularly and reviewed every 6-8 weeks by teachers and our Pyramid of Intervention Team to determine whether the level of support should be increased, decreased, or terminated.

If students demonstrate Mastery before instruction on the target is complete, they explore Extends targets. Identifying which students are ready for Extends instruction is also a collaborative process between teachers and coaches and is based on student data. The nature of the instruction is dependent upon the specific target

as well as the student. In general, teachers and coaches strive to first deepen a student's understanding of a particular target prior to accelerating them to the next level. This equips students with a deep foundational knowledge of all aspects of a given target. Students working on Extends targets may, for example, work on a Teacher/Coach created project that applies a particular target to the real world. Additionally, students performing at very high levels in math, as determined by NWEA-MAP scores and rigorous district developed assessments, move to an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) of instruction, which is specifically tailored to the student's level of achievement and delves into more challenging math content.

In clearly identifying what our students should know and be able to do, frequently assessing students in ways that are embedded into instruction, and collaboratively making instructional decisions based on student data, Prairie ensures that all students have access to a curriculum that is both rigorous and tailored to their current level of learning.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Prairie is an environment where social-emotional growth is valued to the same extent as academic growth. Skill development in self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship building, and problem solving are an integral part of the school. All staff recognize the importance of a positive learning environment in order to engage, motivate, and support students. Prairie has worked diligently to create opportunities for student growth outside the rigor of academia. A culture of connectedness is pervasive across settings at Prairie. Staff has recognized the importance of a “common language” for expectations and creating a community of students and staff that care for each other. The “Positively Prairie” program is the cornerstone of this connection. A team of staff members create experiential lessons that are taught monthly in all classrooms. Older and younger students foster a connection to each other via “Classroom Buddy” activities, which occur monthly. Twice a year, staff and students participate in a half-day activity that reinforces expectations and creates opportunities for relationship development. Students are honored weekly for positive behaviors via “WOW” recognition slips and for academic successes via the “Prairie Pride” program. Monthly social-language lessons provided by the speech-language pathologist and social worker, and classroom meetings further encourage positive interdependence.

Students have a plethora of activities to choose from to enhance their connectedness to the school. Programs include: Book, Coding, STEAM, Roller Skating, Photography, Sign Language, Girls on the Run, Newspaper, Helping Others Together, Rhythm Band, Choir, and Student Leadership Clubs. Staff and students connect during special events such as our Schoolyard Scamper Fun Run, Jump Rope for Heart, Pizza BINGO, Monster Bash, teacher/student and principal/student lunches and “Principal for a Day” activities.

Prairie’s staff culture is one of collaboration rather than competition. Opportunities to learn from one another are abundant and staff-driven professional development is frequent. Authentic learning experiences such as Learning Walks allow staff to explore one another’s unique teaching styles and classroom environments. The embedded, rich, tradition of staff celebrating and encouraging one another can be seen in the weekly staff newsletter -“The Puma Post” - through staff-lounge celebrations, special lunches, raising money for causes, and through extracurricular activities planned by the staff to foster connectedness. Staff at Prairie do not exist in isolation and every role is integral to our shared success. From our custodians, lunch staff, administrative assistants, paraprofessionals, teachers, specialists, and the principal there is a genuine care and need for one another.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

A belief that strong home-school connections are important in educating successful global citizens and lifelong learners is fostered at Prairie. One way this occurs is through the Guiding Coalition on Interculturalism (GCI). GCI is a district-level committee that partners with a local consulting organization. GCI’s purpose is to be a learning community that reflects and connects D96’s values of diversity and inclusion; aligns parents, educators, and students in cultural and educational experiences; and engages with a wide audience. One Prairie parent, a newcomer from Japan, was an integral part of the GCI this school year and served to educate the staff on Japanese culture and family structure enhancing the staffs’ skills in working with Japanese families.

Prairie is committed to home-school partnerships from the moment a family arrives. Parents are welcomed in multiple languages by a wall of graphic art. The office staff and Principal greet new families, assist with questions, and provide a school tour. International students and parents are provided an interpreter to ensure clear communication. Clear communication throughout the school year is ensured through electronic communication like Prairie’s website, teacher emails, twitter, and the weekly Principal’s Message. Report cards are accessed electronically and translated when needed.

Interactive events are hosted at Prairie to partner with families and create an inclusive and supportive

culture. Parents are taught academic and social-emotional strategies to promote common language and create strong home-school connections. This starts before school begins when students are invited to meet their teacher and explore classrooms. Other events include New Family Orientation, Curriculum Night, Math and Literacy Nights, Family Reading Night, and Conferences. Interpreters are present at conferences when needed.

Prairie celebrates its diversity and school culture by showcasing its students creative work and talents. Parents are welcomed to volunteer or experience activities at Prairie such as holiday parties, mystery reader, musicals, art shows, talent shows, band and orchestra concerts, wax museum, community day, and an immigration simulation. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) purchased grade level t-shirts for students to wear during school-wide social-emotional learning events.

Prairie school also partners with local businesses to ensure the success of its students including the local park district to provide a before and after school club for working parents. Local library personnel are invited to promote its services and programs. PTO sponsored cultural arts assemblies are scheduled to increase students' awareness of history and culture.

### **3. Professional Development:**

At Prairie, professional development is a key component in equipping educators to ensure that every child achieves his or her maximum potential while receiving a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Educators actively engage in professional development at the team, grade, and District levels throughout the school year and summer with the professional development being provided by Administrators, Instructional Coaches, Teachers, and outside consultants. Additionally, professional development is not a “one and done” event at Prairie or the District, in that all learning is supported continually. As one example, Kagan engagement training has been on-going in our District for several years and is a daily expectation in all classrooms.

Technology, math, literacy, and informational literacy coaches provide job-embedded training at district, faculty, and team meetings and to individual teachers. The benefit of coaching can be seen daily in classrooms as coaches assist teachers in developing lessons, assessments, and rubrics to better serve students through coaching, collaborating, and co-teaching. The technology coach leads all teams on twice yearly Learning Walks where the team collaboratively determines a focus, such as student engagement or differentiated technology, to focus on during the walk. The team learns and reflects on practice together following the walk.

New teachers enjoy a two-year mentor program. During Year 1, teachers work 1:1 with a mentor and in Year 2, teachers work in groups no larger than five supported by a mentor. During this time, new teachers receive support around the district's mission, vision, and values; goals; curriculum; assessments; data analysis protocols; and culture. Teachers participate in weekly mentor meetings, Learning Walks, Japanese Lesson Study, and monthly District-wide new teacher meetings. Paraprofessionals are integral to student success. Therefore, each month, all paraprofessionals receive professional development provided by teachers, coaches, and the principal to foster continued growth to impact student achievement. Learning has encompassed topics such as tiered vocabulary, ELL instructional strategies, technology apps, and social-emotional learning.

When needed, assistance is provided from outside consultants. Team leaders meet three times per year with a leadership expert and coaches attend monthly coaching academies led by experts in the coaching field. This year for example, team leaders and coaches came together to deepen their understanding and facilitation practices around leading data conversations. Additionally, all Prairie and district staff members have been working with a cultural proficiency expert who serves to broaden knowledge around working with different cultures and ethnicities.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

As part of a Professional Learning Community, Prairie values frequent and on-going collaboration of all stakeholders in the school community. The many facets of successful leadership are evident as teams work towards meeting district and school goals. The building principal partners with four elementary-level colleagues to ensure the school's success and focus are driven by the mission, vision, and values of District 96's yearly goals.

In conjunction with the building principal, there is a building leadership team. This leadership team is comprised of a grade-level representative as well as one leader from each of the three specialist teams. Together this leadership team meets weekly to collaborate on providing support and professional development for all staff in meeting identified goals. All team leaders participate in extensive training throughout the school year. This training focuses on building team leaders' facilitation skills. Team leader participants celebrate building-wide successes and problem solve collectively. The role of team leader is not easily defined as there are many responsibilities that fall under this umbrella. Directives of a team leader include, but are not limited to: facilitating team meetings, initiating and carrying out data discussions focused on student achievement, creating environments that promote professional learning and opportunities for growth in other teachers' leadership skills, and ensuring district goals and initiatives are supported.

As a collaborative culture, Prairie teachers work alongside the Instructional coaches in the building: literacy, informational literacy, technology, and math coaches. Coaches meet with grade level teams twice weekly and with individual teachers to support student achievement through teacher's learning. In addition, grade level teams meet weekly to further investigate student and team needs. Meetings focus on student data, further learning around standards, teaching strategies, as well as collaborative planning for instruction, intervention, and enrichment.

Another integral part of the leadership community at Prairie, includes the Pyramid of Intervention Team (PIT) including: social worker, psychologist, occupational & speech therapists, math coach, reading specialist, special education teachers, language development coach, principal, and when needed, itinerant consultants. Weekly, these individuals come together to discuss student data and collaborate with teachers to aid in students' academic and behavior achievement. PIT shares their expertise to ensure that all tiered students are receiving the supports appropriate for their learning and success.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

Prairie students reach high levels on all standard measures of achievement. Student success is a direct result of the belief that all students can and will achieve. Learning is the fundamental purpose of Prairie school. Through various assessment tools, student learning is monitored and instruction is adjusted to allow for high levels of performance for each student.

Common formative and summative assessments are designed by teacher teams with support from the district job-alike group and coaches. These assessments are Common Core aligned and created to identify multiple levels of mastery. The value is not in the assessments themselves, but in the way the data is utilized. Data from these assessments is discussed with the grade level team and content coach to develop appropriate teaching strategies and resources. This discussion continues throughout the unit to understand how teaching strategies should be adjusted and what interventions are needed.

In addition to common assessments, Prairie students take multiple external assessments. The NWEA-MAP test is administered three times each year. This provides all Prairie teachers the opportunity to assess a student's success, growth, and areas for improvement so that student activities can be differentiated within each classroom to address individual needs. Additionally, students take the PARCC assessment to assess higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving and as a means to evaluate written arguments. Analyzing the results allows us to better understand our students and curriculum and determine any needed changes.

Assessments are also used to determine qualifications for tiered interventions. The NWEA-MAP test is the initial indicator which leads to further screening using AimsWeb probes for literacy and math. These include: CBM, MAZE, M-CAP, M-COMP, and ISEL. These probes offer additional data points and can also be used as an instructional focus for students receiving tiered intervention support.

Similarly, second language learners are assessed using the ACCESS test and the W-APT language screener. The W-APT language screener is administered to help place students into co-taught classrooms. The ACCESS tests give us a snapshot of where students are on a continuum of second language acquisition. The ACCESS test, in conjunction with the WIDA Can-Do descriptors, provides appropriate supports for each stage of second language acquisition.

Ultimately, Prairie students are successful because the Prairie staff believes that all students can learn. Balanced and coherent assessment tools provide the necessary data to guide collaboration and instructional decisions that keep the focus on student learning.