

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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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	28	21	49
K	42	21	63
1	22	22	44
2	33	14	47
3	25	29	54
4	39	17	56
5	28	24	52
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	217	148	365

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 91 % White
 - 2 % 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: 8%

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	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	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	27
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	325
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.083
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

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

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

Hindi, Spanish, Swahili

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 54 %
Total number students who qualify: 172
8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %
60 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.

- 4 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 2 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 13 Other Health Impaired
- 6 Specific Learning Disability
- 32 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:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	13
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 20:1
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
13. Daily student attendance	96%	98%	97%	95%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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.

Otsego Public Schools is a student-centered learning community empowering every individual to achieve excellence.

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

Dix Street Elementary (DSE) is a school of approximately 320 students. We are located in the north suburbs of Kalamazoo, MI yet many people from our district commute to Grand Rapids and Holland for employment as well. Dix Street Elementary students come from various parts of the community including rural and exurban areas as well as from the City of Otsego. The racial make-up of Otsego, according to the US Census of 2010 was 95.2% White, 0.6% African American, 0.3% Native American, 0.5% Asian, 1.2% from other races, and 2.1% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 3.3% of the population. The makeup of Dix Street Elementary is 0.83% Asian, 1.66% African American, 3.59% Hispanic, 91.16% White, and 2.76% multiracial. The percent of economically disadvantaged is 54%, 19% receive Special Education services, and 3.23% are on 504 plans.

Several years ago the town's two paper mills closed but one of them has since reopened. In the last three years, there has been an effort to revitalize the downtown area with acceptance into the Michigan Main Street program. Although there has been some economic growth, the town continues to struggle to provide jobs for its residents. Most folks commute for employment. That said, the community is very supportive of the schools, and perceive the schools as the center of the community.

DSE is committed to the Response to Intervention (RTI)/Professional Learning Community (PLC) process. Our instructors hold a deep belief that all students can learn at high levels, therefore our focus is on learning. The school structures that support this belief include a culture of collaboration, a sense of collective responsibility, and a focus on data to inform decision-making. Building level PLCs and common planning at each grade level afford the time required to address student-specific needs as well as reflection on Tier I curriculum and pedagogy. The results of this collaboration have been common intervention/enrichment time Kindergarten (K)-2nd grade and 3rd-5th grade, where students are grouped, based on data, for targeted intervention/enrichment based on each student's specific needs.

There is a School Leadership Team (SLT) made up of a teacher from each grade level, administration, and representatives from our Title I staff. This team acts as the research and development group for academics. Federal, State, district, and building initiatives are discussed, planned and piloted by the members of this team. These “non-negotiable” initiatives are informed by the work of Otsego Public School's (OPS) district K-12th grade vertical PLCs and include curricular, pedagogical, and structural improvements that affect student learning. Moreover, school-level ideas, such as improvements to RTI, schedules, and patterns of support are discussed and taken back to grade level PLCs for input.

There is also a Student Engagement Team (SET) made up of a teacher from each grade level. This team plans for events, assemblies, and student support structures that enhance students' social and emotional development. Events and programs planned and implemented by this team include character development assemblies and events, after-school programs, anti-bullying events and assemblies, March is Reading Month activities, and other activities and events that increase student engagement at school.

Other strategies/programs that effect the growth of the “whole student” are developed and implemented by the DSE Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) as well as department-specific teams such as Physical Education, Technology, Student Support, and Fine Arts. Examples of these programs are STEAM-Lego Robotics competition, Physical Activity With Spirit!, JumpStart!, Art Club, China Art Exchange, Fair Housing Calendar Art program, Battle of the Books, P.R.I.D.E. character development, Watch D.O.G.S., curriculum-based field trips, Capturing Kids' Hearts training, and School Social Work classroom character/anti-bullying lessons.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Dix Street Elementary (DSE) ensures alignment with the adopted State Standards and articulates the alignment via PLCs, as well as Vertical PLCs (K-12) in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies. This ongoing process continues to bring alignment to all curriculum areas.

DSE works deliberately to ensure that Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III systems are in place within the curriculum provided. We believe that all students can learn at high levels. The variable for learning is time. Some students will need more time to work in Tier II and in Tier III to be on track.

The Tier I curriculum for Reading/English Language Arts is the Reading/Writing workshop model in the classroom using the Daily 5 structure. Within that structure, we ensure that all students receive 120 minutes of instruction a day with 90 minutes focused on reading and 30 minutes on writing. For reading, students are instructed on reading strategies based on running record data that the teachers collect. Whole group instruction are mini lessons followed by Daily 5 rotations where students apply and deepen their learning while the teacher conferences 1:1 with students. We use the Write-Steps program for writing instruction which is a program aligned to the state standards and provides explicit instruction on the three main types of writing. Through PLCs, we make a conscious effort to continuously review data and our core reading structures. As a result, DSE has been able to raise our student's state test scores for third graders to 84% proficient in 2015 and 75% in 2016 with the state average coming in at only 46%.

In mathematics, we use Envisions 2.0 by Pearson which is a rigorous common core aligned program with an emphasis on problem solving and conceptual understanding. Students are challenged daily with problems that encourage them to use strategies to think conceptually through mathematics. Our teachers have worked diligently to tighten our Tier 1 instruction for math by using common assessments and discussing data and teaching practices in PLCs. Our building has been successful with this work, increasing our Math scores as a building on the state assessment by thirty percent since 2011 while also shifting to a new and more rigorous state assessment in 2015. DSE significantly exceeds the state average in math.

In science, we use the Battle Creek Kits for Science which are hands-on and are supported by trade books that are focused on the required scientific topics, content, and skills. In 2014-15, DSE had the opportunity to work with a professor of science education on sabbatical from Grand Valley State University. She worked with PLCs to unpack our Tier 1 curriculum and narrow our focus by identifying essential lessons in science. With this work our scores increased from 18% of our students proficient in 2015 to 38% proficient in 2016. The statewide average in 2016 was 12% proficient.

Our Social Studies curriculum is Social Studies Alive! by Pearson which offers interactive lessons and textbooks. Primary sources are included in all lessons providing students with engaging opportunities to develop critical thinking skills. Civic learning begins in Kindergarten and first grade with Social Studies Alive! where students are examining the world around them, their family, their school, and their community. In 2nd grade, they learn about economics and citizenship in the context of their local community. From there, the lens broadens and economics and citizenship are then taught through the lens of regions of the country. In 4th grade, all students visit Michigan's Capitol in Lansing. This past year they attended a bill signing ceremony. The 5th grade field trip to Henry Ford's Greenfield Village focuses on Michigan history and the history of manufacturing in our state. Much of our civic learning is experiential, often led by our Student Council. Over the last few years we have made civic action relevant by collecting pennies for the Red Cross in support of Japanese victims of the Tsunami, collecting water for the Flint water crisis, collecting shoes in support of our Backpack Buddies program, and raising money for the Make a Wish Foundation. The Student Council also runs an annual food drive for the local Food Pantry, and collects books for our traveling library "The Bulldog Bookin' Bus." These community service projects get all students involved and raise students' awareness of the needs inside and outside their community.

DSE offers preschool for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and a fee-based at-risk 4-year-old

preschool program. Our ECSE program is designed to give special needs students a preschool experience that incorporates the Early Childhood Standards while also addressing their special education eligibility. Students who participate in ECSE programs are exposed to a language-rich environment, small class sizes and individualized lesson plans that also address Kindergarten readiness skills. Children with this type of exposure are more likely to succeed once they transition to Kindergarten.

The Learn 'n Grow Preschool at DSE is an at-risk program for 4 year olds. We have two sessions of 16 students. Classes are held 3 times a week. Preschool focuses on guiding students in the development of social skills, building relationships and exploring a love for learning in all academic areas. Students are preparing for Kindergarten by learning how to write, count, recognize numbers and letters, cut, paste, and paint. Students enjoy story time, calendar, music, discussions, and hands-on learning around units of study. The curriculum includes math skills, reading readiness, fine and gross motor activities, self-help skills and social/emotional skills. All of these activities work in concert to ensure student success in Kindergarten and future grades.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Kindergarten through 5th grade students are offered a variety of other classes to support their learning. Every child receives music, art, physical education, health, Spanish, and technology each week. Students participate in general music class for 30 minutes, two days a week. The music curriculum is vocally based, but also includes playing percussion instruments. In music class the students learn singing technique, inner hearing, and basic rhythmic and melodic note reading skills. Each year the third grade performs a musical play as an introduction to vocal performance. In fourth and fifth grade, students can choose to join Otsego Stars, our extra-curricular choir.

Each student attends one hour of art per week. Throughout the year students are introduced to a number of different artists, art styles, and techniques - including illustrators of children's books. The visual arts help to reinforce skills in reading, language, and math through literature, self-expression, measurements and calculations. This subject is also critical in developing thinking skills, social skills, and motivation to learn, especially in elementary age children. Fifth grade students visit the Grand Rapids Art Prize event and then write critical analyses of the art they see to allow for integration with literacy. Participating in visual arts also develops creative problem solving skills, which can be applied to all other subjects.

Students attend Physical Education class three times per week for 30 minutes. As part of the Physical Education curriculum students learn the following skills: loco-motor skills, manipulative skills, kicking, dribbling, throwing, climbing skills, soccer, football, floor hockey, jump rope, basketball, volleyball, track and field, tennis and fitness activities and components to our students. We also teach character traits such as integrity, sportsmanship, and teamwork.

All students also receive health class each week for 30 minutes. The health curriculum is focused on nutrition and physical fitness/activity. There are lessons on safety, including fire, personal, bike, swimming, and internet use. In addition, students receive substance abuse prevention, including units on alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, as well as a unit on personal health and wellness.

Our students receive Spanish instruction where they begin to acquire the language and learn about practices and products of Hispanic culture. This research-based program introduces students to a second language at the optimal time in their language development. Students learn through stories, games, interactive instruction, cultural activities, and music. Students also learn basic commands, vocabulary, and phrases. This prepares students to enter the more rigorous secondary level Spanish program.

In technology class, students learn the basics of computers, computer applications, and participate in STEM activities. The curriculum includes Google applications such as Google Docs, Google Earth and Google Classroom. Students are also exposed to computer hardware and software programming using devices such as Ozobots and access Commonsense Media to build digital literacy and citizenship as well as internet safety awareness.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

At the beginning of the 2011-12 school year, Dix Street Elementary began a process of creating culture and structures to ensure high levels of learning for all students. The staff committed to collaboration and collective responsibility. We had already differentiated within classes and across each grade level, taking advantage of cadet teachers from the high school, as well as parent volunteers to work with students individually and in small groups. With the focus on RTI, the staff created schedules that would ensure all students received extra time to reengage with essential skills outside of Tier 1 instruction. Our Title I tutors were split into two teams, one for lower elementary (K-2nd grade) and one for upper elementary (3rd-5th grade). Both of these teams rescheduled recess, lunch and specials classes in order to set aside time for interventions. During scheduled interventions, called “Bulldog Time,” students requiring essential skills interventions were put into small groups with other students needing similar assistance. In order to identify students for intervention, we use data from Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the STAR Reading assessment, Running Record/Individual Reading Inventory information, Delta Math readiness screeners, and the results of PLC-created common formative and summative assessments.

Based on student needs and data, Bulldog Time focuses on reading or math. Students working in Tier 2 reading intervention groups work on strategies to increase their reading comprehension, accuracy, and fluency. They also receive increased time in text in order to deepen and reinforce strategies learned in Tier 1 lessons. Students in Tier 3 reading groups, reengage with our neuroplasticity lessons to solidify basic phonics skills and/or with Reading Mastery, Earobics, Road to the Code, or, more recently, the Leveled Literacy Intervention program to target reading gaps.

Math interventions focus on addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts, and/or problem solving and computation process skills. Students receiving extra time on math skills work in small groups with flash-cards, reengage with specific skill lessons with an adult, or do on-line math practice with IXL, MobyMax, Math Playground and ABCya. Often, the Tier 2 math groups work on gaps identified through the Delta Math readiness screener, which assesses Michigan state standards that are highly correlated to success in both Algebra and on the Michigan state test. Tier 3 math groups often work with special education teachers and paraprofessionals to reengage with skills not mastered in previous grades.

While identified students receive Tier 2 and 3 assistance during Bulldog Time, we run enrichment groups for students who, based on the data, are on target in reading and math. These students participate in character education lessons with our counselor and school social worker. Other enrichment activities include units on economics/personal finance, creating on-line math strategy tutorials for their peers, and researching topics of interest such as NASA, state government, marine biology, NCAA basketball “March Madness” statistics, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources hunting and fishing regulations.

In 2012 Dix Street Elementary was labeled as a Focus school because the gap between the bottom 30% of our students and top 30% was too wide. Using our professional learning communities to place a renewed focus on Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions we were able to close that gap and were named a Reward School the very next year. Being a Reward School signified that we had a low gap between the top 30% and bottom 30% of students as compared with our peers. One of our action steps to close our gap was to focus uncompromisingly on data. We have a data room where we meet monthly with each grade level to review where the students are and plan for next steps. For our students reading below benchmark, we have implemented the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System. For mathematics we use the Ottawa County Delta Math Tier II intervention program to intervene on below grade level skills that students have not yet mastered. These skills are specific to Algebra I readiness and provide a solid foundation and focus for the staff to work with our struggling students. Each day, we provide intervention blocks where teachers group students and work to target areas where they are struggling.

DSE is a high performing school. As such, we continue to set goals for growth. Our main avenues for increased achievement are outlined in the paragraphs above. Our teachers have worked to identify Essential Learning Targets for each grade level and intervene through our RTI systems. We use data to support our decision-making and work in PLCs to analyze student growth and set goals.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

DSE develops a Student Engagement Plan each year, and the Student Engagement Team continually updates the plan throughout the year. Programs and events are department-specific and often implemented with support from the PTO. Physical movement is a priority at Dix Street within and outside the classroom. Before the school day starts, students have opportunities for additional movement through our JumpStart! Program which identifies at-risk students and allows them to participate in a physical activity to help them focus. Program examples are Physical Education initiatives such as Mileage Club, All Children Exercising Simultaneously Day (ACES Day), Drop Everything and Dance, JumpStart!, and Physical Activity with Spirit (P.A.W.S.).

Our Technology department utilizes the Lego Robotics kits received through a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) grant both during and in after-school programs. Dix Street Elementary has Lego Robotics programs for all students 1st-5th grade. The 3rd-5th grade students participate in the hour of code and are active bloggers. Dix Street students design bookmarks, awards and other items to be used for various activities throughout the school and use our 3D printer for production of these items.

The Student Support Services team has identified needs and implemented Positive club (POS) which empowers students to identify community needs and design ways to meet those needs. In 2011, Dix Street Elementary School's third grade POS group was awarded \$500.00 in the local FOX affiliate's Pay It Forward contest. Additionally, Dix Street started a Kids Day Out program to expose at-risk students to cultural and community events. Students have experienced minor league baseball games, the zoo, the Lake Michigan lakeshore, and Frederick Meijer Gardens through this program.

In the fine arts, our students participate in an annual China Art Exchange, and enter posters supporting the Kalamazoo Association of Realtors' Fair Housing Calendar Art program. Each fall, our young artists display more than 1,000 pieces of their artwork in the Otsego Creative Arts Festival. We also have an after school Art Club for 3rd-5th grade students.

Our school community is constantly seeking ways to bring relevance to student learning while deepening and reinforcing skills. Examples include Battle of the Books, P.R.I.D.E. character development, Watch D.O.G.S., curriculum-based field trips, Capturing Kids' Hearts structures, and anti-bullying events through the PTO and Student Council. Dix Street Elementary has won the local Battle of the Books competition two out of the last three years and consistently fields two teams each year.

P.R.I.D.E. is a character development program that originated in the Otsego Public School District. The character traits represented are: positive attitude, responsible actions, integrity within, determination to succeed, and expect excellence. Each month the school focuses on a different trait through classroom lessons, student recognition, and a celebration along with prizes and other motivating events.

Dix Street Elementary is a Professional Learning Community where teacher-teams collaborate to support each other and the school. Every staff member participates in either the School Leadership Team (SLT) or the Student Engagement Team (SET). Moreover, the K-2nd grade, 3rd-5th grade, and Special Education instructors have consistent PLC collaboration time. Additionally, our Student Support/Intervention Team meets on a consistent basis to evaluate and plan for Tier 2 and Tier 3 support and intervention. These teams research and develop events and activities, as well as analyze student data (academic, behavioral, attendance) to inform future plans to address each student's academic, social, and emotional growth.

Each week Dix Street Elementary has a delayed start that gives staff opportunities to present ideas, plan for initiatives, and evaluate progress. During these team meetings, PLC teams and individuals present Professional Development on pedagogy and best-practice as well as substantively discuss our school vision, school/student issues, and plans for the future. Much of this time is spent reflecting on the systems in place to support students, staff, and the community and planning interventions to improve these systems

of support. The culture of collaboration and sense of collective responsibility generate a feeling of value and support across the staff, giving voice to all in a teamwork atmosphere.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The Dix Street Elementary community is very involved, with our PTO playing a large role in supporting our educational programs as well as student engagement. In two of the last five years, a Dix Street Elementary parent volunteer has received our district "outstanding citizen" award. We have parent/stakeholder representatives on the School Improvement Steering Committee as well as a parent who attends the staff meetings. The principal meets with them regularly to discuss any questions/concerns they may have. The School Improvement Steering Committee representative is a member of the group with full rights as to input and planning. Parents are surveyed annually concerning many facets of the Title I Targeted Assistance Program as well as parent perception, and areas in need of improvement. Each fall we send home a School-Home Compact which describes responsibilities of all three parties (school, student, and home) in the intervention/assistance program. This is periodically updated with results from benchmark testing and screeners and communication lines are always open with parents/families. Parents are and will continue to be involved in all aspects of our School Improvement Plan, Title I Targeted Assistance Plan, and the evaluation of both.

Dix Street Elementary is quick to seek support and expertise from our community. We welcome undergrad and graduate students to Dix Street Elementary from Grand Valley State University and Western Michigan University for field work and internships. We also have volunteers from PNC Bank, and many local business people serve as volunteers with the Junior Achievement program. Recently, Dix Street Elementary has been actively seeking community resources to bring relevance to the classroom, and volunteers from Allstate Insurance and Horace Mann Inc. are providing volunteers and resources to enhance student recognition. During the spring of 2015, a team of staff members presented at local churches, encouraging volunteerism. The Otsego United Methodist Church embraced the challenge and formally adopted Dix Street Elementary as one of their outreach ministries. Several people from the congregation volunteer in classrooms on a consistent basis. This extra help from the community has enabled teachers to target one-on-one or small groups of students who need extra attention, intervention, or enrichment.

We use our district website to communicate clearly and consistently with parents and the community. Moreover, the Dix Street weekly newsletter is sent home via email or paper, if needed, to communicate curriculum changes and other vital information. Parents can view grades online using our Infinite Campus Parent Portal system. We also have a District App and use social media to celebrate learning and keep parents informed.

3. Professional Development:

Our approach for professional development over the past three years has morphed from five full days per year to a more systemic, on-going model of delayed starts each week for 30 weeks of the 36-week school year. In this model, students come to school an hour and half later than usual and PLCs work together during this time. We operate on a five-week rotation where we meet as a building with professional development focused mostly on reading and math. During delayed starts we hold data meetings, work collaboratively to enhance our student support structures, and build school culture. One of those weeks the teachers meet district-wide with other elementary peers to compare data and discuss best practices. We have used foundational ideas from Rick DuFour, Mike Mattos, and John Hattie to drive our professional development topics. In addition to this, teachers participate on vertical curriculum teams at the district level for Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies, PLC facilitators group, District Literacy Team, and a Student Support Services Team where they receive additional leadership training and content-specific training. We have also sent 95% of our staff to the Daily 5 training in Chicago to aid with the implementation of Daily 5. We have a literacy coach who also embeds professional development by observing, coaching, and modeling during class for teachers. The on-going professional development approach in Otsego has proven to increase teacher capacity and efficacy. This "job-embedded" approach aligns with the Board of Education's strategic plan which includes RTI implementation in all school buildings as well as vertical and horizontal alignment of instruction. All of this training centers on these two goal areas.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of Dix Street Elementary is “Whatever it Takes; we’re all in this together.” Using data, the two main teams, the School Leadership Team (SLT) and Student Engagement Team (SET), plan ways to continue our growth as a learning community. The delayed start schedule implemented in 2015 allowed the staff to split into these two teams on a regular basis. This enabled the SET to plan and implement engagement programs and events while the SLT focused on academic and behavioral RTI systems that would assure high levels of learning for all students. The intervention team meets to focus on data that leads to Tier 3 assistance for students, either academically or behaviorally. The sense of common purpose, collaboration and collective responsibility leads to a level of trust where all staff desires to work together to help everyone succeed and to enhance the learning experience for our students.

The principal acts to aggregate the shared vision and provide the structure and resources to achieve that vision. As changes come over the horizon, the principal sets the cultural shift in motion through PD, book studies, frequent meetings with staff-leaders, and activities to reach consensus on direction and ensure commitment across the staff. These changes can originate from the State Department of Education, the Otsego Public Schools District, or organically from members of the staff who have a passion for a specific aspect of learning. The open communication between and among all staff as well as the commitment to collaboration and collective responsibility often leads to these initiatives. The principal continuously works to foster a proactive culture that is flexible enough to react to changes, while maintaining a focus on student learning.

In 2011, three years before Otsego Public Schools formalized RTI in the strategic plan, DSE experimented with common intervention time, flexible scheduling, and identifying entry and exit criteria for students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. Through PD, the principal and small groups of teacher-leaders took research-based methods and best practice pedagogy to the whole staff during delayed start time. Many of these methods and practices have become standard in the school. For example, the list of non-negotiable classroom practices includes greeting every student at the door in the morning, developing a social contract (Capturing Kids’ Hearts) and posting it in the class, having all activities last less than 20 minutes, and engaging students within 45 seconds of arrival. At the district level there is a requirement to create assessment maps for all subjects over the next few years. The SLT started this exercise to identify milestones in their curricula that will ultimately become the assessment maps for all subjects by 2020. This desire to get ahead of initiatives is a testament to the leaders on the Dix Street Elementary staff and their desire to maintain flexibility that will ensure academic, emotional and social success for all students.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In a broad sense, Dix Street Elementary has been successful over the years due to a strong sense of collaboration and collective responsibility. The staff is dedicated to continuous improvement with a focus on learning for all students. The staff focuses on evaluating, reflecting, and improving the systems and programs that effect each student's academic, socio-emotional, and personal growth. This dedication is manifested in the way that the staff collaboratively works to shape the culture that ensures successful PLCs and systematic academic and behavioral RTI.

As a team, the Dix Street Elementary staff works to develop systems to face challenges whenever they arise. At times the challenge comes from outside, such as the transition to the Common Core State Standards and the new state test. Other times, the challenges are local: a new math program, students facing hardship due to economic downturn, or staffing changes in the building, to site a few examples. Whenever adversity arises, the staff pulls together to put the required systems and structures in place to support students.

Academically, this dedication to collaboration has led to vibrant, honest PLCs. The grade-level and grade-band PLCs work together to identify essential learning, design, plan, and implement interventions and analyze data to continually improve instruction and student support. The staff's sense of collective responsibility leads to a level of flexibility that ensures all students receive the extra time and support necessary to be successful. The staff is committed to high levels of learning for all students and continuously looks to data to create flexible groups for intervention and enrichment.

Our PLCs have been working over the past few years to create assessment calendars, coordinating essential learning targets with the pacing of curricula and creating formative and summative assessments. This allows the teams to be proactive with intervention plans as skills are being taught. Our K-2nd grade and 3rd-5th grade PLCs have focused interventions that ensure each student is ready for new material by assessing prerequisite skills associated with essential learning targets. This effort has returned positive results that help us avoid overwhelming the RTI process and also reduces the numbers of students who require Tier 3 intervention compared to previous years' data.

Support for the social-emotional development of Dix Street students is also enhanced by this collaboration and through the PLC processes. The staff utilizes the structures and protocol of Capturing Kids' Hearts to build relational capacity with and among the students. Capturing Kids' Hearts also gives the staff and students the tools and structures to work together to make Dix Street a safe place to learn and grow. The emotional and behavioral supports for students are planned and implemented by the intervention team in concert with ancillary staff and county agencies such as Allegan County Community Mental Health.

At DSE, the sense of collective responsibility and dedication to collaborating ensure that no student gets overlooked. As a team, we continue to focus on high levels of learning. "Whatever it takes; we're all in this together!"