

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Mary Kathleen Couillard

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

Official School Name Handley Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 224 N. Elm Street

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

City Saginaw State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 48602-2651

County Michigan (MI)

Telephone (989) 399-4251 Fax (989) 399-4255

Web site/URL http://www.spsd.net/handley/ E-mail mcouillard@spsd.net

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Mr. Nathaniel McClain E-mail nmccclain@spsd.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Saginaw City School District Tel. (989) 399-6500

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. Rudolph Patterson  
(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**

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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

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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):
- 11 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 3 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 16 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	24	19	43
1	20	37	57
2	24	31	55
3	26	33	59
4	42	37	79
5	38	43	81
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>	174	200	374

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 20 % Asian
  - 27 % Black or African American
  - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 47 % White
  - 1 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2015 – 2016 school year: 5%

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	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	23
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	445
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.052
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Arabic, Korean, Bengali, Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi/Panjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 35 %  
Total number students who qualify: 134

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %  
10 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
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	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 27:1
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	97%	97%	97%	96%	97%
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 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.

Handley School is committed to developing principled young people who become inquiring and compassionate life-long learners. Through guided inquiry, the staff is committed to providing rigorous interdisciplinary curriculum experiences that promote intercultural understanding and global-mindedness.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Handley is a public magnet school. Students must test in order to attend Handley. Testing involves individual (K-1) or small group (gr. 2-5) assessment of ability and achievement. The Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test and 2 subtests of the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement are used for students applying for Kindergarten and first grade. The Otis- Lennon School Ability Test and two subtests of the California Achievement Test (reading comprehension and math concepts and applications) are administered to students applying for grades 2-5. A matrix is used to determine acceptance. Information nights and school tours are offered for prospective students and their families each year. Testing takes place each spring for anticipated fall openings.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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The Program for Academically Talented and Creative at Handley School began in 1981 in order to meet the needs of academically talented, which includes gifted students. Several studies done at that time, revealed that many inmates incarcerated in prisons are, in fact, gifted, so part of the mission of the school was to address the needs of underachieving gifted students.

Handley is located at 224 N. Elm St. in Saginaw, Michigan and is part of the Saginaw Public School system. Saginaw is the seat of Saginaw County and is located in the area known as Mid-Michigan. According to the 2010 census, the population is about 51,000. The manufacturing presence in Saginaw has significantly declined, leading to unemployment and the rise of crime. There has been a decline in property values in the city, which has decreased the amount of money the city government is able to collect through property taxes.

Handley is a magnet school serving students from the City of Saginaw, Saginaw Township, Midland, Bay City, Carrollton Township, Hemlock, St. Charles, and Chesaning. Fifty-three percent of our students come from outside of the City of Saginaw. We have 374 students in grades K-5 with very diverse demographics in terms of race, religion, and economics. We are the only non-Title I school in our district and receive no extra funding. We have had consistently high scores on state tests, achieving the status of a reward school since that designation began. This year Handley is ranked seventh in the state for elementary schools. In 2010, Handley became authorized as an International Baccalaureate School.

The International Baccalaureate program was chosen by staff because of its emphasis on international mindedness, action and social responsiveness as well as providing a framework that encompasses best practices.

At Handley School we believe that: 1. Academically talented students have unique needs and learning styles. 2. The teacher acts as a facilitator of learning through inquiry. 3. The natural curiosity of students helps direct their learning. 4. The diversity of cultures at Handley is to be appreciated, respected, and celebrated. 5. The arts play an important part in learning. 6. The responsibility of education is shared among all members of the community.

Handley embodies its purpose through the implementation of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme. The pedagogy of IB is inquiry which fosters curiosity and allows students to construct their own learning. Expectations for behavior are found in the IB learner profile and attitudes which focus on international mindedness and strong personal values. The learner profile is a shared vision of what we hope and expect students to become; inquirer, knowledgeable, thinker, communicator, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-taker, balanced, and reflective. We expect attitudes of appreciation, commitment, confidence, cooperation, creativity, curiosity, empathy, enthusiasm, independence, integrity, respect, and tolerance.

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) provides us with a curriculum framework of essential elements—knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes, and action that young students need to equip them for success in the world. These elements are used in six transdisciplinary themes which were selected for their relevance to the real world. They are described as transdisciplinary because they focus on issues that go across subject areas. These themes are: Who we are, Where we are in place and time, How we express ourselves, How the world works, How we organize ourselves, and Sharing the planet. The transdisciplinary themes help teachers develop Handley's program of inquiry. Teachers work together to develop six units of inquiry per grade that focus on important ideas which require a high level of involvement on the part of students. Teachers use the mandated state curriculum as a starting point and use the units as a vehicle for further inquiry.

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

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

Schools in Saginaw Public Schools have been mandated to follow the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) common core state standards units which were written by experienced curriculum writers, piloted in classrooms and reviewed by local and ISD (Intermediate School District) staff across the state.

#### **ELA**

The ultimate goal for all English language arts learners is personal, social, occupational, and civic literacy. Language is the major connecting element across the curriculum. Therefore, the focus is not only on language for its own sake, but also on its application across the subject areas and throughout the IB transdisciplinary program of inquiry. At Handley, the English language arts (ELA) curriculum, instruction, and assessment reflect the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting. ELA is not perceived as individual content areas, but as one unified subject in which each of the five areas supports the others and enhances thinking and learning. The integration of knowledge, skills, and strategies of the English language arts enables students to solve problems and think critically and creatively in all subject areas.

Foundation skills for ELA are taught through Pearson Reading Street which is supplemented with trade books at various levels. We recognize that not everyone learns in the same way so many different approaches are incorporated in instruction such as phonics, sight words, and learning to read through writing. Many grade levels use the Reading Workshop approach because it allows for differentiation as well as providing ample time to practice skills. The Write Steps writing program and Writing Workshop are used at all grade levels to teach skills. Many authentic reasons for writing are provided for students such as writing letters to state representatives to express opinions. One unit of inquiry done in fifth grade is called Exhibition during which groups of students decide what action to take to solve an identifiable local problem that is also related to the bigger world. They then have to share their message with the community and world. Last year one group focused on the dangers of texting while driving and wrote letters to both Google and Apple suggesting an app that might disable cell phones while driving. They even received responses back from each company. Each grade also does a musical play each year focusing on a science or social studies unit providing experiences for speaking and presenting.

#### **Math**

For each MAISA unit there are essential/focus questions, a list of key concepts that are addressed, and a plethora of available resources. We also use Pearson Envision math 2.0 which provides rigorous math instruction focusing on thinking and problem solving. Many grade levels also supplement with lessons from Engage NY. Various other resources are utilized such as Math for Today, Mountain Math, and Interact's simulation, Math Quest. We believe in exposing students to problems and concepts that they have not yet been taught as a way to use inquiry in mathematical thinking. Many hands-on manipulatives are used at all levels. We are very proud of the fact that last year 100% of our fourth graders passed the math portion of the state test.

#### **Science**

Handley School has always had a strong focus on science. With two \$50,000 Golden Apple awards that we received from the state many years ago, we purchased a program out of Penn State called Lab Learner which provided us with a science lab complete with scientific equipment for real hands on discovery learning. After a few years, we realized that this curriculum did not match our state standards so we now follow the MAISA curriculum while still utilizing the science lab. Another resource is the Pearson science text book. All grades participate in the annual science fair with Kindergarten, first and second grades doing a class experiment and third, fourth, and fifth grades doing individual projects. The fifth-grade projects are judged and winners are able to participate in a regional science fair in Flint, Michigan. Science is taught at least three times a week and some of the IB units of inquiry focus on a science unit.

#### **Social Studies**

The social studies curriculum at Handley focuses on the Social Studies Content Expectations for the State of Michigan. The lessons found in the MAISA units and social studies textbooks are used as resources for developing the IB units of inquiry for each grade. The content standards focus on history, geography, civics and government, economics, public discourse and decision making, and citizenship involvement. Teachers develop units for those areas under the appropriate transdisciplinary theme in the program of inquiry. Each unit has a central idea and three lines of inquiry which are focused by three of the eight key concepts. Guided inquiry is utilized to promote learning through student investigation so that students are able to construct their own knowledge. Specific skills and attitudes are woven into the units of inquiry. One of the essential elements of the IB PYP is action so teachers look for ways to encourage students to take action as a result of their learning.

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

Art, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish are taught for a half an hour per week to kindergarten through fifth grade students. They are not considered elective classes. The curriculum of these non-core classes is standards-based, following the Michigan state standards and benchmarks. Specials teachers collaborate with classroom teachers to make cross-curricular connections when possible.

In art class, students gain experience using a variety of art media (ex: paint, colored pencil, marker, oil pastel, watercolor, cut-paper, and three-dimensional media), and learn about artists, art history, and cultures. They use and apply knowledge of the elements of art (line, shape, form, value, texture, and space) and principles of organization (balance, unity, emphasis, movement, repetition, variety, and proportion). Other topics the students learn about include landscapes, portraiture, figure drawing, still life, abstract versus realism, sculpture, perspective, and shading/blending.

In music class, students focus on: music history, creative movement/dance, singing, hands-on Orff instruments, basic music theory (beat, rhythm, pitch, and notation), and multicultural music. Second through fourth grade students learn basic composition: how to compose a basic melody or rhythm pattern that they perform for classmates. The students receive flash cards, organize them into their desired patterns, write them down, and perform them in class. Sometimes students do "informances," where students perform in class for parents and show them what they have been working on. In February, students learn about music appreciation and music history: different musical genres, famous composers along the timeline, and how music has evolved over time. All students participate in two performances a year: a winter and a spring program. All fifth-grade students participate in beginning band for forty-five minutes a week.

In physical education class, the Exemplary Physical Education Curriculum (EPEC) is taught which aligns lessons with the current Michigan state standards and benchmarks as well as the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE). All lessons contain the following components: Locomotor Skills, Object-Control Skills, Knowledge, Activity and Fitness, and Personal/Social Skills. An emphasis on the personal, social and physical well-being is a main focus of each lesson. A balanced approach is used to help develop individual skills, learn movement sequences, create various game strategies, practice group collaboration, and recognize the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Students are challenged to establish connections with the way skills being taught can carry over into other aspects of their lives. Critical thinking is an important part of learning in physical education, and inquiry is strongly encouraged. Above all else, sportsmanship is emphasized so our students can learn to be individuals who demonstrate integrity in not just sports, but all areas of their lives.

In Spanish class, all students learn using the World Language Standards that include: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. The communication standard stresses the use of language for communication in "real life" situations. It emphasizes "what students can do with language" rather than "what they know about language." Students are asked to communicate in oral and written form, interpret oral and written messages, show cultural understanding when they communicate, and present oral and written information to various audiences for a variety of purposes.

Cultural understanding is an important part of world languages education. Experiencing other cultures develops a better understanding and appreciation of the relationship between languages and other cultures, as well as the student's native culture. Students become better able to understand other people's points of view, ways of life, and contributions to the world. World languages instruction must be connected with other subject areas. Content from other subject areas is integrated with world language instruction through lessons that are developed around common themes.

Students are encouraged to compare and contrast languages and cultures. They discover patterns, make predictions, and analyze similarities and differences across languages and cultures. Students often come to understand their native language and culture better through such comparisons.

Extending learning experiences from the world language classroom to the home and multilingual and multicultural community emphasizes living in a global society. Activities may include: field trips, use of e-mail and the World Wide Web, clubs, exchange programs and cultural activities, school-to-work opportunities, and opportunities to hear speakers of other languages in the school and classroom. We learn these by using a variety of activities that include: songs, writing, games, puzzles, worksheets and other fun interactive activities.

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

At Handley, we believe that it is not only what is learned, but how one learns that is important. The focus should not be on the regurgitation of facts, but the development of ways of thinking which can be applied to new situations. The pedagogy we use, which the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) espouses, is guided inquiry. Our focus is on conceptual understanding, collaboration and differentiation, and is informed by formative and summative assessments. Approaches to learning in the IB program are deliberate strategies, skills, and attitudes that permeate our teaching. The approaches to learning include thinking skills, communication skills, social skills, self-management skills, and research skills. Units in all subject areas are developed around a big idea and all lessons connect back to that. Our goal is to ensure that learning is engaging, relevant, challenging, and significant and that students take action as a result of what they have learned.

Instructional methods are varied depending on the situation. They include explicit instruction in whole group settings as well as small groups and individual conferences. Manipulatives are used as well as videos, interactive and adaptive technology, center activities and games. Connections are often made to the real world to make learning relevant. Inquiry is used in many areas, including mathematics. Often, explicit instruction is done after students have had an opportunity to explore and inquire, trying to construct their own understanding. Students are given chances to work collaboratively with each other to share their thinking. Differentiation is done through fluid ability groupings, varied homework assignments, Reading, Writing, and Math Workshop and adaptive technology. Students are also given choices in how they present their understanding based on multiple intelligences.

Based on multiple assessments, students are grouped according to their needs. Interventions are sometimes done on an individual basis but often students are grouped for re-teaching or enrichment/extension activities. Teachers select a variety of resources to support learning at different levels of complexity. Higher level thinking questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy or Webb's Depth of Knowledge are consistently used to develop rigorous thinking.

In order to ensure the best possible outcomes for our diverse student population, many different types of assessment are used at Handley.

#### **Pre-Assessment**

Teachers will assess students' prior knowledge and experience before embarking on new learning experience in an appropriate manner. This also informs differentiation.

#### **Formative Assessment**

Formative assessment is interwoven with the daily teaching and assists teachers in determining what the

children have learned in order to plan for the next stage of learning. Aims Web benchmark testing in reading and math will be done three times year in September, January, and May. Pearson weekly tests and teacher-developed common formative assessments that are analyzed in Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

#### Summative Assessment

Summative assessment takes place at the end of the teaching and learning processes and provides students with opportunities to demonstrate what has been learned. District unit tests are administered in math, science, and social studies as well as Pearson End of unit Balanced Assessments in reading. Staff will administer the M-Step test to third, fourth, and fifth graders in the spring.

Assessment Tools include: Checklists comprising lists of information, data, attributes or elements that should be present in students' work or performance; Exemplars with samples of students' work that serve as concrete standard against which other samples are judged; Rubrics with an established set of criteria for rating students in all areas. The descriptors tell the assessor what characteristics or signs to look for in students' work and then how to rate that work on a predetermined scale; Anecdotal records with brief written notes based on observations of students; Continuums with visual representations of developmental stages of learning that show a progression of achievement or identify where a student is in a process; Portfolios to showcase a purposeful collection of a student's work designed to demonstrate successes, growth, higher order thinking, creativity, and reflection; and Student reflections. Reporting about assessment: Parent/teacher conferences are held two times a year, once in the fall and again in the spring. These conferences are in a formal setting where parents and teachers discuss the progress of students. At the fourth and fifth grade levels, these are student-led conferences. Progress reports are sent out four times a year for third, fourth, and fifth grades. These are sent out in the middle of the marking period.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Research indicates that a positive school climate directly impacts student achievement as well as providing a feeling of safety and acceptance which leads to lower student misbehavior. Our school climate is greatly impacted by the International Baccalaureate (IB) learner profile which describes a broad range of human capacities and responsibilities that go beyond academic success. They imply a commitment to help all members of the school community learn to respect themselves, others and the world around them. Being principled, caring, and open-minded, three attributes of the IB learner profile, encourage our students to behave in ways that reflect those words. In addition, the IB PYP attitudes are a vital focus in the development of positive attitudes towards people, the environment, and learning. These are the day to day attitudes we use: appreciation, commitment, confidence, cooperation, creativity, curiosity, empathy, enthusiasm, independence, integrity, respect, and tolerance. We start each day with students reciting our “Handley Pledge.” At the beginning of the year each classroom develops an essential agreement. There are very few, if any, discipline measures such as suspension that we have to use. Since this is a school that is ranked high in the state with an excellent reputation, parents really want their students to attend and are very supportive and involved.

We recently sent out a parent survey and some of the recurring comments about what they liked about our school were student and parent accountability, challenging curriculum, high expectations, the variety of culture and diversity, and parent/teacher interaction. One parent said, “The IB program really does make a difference in how students treat each other, and in helping them develop a wider world view.” Another parent’s comment was, “I love that Handley does more than academics. There is so much more being taught at this school. The program focuses on values and principles that go beyond just academics and the children are very well-rounded and kind.” At Handley, we try to make learning authentic and promote an action-oriented thinking culture which encourages, empowers, and recognizes students who take action, both at school and at home. We have an “Action Board” where we post action taken by students and their families. Action is often connected to authentic learning done in units of inquiry or identifying a problem in the community. We also have an “Amazing Board” which displays pictures of students doing something amazing such as winning contests or competitions.

Another factor that engages and motivates students is participating each year in their grade level musical production. Field trips, including the fourth-grade trip to a nature center where they spend two nights in engaging and motivating activities. Students are recognized and presented awards for science fair projects which motivates younger students. After school clubs and sport teams promote social development as well.

Our school culture creates an environment where teachers feel valued and supported. During Teacher Appreciation Week, our parent group provides lunch and gifts every day for our staff. We have almost 100% participation in parent teacher conferences. Teachers are given an extra hour every week to collaborate with their team. There are shared leadership opportunities, including the School Quality Team, where decisions are collaboratively made.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Handley, we use the Epstein Model for successful school, family, and community partnerships. We have always had great levels of parental involvement but this model has helped us to monitor this involvement in more specific ways.

Type one involvement addresses parenting. “Coffee with Couillard” was one way we found helpful for our parents. Once a month, in the morning, the principal would have an informational meeting with parents to address a wide range of topics from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in math to ways to develop a growth mindset in children. Sometimes guest speakers, such as our District math coach would be included in these discussions. We also have a homework policy that suggests guidelines for parents as well as a parent contract that we ask them to sign at the beginning of the year.

Type two involvement is communicating. We communicate in a variety of ways. A weekly newsletter called the Handley Headlines is sent out every Monday in our “Monday Folders.” This has the yearly calendar dates which are updated as needed, school news, community events, and parent group announcements. Teachers also send out grade specific newsletters. Beginning in first grade, students start using daily planners which must be signed every night by a parent. Along with homework assignments, teachers and parents are able to communicate daily through written notes on planner pages. Teachers also communicate via Remind.com, email, phone calls and conferences in the Fall and Spring and on an as-needed basis. Our Handley Parent Group also has a Facebook page.

Type three involvement has to do with volunteering opportunities. Parents volunteer in a number of ways at Handley. Some are classroom volunteers while others volunteer for events sponsored by our parent group such as our Winter Walk-about, math night, or ice cream social. We always have an abundance of parents volunteering to be chaperones for the many field trips we take. Parents also help with scenery and costumes for our grade level musicals, coach our sport teams, our Cultures around the World night and after school clubs.

Type four involvement is learning at home. Many long-term assignments such as science fair provide opportunities for parents to become involved with their student’s learning. Other homework requires students to read to parents or participate in homework from the IB units of inquiry that has real life connections, such as interviewing family members or keeping track of nutrition values in meals for a week.

Type five involvement is decision making. All parents are invited/notified of our parent group meetings where many decisions affecting the school are discussed and voted upon. We also have a Foundation and parents comprise some of the board members. Both groups are open to teacher requests for funds for things needed in their classrooms or financing things like Brain Pop which is utilized by the whole school. Parents from both groups are invited to participate in writing our School Improvement Plan.

The last type of involvement is collaboration with the community. We do this in a number of ways. Many teachers invite community members from organizations such as Consumers Energy, St. Mary’s Hospital, and the Child and Abuse Council as speakers for their units of inquiry. Community groups are involved in our math night. Our fifth graders visit a geriatrics home on a weekly visit and some students are involved in painting walls at the local animal shelter. The fifth-grade Exhibition provides opportunities for our fifth graders to interview community organizations who deal with real problems and discover ways in which they are able to take action to deal with them. Saginaw Valley State University undergraduate students have fieldwork assignments at our school each semester.

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

All professional development (PD) activities in Michigan must adhere to specific guidelines. These guidelines are as follows: serve the purpose of increasing student learning; align with our school improvement plan; are planned, ongoing, and intensive; and are supported in some way by the school or district, such as through released time or cost

Some of the PD opportunities are District wide, either on a day with no students or after school through Teacher Institute. These usually focus on District initiatives such as new learning tools or activities to develop strategies for the CCSS or the new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). These PD sessions are usually led by our District coaches who are also available to attend staff meetings or provide one-on-one coaching. The principal has PD provided through monthly administrative meetings and at the beginning of the year. Guided School Improvement is provided monthly as the principal and two teachers work on the School Improvement Plan which is then brought to the staff.

The Saginaw Public School District has made a commitment to developing professional learning communities (PLC). For several summers, principals and staff members have attended PLC conferences in various locations across the United States sponsored by Solution Tree. There is also a PLC coach in our district who has provided training in unpacking the standards and is also available to attend school PLCs. This approach has been very impactful in using data from formative assessments to meet the needs of all students.

Saginaw Public Schools is also committed to Restorative Justice Practices and has provided training for all staff and principals.

The principal has also put together notebooks for each staff member with ideas for differentiation as a response to the new movement, a Response to Intelligence. Since Handley School is a school for academically talented students, we make sure to address the needs of advanced students.

Some of the PD activities are building based and determined by school needs. We often utilize book studies to support our inquiry into the pedagogy of inquiry based teaching and learning. Books are purchased for staff out of school funds. Some of the books that we have found helpful are *Why Are School Buses Always Yellow?* by John Barell, and *Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry Circles in Action* by Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels. Videos from Math Solutions, Number Talks, have also been helpful as we integrate inquiry into math instruction. The principal also makes copies of articles from educational journals to give to staff before a staff meeting so that meaningful discussion occurs. Staff members often share best practices at staff meetings.

Handley is an authorized International Baccalaureate School and has a requirement for Professional Development within the IB organizations. We have a rotating schedule to send four/five different teachers every year to an IB workshop. We also visit other IB schools and host visits ourselves.

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

The fundamental function of leadership is to define and clarify the “primary task”, and to support the efforts of others towards addressing that task. The “primary task” in a school setting is to enhance the learning of all students. In an IB World School, the “primary task” is encapsulated in the mission statement of the school: "The Program for Creative and Academically Talented at Handley School is committed to the development of principled young people to become inquiring and compassionate life-long learners. The staff is committed to providing rigorous transdisciplinary curriculum experiences through guided inquiry that promote intercultural understanding and global-mindedness."

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

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The Program for Creative and Academically Talented (PCAT) at Handley School began in the fall of 1981. For over thirty-six years, we have developed a culture of excellence with a common set of expectations with all stakeholders. We have always worked to serve a diverse student population and have developed a reputation in the community as a school that welcomes all students who qualify, not just in the City of Saginaw, but as a magnet school of choice for students in other school districts.

One of the things we have always done at Handley is to use mandated standards as a starting point for our teaching, not as the goal or end result. We differentiate instruction, providing enrichment or acceleration for those who already have achieved these standards and support for those who not quite there yet. We also incorporate strategies through IB approaches to learning that actively engage students, making content relevant to students' lives, providing students with choices and a sense of control, and capitalizing on student collaboration tapping into the social nature of learning. The arts, including foreign language instruction, have always been an important component of our curriculum. There is sufficient data to support the belief that participation in the fine arts is instrumental in improving learning throughout all academic areas. The fine arts also promote self-esteem, motivation, aesthetic awareness, cultural exposure, creativity, communication, as well as social skills and appreciation of diversity. We have art, music, including band for fifth grade, physical education, and Spanish. In addition, each grade level produces a musical production that is connected to one of their units of inquiry. There are field trips to plays, the symphony, and museums.

The collaborative nature of the IB PYP Programme is another contributor to the success of our school. Teachers are required to not only plan units together, but also reflect on them. We do not departmentalize instruction because being with one teacher allows for deeper knowledge of each student as well as allowing for transdisciplinary connections.

Another very important reason for our continued success is the support of our parents. They have a strong feeling of pride for our school and serve as our advocate when discussing it with friends and neighbors. In surveys we have conducted, our parents like our high academic standards, the positive school culture we have, and the personalized education we offer for their child and therefore look for opportunities to contribute to Handley's success. We now have children and grandchildren of previous Handley students who bring their children to our school hoping to replicate the wonderful experience they once had within our walls. Many previous students often return to tell us what a solid foundation they received at Handley and the impact it has had on their success.