

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Rima Hassan

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

Official School Name Iris Becker Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 10821 Henson

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

City Dearborn State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 48126-4817

County Wayne

Telephone (313) 827-6950 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://becker.dearbornschools.org E-mail hassanr1@dearbornschools.org

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

Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Glenn Maleyko E-mail maleykg@dearbornschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Dearborn City School District Tel. (313) 827-3020

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 Ms. Mary Lane
(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):
- 21 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 3 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 29 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	26	27	53
1	28	27	55
2	30	20	50
3	27	17	44
4	23	22	45
5	17	22	39
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	151	135	286

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 98 % White
 - 0 % 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: 6%

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	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	265
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.057
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 76 %
201 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 87 %
Total number students who qualify: 231
8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
22 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	12
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.	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 23:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	97%	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.

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

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

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

Deaborn Public Schools will provide an exceptional learning environment that empowers every student to succeed in life today and in the future.

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

The city of Dearborn is a suburban community bordering Detroit, Michigan. Dearborn Public Schools is a district that includes 22 elementary schools (K-5), two K-8 schools, five middle schools (6-8), STEM middle school, and three high schools (9-12) with dual enrollment, with a student population totaling 21,524. Approximately, 9,518 (44%) of the total student population are English Language Learners.

Iris Becker Elementary school is a K-5 school located on Henson and Miller in the city of Dearborn. The school first opened its doors in 1993. The current student population is 295 students. Males comprise 53% and females 47% of the student population. Ninety-two percent are economically disadvantaged and 80% are English language learners (Els). Twenty-two percent of the student population receives special education services.

The majority of students come from the Middle East (98% are included in the category of Caucasians). The students come from a mix of different countries in that region, especially countries facing turmoil and wars.

Many of our families are immigrants or refugees. We make every effort here at Becker to ensure that our parents feel that they belong here at our school and that we are here for them and their children. We make clear that our mission is to invest all we have in their children's prosperity. We take every opportunity to break down any barriers by providing translators and cultural references they too can identify with. Throughout the school year we help these families assimilate to our school culture by having them conduct classroom observations, attend parent educational meetings, parent workshops, and family nights. The emphasis is on involving our parents and providing them with strategies to help their child at home.

Iris Becker Elementary has a philosophical approach in that we teach the whole child. The mindset is you need to know the child's story (background) in order to get through to any child. What makes our school so unique and successful is that all personnel staff, from secretaries to custodians, are invested in the child's social/emotional well-being. This creates an atmosphere that every child matters no matter their background. We have a process in which we identify the students with specific social/emotional needs. We provide mentor staff to check-in periodically with students. We check in with the child on home-life, academics, peer to peer interactions, and overall student well-being. We also make frequent home visits. The home visits allow us to build bridges between the school and our families. These conversations lead our students and their families to feel that they are a part of something larger. Through this process, our students know that all the adults in the school are invested in their academic and personal success. Hence, we have the school motto "We are family!"

Parent education, engagement, and participation is also another factor to our students' success. The research is clear that most common issues in low-income families and immigrant/refugee families include depression, hectic work schedules, addictive dependencies, and unstable home life. All of these factors interfere with students achieving. Classroom teachers conduct parent-workshop models for parents to attend. In these workshops, parents and their child, during the school day, work on activities that will help build parent to child relationships, allow parents to feel that they can contribute to their child's learning, and provides an optimistic attitude about the connection between home life and school. Parents also get to take any items we provide that go along with the activity/strategy being taught and modeled. Our monthly parent meetings are all educational for parents. These parent workshops have the resource teacher and the principal teach academic strategies to parents as well as social/emotional education. We have community guest speakers (social workers, life-coaches, drug prevention, etc.) to educate our families on how to handle the daily stressors in life. We also have various family nights that allow our parents to come to the school after school hours to participate in literacy nights, family bingo, family movie night, math literacy nights, cultural night, and summer camp nights to name a few. Here at Becker, we pride ourselves in including the parent partnership model to highlight to our students that the communication between home and school is fluid.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Iris Becker uses the same curriculum all Dearborn School use. Elementary Curriculum for Dearborn Public School is based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts and Mathematics. The Everyday Math series is used in Dearborn elementary schools. Dearborn still uses the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) for Science and Social Studies, Music Education, Arts Education, Technology and Physical Education. We are in the process of transitioning into using the Next Generation Science Standards for the science curriculum. In addition, teachers are using project-based learning (PBL) to engage students in hands-on learning across all content areas. Also, we offer students an additional enrichment class of Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) one time a week. We try to teach and nurture the whole child. So we, provides curriculum support for character education using the Core Values of honesty, integrity, responsibility, courtesy, respect for self and others and citizenship. The Response to Bullying Behavior program components are part of elementary curriculum and are taught twice a year. We also provide assemblies throughout the year that represents the core values we expect our students and community members to exemplify.

Iris Becker classroom teachers have a curricular support system in place; the Dearborn Education Curriculum (DEC) is a web based pacing guide available to all teachers across the district. These pacing guides plot the standards for content areas from September to June. For English Language Arts, Iris Becker employs the Balanced Literacy Framework which includes Common Core State Standards for Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. Classrooms provide an uninterrupted time for Reading and Writer's Workshop through the use of Daily 5 and CAFE. CAFÉ is an acronym for Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency and Expand Vocabulary. The teacher and student select student goals in the appropriate category and the teacher provides strategies for the students to work on. Small group instruction occurs in strategy groups of no more than three students. The student then, can choose to Read to Self, Work on Writing, complete Word Work, Listen to Reading and Read to Someone. Since many of our students are second language learners, teachers use a multitude of strategies, such as, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), Language and Literacy, Thinking Maps, small group instruction, one to one conferring methods, and developed oral language mini-lessons. We provide 90-minute uninterrupted literacy blocks. During literacy blocks, the Daily 5/CAFE framework is implemented. Through the mini-lessons, teachers put an emphasis on developing close and critical reading skills, oral language development, writing skills, and presentational skills. When teachers conduct the one-on- one conferring time, they are able to hone in on student's foundational skills. We use various forms of intake data to better assist the needs of the students. For those students who are not performing at grade level, the teacher has to document the second dose of intervention.

At Becker we effectively implement the Math Workshop Model. The workshop model allows the teachers to focus on the common core standard while increasing rigor and student development. Within the model, the teacher conducts a mini-lesson that is tied to the common core standard needed to teach. After the mini-lesson, the teacher provides math station areas throughout the classroom for students to work independently (usually using technology), collaboratively, in a small group, or one on one with the teacher. This model reinforces the standard, but also engages all students in the learning process. The model rotations are formed to reflect the various Depths of Knowledge (DOK) levels. All students are geared to move from levels one and two to levels three and four according to the DOK levels.

Science instruction at Becker surrounds project-based learning. Project-based learning is inquiry based and challenges students to create their own essential questions. Through this process, students are engaged in creating projects that are applicable to real life. Students are instructed with key elements presented within the standards and are to produce authentic connections to their own life. Students present their projects to classmates and parents. Students and teachers then reflect on their own learning.

Social studies is taught in isolation as well as integrated into the literacy block. The approach to social studies begins with an essential question for the unit. Students are exposed to the various media and texts to

understand the standards being taught. At Becker, we have designed a four-square approach to better understand the social studies concepts. This four-square organizer is a close and critical reading strategy that is used across content areas. The four-square asks students to look closely at what did the text say, how does the texts say it, what does it mean, and what does it mean to me? These questions also have sub-questions that revolve around the concepts that that relate directly to the standards.

The focus of any instruction at Becker is to provide all students with the foundational skills that will allow students to be successful in either college or career. Although we are an elementary school, we aim to provide students the opportunity to have a growth mindset and to focus on ways to have a better future.

Civic learning instruction is integrated within our social studies instruction; however, we also provide opportunities for our students to foster civic knowledge and skills through our Project Based Learning (PBL) assignments. Through such assignments, we instruct students to use 21st century skills that allow them to be media literate while being aware of current events. We also provide students opportunities to be part of our peer mediation group. Students are empowered to take on the role of a leader and are taught the district/community core values and practice them when they are problem solving with their peers. We also provide core value assemblies throughout the year to ensure our students are well aware that we expect our students to have honesty, respect for self and others, integrity, and good citizenship. Through our civic learning student engagement, we are able to allow students to connect with the community by learning to have respectful dialogue, and build on their teamwork skills.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Arts: the arts provide an opportunity for our students to express themselves through various forms. Our teachers partner up with core teachers to establish fluidity within the instruction of art. For example, students were studying planets in science, part of their project-based learning including them to create planet life. Students created their planets during their art class.

Physical education/health/nutrition; physical education is surrounded on students refining their fine motor skills, physical health, and reading and writing. We provide opportunities for students to read about physical health and write. This is another example of how we try to integrate reading and writing within every area of the curriculum.

Technology: we provide students with STEM classes. All students at Becker take STEM once a week. STEM uses technology and expands on science, engineering and math.

Music: our music program focuses on embraces all types of learners. Teachers tap into the cultural background of our students and encourages them to bring in their own forms of music to be part of something larger.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

The instructional methods, interventions and assessments used at Becker are all reflective of best practices and research based programs. They are differentiated based on student needs and aligned with the Common Core. They are also data driven adapting to needs with the end goal in sight.

and Project Based Learning our students are encouraged to work together to achieve a common goal. Students have constant access to technology through the use of chromebooks and laptops. The district approved programs, including Moby Max, MyOn, Khan Academy and Study Island provide differentiated instruction across the curriculum.

lessons, Text Dependent Questions, and the Language & Literacy model.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Becker is a small school where teachers, students, and parents are more of a family. This family atmosphere is what engages and motivates students first. Students know they are loved and cared for, thus creating a very positive learning environment. We have an open door policy and we pride ourselves in being a community school. In the classroom, teachers create an active learning environment using a variety of modalities. Teachers go above and beyond, working with small groups to provide a more personal and differentiated learning experiences. The identification of at-risk students allow teachers to design instruction aimed at the exact needs of those students and boost them up.

Students are motivated and engaged by developing their own learning plan where they have identified their own academic and personal goals along with how to reach them. They then meet with their teacher regularly to discuss their progress and track their progress as well. Students are recognized within their own classrooms as well as by the whole school for their efforts and progress.

Socially and emotionally, our students are nurtured and inspired. Our PTA is very active and holds activities and events that bring our students and families together. Our teachers hold parent workshops where parents are taught different strategies to use with their children thus fostering a team type of relationship. The principal is actively involved throughout each day and is present and active in the classrooms. Specialized teachers take an active role in the classrooms making learning deep, rich, and meaningful. The social worker has groups, such as peer mediators, that place leadership roles on students who are at-risk, but enables them to work through their challenges.

Our staff is truly like a family. We are very supportive of one another, always praising, thanking, and encouraging one another. The principal sends weekly letters to us thanking us for what we do every day and spotlighting the great things she sees happening around the building. She also supports us personally and recognizes the importance of our own families. She also has regular dialogue with teachers and her door is always open for any concerns we might have. Our PTA also does special things for us, and our instructional coach sponsors creative breakfasts and lunches that keep us excited. The climate and culture of the school is centered around students first. When we put students first everything will fall into place as it should be.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging families and community is an important priority at Becker Elementary where customer service is consistently demonstrated by an effective parental engagement program. As a learning community, we found that our community, just like our students, learn through hands-on instruction. Each grade level conducts quarterly parent workshops that are engaging, directly related to the Common Core and engage our community of learners; parents, students, staff and community volunteers. The administrator also conducts parent meetings to keep our parents informed of school concerns and achievements and seeks their input and feedback. The Becker Learning community values all members of our growing community and its diversity and works hard to address needs of learners. Home visits are routinely utilized to foster communication, collaborate with our community and work together to close the achievement gap! Our parents are the children's first teacher and the information and insight they can give us on the students are invaluable! The principal updates the school blog weekly with classroom events, instruction, school functions, etc. The blog is a great communication tool and also provides our families with a snapshot of all the great things happening on a day to day basis. Monthly newsletters in Arabic and English are sent home to ensure that our partnership between home and school continues to be strong.

We have a large number of immigrant families that we also support through home visits. ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services) is a community resource that is used to support our families. Children who come to school hungry and stressed, cannot learn. Therefore, ACCESS will often help with locating housing for families, find employment and provide needed social work services. With

the support of Zaman, another non-profit organization, that donates furniture, clothing, food and also job training and services, is an essential safety net for our community and we utilize such organizations to better serve our families.

The Becker community also engages families in initial student progress and student- self driven goal meetings. Meetings are data driven and district and school expectations are clearly communicated. Our mission is Students First! Students who are lagging in the achievement gap are put on a parent contract. The parents are notified and their input is an essential part of their child's success. Students are also an important part of the process and the commitment and role of each member is verbalized and put on paper that all agree to. The MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) meets regularly to ensure all learners are making progress toward goals and provided an integrated support system for all stakeholders.

Many of our school families do not have access to dental care. Therefore, we have teamed up with the local university, The University of Detroit Mercy (UDM) and their dental students came to Becker to provide a much needed dental service for our students. We have many parents who don't have means of transportation which often means that medical needs of students are either neglected due to lack of resources, transportation and/or dental health knowledge. This partnership allowed for a dental clinic on wheels and it offered relief and also offered medical treatment for our children right at the school. Students were provided with oral examinations, teeth cleaning as well as removal of rotting teeth as needed to circumvent future health risks! The children were so excited to be supplied with toothbrushes, toothpaste, and floss to continue with good oral hygiene.

Partnerships with local organizations and universities have created a sense of belonging and has allowed our students to excel academically and socially.

3. Professional Development:

Effective professional development promotes a positive cultural change. The professional development at Becker Elementary is rooted in best practices. These practices are aligned with the district's beliefs and expectations. To ensure the staff is embedding best practice into their instruction, the staff studies the school wide data. By studying the data, the staff members are able to determine barriers, expertise of the staff, and successful measures that are needed to implement and improve learning within a given area. Our approach is based on data and staff needs. These needs then become a focus for our School Improvement Plan goals. Our School Improvement Goals also focus around the school's and district's vision to support student achievement.

Becker's professional development is designed to foster leadership and use data driven instruction and analysis to improve learning for all! Professional development is used within grade level and across grade levels to foster reflection and implementation of best practices and interventions. This year, our staff development is focusing on Reading, Writing and Math. In reading, the staff is exploring Close Reading with a focus on the Common Core Standards. We are collaboratively working on writing with implementation and fidelity of Writers Workshop. The three text types are being explored for creating graphic organizers and rubrics. Non-negotiables are implemented for consistent language and practices in order to establish life long learners. The focus in math is math workshop and math talks that are researched based best practices.

Throughout the professional development process, staff capacity is built. Through continuous and consistent professional development, the staff is provided opportunities for inquiry, feedback, reflection and action. This powerful approach allows the staff to work together to improve student achievement. The school's leadership team enhances the guidance of the professional development to ensure the staff is differentiated in their own learning. The leadership team will work with groups within the staff to promote consistency and communication.

Staff needs are met through differentiated instruction and development. Professional development needs are met through whole group, small group and individualized instruction through the classroom. The school's leadership team will model a lesson for the classroom teacher based on a needs assessment. Then the I do,

We do, You do model of instruction is implemented with gradual release for educators to hone in on their craft and allow for sustainable growth to occur!

All staff have participated and continue to receive professional development on Close Reading, RAN Strategy, Daily 5/CAFE strategies by the instructional coach, district professional development and through sharing best practices with each other during collaboration and planning together. Teachers introduce the structure of the Daily 5, and the use of the CAFE board to build reading stamina, focus on strategies to build comprehension, confer as needed, and assess and instruct students throughout the year. Also, we continue to train novice teachers, and revisit Thinking Maps to organize and strengthen students writing and comprehension across the content areas. All classroom teachers have developed a content area vocabulary wall in their classroom. Teachers along with students use academic vocabulary through Close Reading to design and define the terms. Students then use the vocabulary when writing across content areas.

Our teachers are trained in Close Reading strategies to help enhance their teaching strategies in reading comprehension and strengthen students' writing across content areas. All of our adopted strategies align with the school improvement plan. We also use the Daily 5/CAFE model as a structure for increasing reading and writing across content areas. In addition, teachers use and train new staff on SIOP strategies for all students, including newcomers, to increase student achievement. We will maintain the use of Academic Vocabulary and Thinking Maps to use in all content areas with students. In math, we have offered teachers professional development on Number Talks and Model Drawing.

4. School Leadership:

The school leadership consists of the students, parents, teachers, and the principal. Collectively we work together to establish expectations, rigor, and building initiatives. The philosophy of the school leadership is to adapt the understanding of the whole child. Having a whole child approach allows for continued support for academic components as well as the development of the social/emotional well-being of each student. Student and parent input is surveyed throughout the school year to better serve the needs of our students. We acknowledge that in a democratic society, we have to educate beyond the core subject areas. The leadership staff at Becker identifies that learning does not start and finish at school. We attempt to integrate all of the students' learning and engage them in more meaningful dialogues about their readiness for college and career.

The principal, resource teachers, and instructional coach meet weekly to discuss current practices while reviewing student data trends and refine professional development based on staff and student needs. The principal also meets with her student council team once a month. Student input is taken into account and family events are planned with students. The principal also conducts instructional dialogues and instructional rounds with each teacher. The instructional dialogues are aimed to be student centered and provide an opportunity for the principal and teachers to discuss the current intervention strategies. The dialogues are always data driven and promotes healthy collaborative measures between administration and instructional staff. The instructional rounds are geared towards conducting classroom walkthroughs with the teachers and principal. Together they observe classroom instruction and then debrief on the lesson. This process contributes to the culture and climate of the building as well as presents an opportunity for both the principal and the teachers to master their craft.

The most critical aspect of the school leadership is to empower teachers, students, and other stakeholders. Providing autonomy in certain aspects, trusting the professional, creating an atmosphere that allows for students to account for their own learning, and inspire all within the school to lead at some capacity. The proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" is the same notion we have here at Becker, "it takes a community to teach a child". Although we may be the educated professionals, we acknowledge what our community can do for our children and therefore, the community is part of our school. By empowering all stakeholders, we have created an atmosphere that is student centered, student invested, and aims at providing an approach that will allow for the whole child to be successful in college and career.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Becker staff utilizes research-based instructional strategies for all students to achieve academic success. The main strategy that has contributed to student success is our staff development of close and critical reading strategies. Collectively, as a staff Professional Learning Community (PLC), we have identified the need for our students to master close and critical reading strategies. Close and critical reading allows for the student to examine the depth of the text, while evaluating the author's purpose, connections to other texts, and ways students can make their own connections or opinions. As a PLC, we also realized that introducing close and critical reading strategies begin as early as kindergarten. We don't water down the academic language, we teach our students that these strategies help them become better readers. We also instilled that the purpose of close and critical reading is to build their stamina when confronted with text that is more complex.

As a PLC, we designed a systematic approach to enhance our students close and critical reading strategies. As with any school improvement initiative, the staff needs to be highly invested, part of the decision making, and educated on how to implement effectively within their own classroom. Through our PLC we realized that there are so many components that contribute to student development of close and critical reading strategies. These include, but are not limited to: independent reading and writing, shared readings, modeled teacher readings, text dependent questions, read alouds, etc. Therefore, we created a close reading routine that was to be embedded across content area readings. We began to model how to effectively implement close and critical reading strategies. We began with short passages and then moved onto more complex texts. We showed students to read first (cold read), then the teacher would read aloud (students would follow along) and annotate her thoughts onto the paper, then students would read the third time individually or with partners and annotate their thoughts, misunderstandings. We had a process that was modeled over and over again until our students were able to master their own close and critical reading strategies. We also created grade dependent questions that are framed around: what does the text say; how does the text say it; what does it mean; and what does it mean to mean? These formulated questions are then put into sub-questions based on grade level expectations. These essential questions allow for students to move from DOK level one and two to DOK levels three and four. Throughout kindergarten to fifth grade, our students are modeled and taught close and critical reading strategies across content areas. Our students begin to understand the importance of understanding key details, identifying key language, determining the author's purpose, challenging themselves to make counter arguments to the author's purpose, and have their own opinion on the text at large.