

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Bret Jason Domstrand

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

Official School Name Lake Marion Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 19875 Dodd Boulevard

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

City Lakeville State MN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 55044-8355

County MN

Telephone (952) 232-2700 Fax (952) 469-7180

Web site/URL http://www.isd194.org/lake-marion E-mail bret.domstrand@isd194.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*Mr. Michael Baumann E-mail michael.baumann@isd194.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Lakeville Area Public School District Tel. (952) 232-2000

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 Mrs. Michelle Volk

(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):
- 8 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 14 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	36	50	86
1	58	42	100
2	58	36	94
3	52	49	101
4	42	56	98
5	50	61	111
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	296	294	590

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 6 % Black or African American
 - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 81 % White
 - 4 % 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: 28%

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	84
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	74
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	158
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	562
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.281
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	28

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
15 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 23 %
Total number students who qualify: 136

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
87 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.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <u>12</u> Autism | <u>3</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>15</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>23</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
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	25
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	18
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 22:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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.

Lake Marion Elementary is committed to educating and nurturing all students to achieve their full potential, become responsible and productive citizens, and embrace lifelong learning.

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

Lake Marion Elementary School (LME) is part of the Lakeville Area Public School District in the southern suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota, that serves all or part of the communities of Lakeville, Elko, New Market, and Credit River. Opened in 1990, LME served grades Kindergarten through six. The Lakeville Area Public School District underwent a change to its elementary and junior high school model switching the elementary schools to kindergarten through grade five. The junior high schools became middle schools serving grades six through eight. Today, Lake Marion serves nearly 600 students. Over the last ten years, LME has seen a shift in our Free and Reduced Price (FRP) Lunch student population from 13% to 23%. The demographics of students of color at Lake Marion have changed significantly over this time. Our mobility rate has made a significant increase over the years to a current rate of 28% in 2016. Along with this, Lake Marion has a 21% open enrollment rate from students outside of the district or school boundaries. As Lake Marion's student population has changed, it consistently continues to be one of the top performing Title I schools, recognized by the State of Minnesota as a Reward School five out of the last six years. Reward schools are public schools that receive Title I funding that have demonstrated exemplary academic achievements in state exam proficiency, student growth, graduation rates and closing opportunity gaps. Lake Marion also hosts the center-based program that serves Lakeville's students with the highest level of emotional and behavioral (E/BD) special education needs K-5 through the Academic and Behavior Classroom (ABC) Program.

Lake Marion is a learning community that recognizes and celebrates the diversity, strengths, and inquisitive spirit of every child. Using the culturally responsive teaching (CRT) model, we enable all students to succeed and strive for personal excellence, no matter the background or experience. One of the secrets to our success is a strong school climate focused on respect and building relationships. All adults, no matter the role or position, work together to create a welcoming environment where all students can succeed. We are known as the Lake Marion Elementary CATS, which stands for Caring Community, Awesome Attitude, Trustworthy and Safe, "Learning for Life." Together our school community came up with CATS. We selected this name because fifth grade students, when transitioning to sixth grade, divide into two middle schools with mascots called the Panthers and Cougars. We needed something that could unite our students and staff, regardless of the schools our students would be attending. By putting a focus on the things that bring us together with a strong emphasis on relationships, we continue to build a strong community.

We are dedicated to building a strong community through numerous culturally responsive and relevant trainings that are embedded in our practices. Seeing the shift in our student populations, our staff called for an opportunity to engage all students in our school community. We continue to see the benefits of this by witnessing how easily students integrate into our school from other districts. Another commitment to the school culture comes from the way our staff work to take ownership of all students. If a student makes a contribution to the school community, there are several adults who recognize the greatness of the child. Students are frequently heard saying, "How do you know my name? You're not my teacher." We believe these personal efforts to know all students go a long way toward building school community.

Lake Marion's success builds on a strong foundation of academics in literacy, math and other content areas, ensuring all students learn the variety of skills needed to be successful both in and out of school. Through the blend of technology and traditional methods, Lake Marion uses numerous tools to meet the needs of our students. We leverage digital literacy resources to personalize learning by providing supplemental and interactive lessons based around a whole group lesson. Lake Marion teaching staff use a model of whole group instruction that gradually releases into small group work and independent application, depending on the needs of the student. Through continual professional development, Lake Marion's teaching and support staff are involved in the learning process, just like the students.

LME integrates culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies within all instructional areas. Teachers and administrators have been trained in Beyond Diversity as well as Dr. Sharroky Hollie's Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning. These strategies enhance our academic language, classroom management and academic literacy. Students see texts and symbols that value culture. Teachers use terms that value diversity and youth culture. We feel it is important to separate out our biases, misinterpretations and miscommunications in the classroom. By continually learning CRT strategies and being aware of how this impacts our classrooms, we believe this groundwork lays the foundation of learning for all.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Our core curriculum includes a commitment to ensure access and equity for all students. Our teachers are grounded in the belief that all students can learn at high rigorous levels.

Lake Marion incorporates a Balanced Literacy Framework. All students are engaged in a workshop model, both with reading and writing. This workshop model supports the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (GRR), where the Learning Targets, based on content standards, are released from whole group explicit instruction, small group guided practice and independent application. The 120-minute literacy block at LME builds knowledge through culturally responsive, content-rich informational and literary text, where reading and writing are grounded in text-based evidence. Students are also engaged in regular practice with complex text and academic vocabulary. LME supports this work through engaging text that is aligned to the content areas, supports a variety of genres and is at the learner's instructional level. These texts, within our bookroom support guided reading, strategy groups, literature circles, book clubs, read alouds and mentor texts for both reading and writing. This commitment to increase the amount of diverse texts for all levels of readers has continued to make LME a top performing school.

In addition to the workshop approach of modeled, shared, guided and independent application for both reading and writing, our school integrates language and word study within the literacy block. This work includes the development of word study/structural analysis, academic language/vocabulary along with early literacy skills of phonetic principles. Our focus and goal for our learners is to ensure that all students develop a love of reading and can comprehend and understand connected text for deep understanding.

Math:

Using the Minnesota Standards as our curriculum, Lake Marion focuses on what students are supposed to know and do. Each math block incorporates a minimum of 60 minutes. Classrooms also offer an extended math time where students receive one-on-one support for independent enrichment and review. LME uses Houghton Mifflin Math Expressions while supplementing instruction with manipulatives. Additional resources we use to engage our students include utilizing the Learning Carpet and technology applications such as TenMarks, MobyMax, IXL, Prodigy Math and Khan Academy. This provides personalization and differentiation so all learners have materials and instruction at their level. Teachers implement whole group, small group and independent application during math instruction in a GRR Model. Students engage in activities that involve collaborative, critical, and independent thinking. They partake in games, activities, real world problem solving, and interactive quizzes. Progress monitoring and flexible grouping are key components to maximize student learning. Strategy grouping is done in all grades in order to allow students to engage in learning that is at their appropriate level. Assessments such as NWEA MAP, AIMSweb, grade level common formative assessments, and technology applications provide numerous data points for making instructional decisions.

Science:

The development of scientific literacy is a primary focus of LME's science curriculum. Through the collaboration of our grade level and STEAM teachers, units are developed to provide content-rich, inquiry-based, hands-on learning experiences. These standards are broken into four main areas: nature of science and engineering, physical science, earth and space science, and life science. Using a hands-on learning approach provided through Engineering is Elementary (EIE) curriculum units and Foss Science Modules, students are highly engaged in multiple learning experiences. LME partners with many local outreach environmental learning opportunities to enhance experiential learning.

Social Studies:

The Social Studies curriculum at Lake Marion focuses on the building of citizenship that prepares students for a globally connected world. With an emphasis on informational and digital literacy skills, students engage in the use of Time for Kids, Scholastic News, Newsela, Readworks and Minnesota Partnership for Collaborative Curriculum (MPCC), an open education resource. Each tool provides a different lens for the grades to access information at multiple reading levels. Although the materials look the same, these

resources provide differentiated levels while allowing students to analyze text. They can identify bias, cite sources, and make informed decisions based on the reading.

With a focus on literacy skills and culturally responsive teaching, LME integrates multiple real-life learning experiences such as when our 4th grade students go to the state capital each year and when our 5th grade students complete a capstone project from JA BizTown after completing Junior Achievement (JA). JA supports work-readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy skills.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In addition to our core curriculum, LME students attend additional learning experiences in the areas of music, art, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math), and physical education. Our students participate in each of these classes for 50 minutes weekly. Teachers of these subjects collaborate with the grade level PLCs to align instruction and focus the learning to embed content areas. Much of the instruction occurring in our specialist classes follows our GRR Model of instruction.

Our music teacher incorporates numerous Minnesota content standards for literacy and social studies into her instructional delivery. The classroom environment allows for student movement while learning songs, playing instruments, dancing and performing. Students are exposed to music from around the world through listening, reading and practicing traditional music. Use of African drums, Native American songs, Irish melodies and many other styles of music that influence what we hear today are used to make the learning relevant. Movement is heavily embedded in this class. Students use rhythm, clapping, gestures and tone to add modality to the learning. Music class incorporates many culturally relevant books, songs and videos to understand the connection between music and the world. Students learn to read music, play instruments, and perform for other groups. Our 5th grade music students also have the option of participating in band. Lessons are offered in small group during the day and in full rehearsal before school. Music is one of the many ways we get students connected to school.

Our STEAM programming is taught through an inquiry-based model. Students are presented with a problem or project, and then hypothesize, design, test, collect data, draw conclusions, reflect and make changes. The program embeds a deeper understanding of complex text and mathematical reasoning. Students learn how to research then apply new learning to a novel problem. Students use different methods of reporting their findings from a Learner Management System (LMS) like Schoology to collecting data through traditional methods on paper. A favorite project of many of the classes is the bridge design unit. Students need to research different types of bridges then design a scaled model. They test the weight, structure and cost. Unplanned events such as wind and earthquakes are taken into account. This lets LME students see the design and engineering process at work while making it relevant to everyday life.

Physical Education (PE) at LME focuses on students being “Physically Literate,” which is the ability to move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person. It focuses and supports holistic development encompassing all three domains of PE that include psychomotor, cognitive and affective development. Through this development, students not only build competence but the attitude, motivation and social skills needed for participation. Our PE teachers have a strong PLC that created Learning Targets for each benchmark. Students are able to describe and apply what they’ve learned. Through this scaffolded model, our students can do more complex physical activities. Our students also learn about character and life skills, growing skills in grit, teamwork and determination.

Art programming at LME has moved away from a product-oriented approach to a process-focused methodology that fosters the development of 21st century future readiness skills and studio habits of mind. It was necessary for us to address this shift as we developed our visual arts curriculum from the ground up, ensuring that it is standards-based and cognizant of child development. Media and visual literacy are embedded in the learning. As a result, art instruction at Lake Marion emphasizes the teaching of artistic behaviors that support future ready skills. LME’s art instruction stresses the importance of the following artistic processes:

Creating through collaborative, creative, critical inquiry and innovative thinking by using a variety of media techniques, modes and processes.

Presenting by communicating, appreciating, analyzing and interpreting artistic work in relation to various techniques, methods, venues, history and cultures.

Responding, reflecting, critiquing, and assessing the characteristics and merits of personal work and the work of others.

Connecting and relating knowledge to personal experiences and other societal, cultural and historical contexts along with connecting to other content disciplines.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Instructional Approach and Interventions:

Our Tier I core instructional approach starts with a deep understanding of and alignment with the academic content standards. Once teachers unpack the standards and identify the rigor of what students need to know and do, they plan for pedagogical strategies to support student learning. Teachers may need additional professional learning opportunities to support conceptual understanding of student benchmarks to design and plan for meaningful units of study and learning experiences within their classrooms. Once teachers have engaged in a collaborative, professional learning environment to gain additional instructional practices, they can be clear and transparent with students regarding Learning Targets and success criteria. Teachers support this learning through the GRR Model. Teachers partner with students in identifying mastery. This collaborative work is the heart of our PLC process and provides guidance to our MTSS framework.

Our MTSS framework is designed to support students who are not meeting benchmarks in the quality core/Tier I instruction by providing additional innovative, learning experiences to accelerate learning. These personalized interventions in Tier II and Tier III are designed to scaffold and support our students' strategic and intensive needs. These students' are serviced through highly trained licensed teachers and paraprofessionals. Our Tier II differentiated learning environments support small group targeted, strategic interventions both during the day and outside of the school day, including summer learning. Through LME's commitment to student achievement, students who perform below benchmark or have social/emotional needs are invited to participate in our Targeted Services programming before school and in the summer. We currently have more than 100 students participating in these opportunities. In an effort to raise participation levels and eliminate the barrier of transportation, Lake Marion provides busing to students resulting in increased attendance. All students with consistent attendance in Targeted Services have shown growth according to our systems outcome data of DRA2 and NWEA MAP assessments.

Tier III interventions are delivered in individualized settings, many times one-on-one, where interventions are intensive and customized to individual needs. Resources and instructional practices in all Tiers, including the quality core, are aligned to best practices and evidence-based research. The interventions that LME incorporates within their Tiered system approach include: Fountas and Pinnell's Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), iRead, Systems 44, Read 180, Anchor Comprehension Bookroom, myON, ReadWorks, Newsela, Scholastic News, Time for Kids, Epic!, RazKids and other classroom tools.

Assessments:

A comprehensive assessment system, linked to formative goals and overall proficiency, is an essential component of Lake Marion Elementary's overall Assessment Framework. Data from LME's assessments are used to make decisions about individual student instructional and/or social emotional needs, as well as system outcomes for evaluation of programs and practices. LME uses assessment data to identify and progress monitor students who need additional support and/or enrichment opportunities. Employing the right tool is an important part of valid and reliable data collection. We utilize the following types of assessments to inform and shift our instructional practices within our Tiered system to personalize, enrich and intervene for ALL students:

Universal Screener - Identify and screen students three times a year to determine which students may need

enrichment, additional academic and social emotional support (e.g., AIMSweb, Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and local district universal screeners)

Progress Monitoring - Monitor student progress to determine whether students are making adequate progress toward preset end of the year outcome goals (e.g., AIMSweb, iRead, Systems 44, and Read 180)

Diagnostic - Diagnose specific skill needs that may warrant a more intensified and individualized enrichment, or intervention when a student is not making sufficient progress despite targeted core instruction and intervention (e.g., CogATs, Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2) and classroom diagnostic assessments)

Summative - Determine through summative measures whether students are meeting academic and social emotional goals with sufficient proficiency to meet grade-level expectations (e.g., NWEA MAP, Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA), End of unit common assessments)

Systems Outcomes - Evaluate whether student success indicates overall program and system effectiveness (e.g., NWEA MAP, MCA scores by subgroups, screening data (AIMSweb) by classroom or grade level, SDQ, and School Stakeholder Survey Data)

In addition, our assessment framework supports data literacy practices. We believe data literate educators should know and understand that different kinds of data exist and how to use them for various decisions. Teachers, through their PLCs, turn data into actionable information to guide decisions that hold themselves accountable for ethical interpretation and application of assessment data.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Lake Marion Elementary welcomes ALL students. We create an environment where all students feel safe, nurtured, free to make choices, and challenged at high levels. LME takes pride in knowing all of our students. Teachers and other staff members not only know the students in their classes, but also take the time to know other students. Teachers are outside at parent pick-up and drop-off, the bus area and in the lobbies and halls waiting to greet students. Having that “Good morning” makes a difference. We believe students need to have a special connection with adults in the building. In the beginning of the year, our staff create a “Welcome Wagon” board in the staff center with a picture and name of every new student in grades 1-5 at LME. This allows our teachers a chance to get to know a face and a name so they can greet each child. We hear students say things like, “How did they know my name?” This brings about a true school connectedness.

Lake Marion Elementary builds community culture through other opportunities such as our Kindergarten Buddies program, where 5th grade students partner with a kindergarten student as a mentor and guide. The 5th grade students read with and to their buddies, work on projects and serve as positive role models. Fifth grade students are frequently seen at lunch stopping at the kindergarten tables to say hello. When talking with our current 4th grade class, one thing many of them say they is that they look forward to being a part of Kindergarten Buddies Program.

While rigor and high expectations are key foundations to LME’s success, teachers and staff know having fun, authentic learning experiences create strong culture. With engagement in these environments, students take more risks in their learning, knowing a teacher cares and wants them to do their best. Grade level teams meet frequently to discuss academic, as well as social and emotional needs of students, so that they can plan for student success.

Our school culture creates an environment where staff feel valued and supported. Through monthly luncheons, gatherings outside of school, informal games around shows and sporting events, and grade level camaraderie, LME has a school culture that loves to celebrate the wonderful things that happen throughout the year. This builds a culture that supports each other when celebrations and tragedies occur. We stay strong for each other in all venues.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Lake Marion Elementary families value and promote school connectedness and community involvement. LME starts the year off with our Back to School Open House. Students and families get to meet classmates, teachers and other staff members in a casual environment. School information and contacts for additional services are shared at stations. This is primarily a social event but is a great way for the families to gather, connect and meet in a school community.

Throughout the year, teachers are sharing great things happening in their classrooms both in print and digital platforms such as Schoology, Twitter, Instagram and SeeSaw. Our parents who can’t be at school during the day have an opportunity to see and hear what is happening at LME. Parents can connect with their child in the evening, no longer wondering what they learned during the day. This connectedness continues to foster our family-school bond.

Another way Lake Marion Elementary connects with the community is through our annual school Walk-a-Thon fundraiser. This event takes place on our high school track promoting exercise and community involvement. Families come throughout the day to walk with the students. Each grade level gets their own walk time to allow space for all the people on the track. Our students talk about this event all year. The Walk-a-Thon is LME’s biggest fundraiser of the year, providing a budget for our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The PTO partners with Lake Marion to provide classroom celebrations, volunteers for classrooms, reading events, community event nights, and scholarships for learning field trips. Throughout

the year we see more than 400 family members at one time in our building for special events. Our PTO also organizes sandwich-making stations to give to those in need as part of our commitment to community connectedness. The PTO has donated money to help promote resources outside of our traditional budget: technology carts and iPads, new high-interest books, and much more that helps our school function at a high level. Through our community, we have frequent volunteers read to classes, work on individual skill building and provide additional help to classrooms. Parents are actively involved in many of the school decisions and supports at LME. They volunteer time to help teachers prepare instructional materials at our once a month PTO help day. Parents contribute to our continuous improvement plan by working individually with students who need extra assistance or enrichment. Lake Marion would not be as successful as it is without the continued partnership with our families and community.

3. Professional Development:

In order to create lifelong learners, teachers must have a passion for and commitment to their own development. Professional development is critical in helping our teachers grow and practice new learning. One of the most impactful, frequent ways of learning is when a teacher participates in weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLC). The team looks at student work and data, shares ideas of how to deliver lessons, and determines how to assess student learning. These conversations are some of the best job-embedded learning opportunities for teachers in practice.

Lake Marion teachers are trained in the Balanced Literacy Framework for reading and writing instruction. Over the years, Lake Marion Elementary has focused much of its professional learning time around each of the foundational pillars of balanced literacy. The effects of this practice can be seen in the classrooms. Whole group instruction happens for shorter periods of time to allow for more focused small group instruction. These trainings happened throughout the school year to give teachers time to practice each element. Feedback was a critical component as teachers needed to discuss what successes and struggles they had. This feedback was used to plan the next training, allowing the learning to be tailored to the group.

Lake Marion Elementary integrates culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies within all instructional areas. Teachers and administrators have been trained in Beyond Diversity as well as Dr. Sharroky Hollie's Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning. These strategies enhance our academic language, classroom management and academic literacy. Students see texts and symbols that value culture. Teachers use terms that value diversity and youth culture. We feel it is important to separate out our biases, misinterpretations and miscommunications in the classroom.

Lake Marion teachers are encouraged to seek additional professional development activities outside of our district. Several examples of this would be attending the Daily 5/CAFÉ, Reader's Workshop, Reading Strategies, Guided Reading with Jan Richardson, Apple Teacher and Writing Workshop with Lucy Calkins. Many of these professional development opportunities were offered during the summer or on weekends. Our teachers gladly gave up their personal time to participate in the learning. This says volumes about the commitment LME teachers make toward their learning and the students' learning. All of these pieces help ensure our teachers are getting what they need to bring high-quality and meaningful instruction to the students at Lake Marion.

4. School Leadership:

Lake Marion has only had two principals in its 27 years of existence. Although the principal oversees the day-to-day operations at LME, our Shared Leadership Team (SLT) and others play an important role in the success of our school. Our SLT is comprised of the principal and a representation of each grade level and specialist area. Through collaboration and communication, decisions are made about student achievement, initiatives and procedures. Through the use of quality tools and the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) improvement process with feedback, the SLT designed a plan to engage additional students and teachers in our extended day learning opportunities. We dug into the data, identified our needs/barriers, then planned how to increase our student participation. Our SLT developed a plan to secure a bus and made personal invitations to families and students. We saw our numbers double through this process. This PDSA cycle is the tool we utilize throughout our system for continuous improvement.

Seeing the shift in our student populations and high mobility, our staff called for an opportunity to engage all students in our school community, leading to the creation of our “Welcome Wagon Plan”. We brainstormed and designed a process to connect and build relationships with students and families. Having a Shared Leadership Team provides opportunities to have transparency and a robust collaborative decision making process.

Another important leadership role is our Learning Specialist. LME’s Learning Specialist serves as a lead teacher. She provides insight into decisions that affect both students and staff, offers ideas and guidance for instructional delivery and provides deep data analysis for teams as they examine flexible student groupings and teaching strategies. When discussing curriculum, instruction and assessment decisions, she brings best practices, mentorship, historical perspective, and most importantly, coherence to the system.

In addition, the principal at LME builds capacity and agency amongst his staff by leading from the middle where he embraces a school voice model of listen, learn and lead. This model of seeking to understand with mutual engagement between parents, students and staff is at the heart of the work at LME. By listening with an authentic intent to learn and capitalizing on the resources from the voices of others, he is able to take action collaboratively and lead in partnership based upon what is learned and what is best for the school community. The principal values and believes that school voice is the instrument of change that amplifies the success of improvement efforts.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

LME implements our district’s vision of “World class, personalized learning, ensuring success for every student” by supporting our learners with multiple means of accessing, engaging and expressing their learning. LME capitalizes on students’ individual strengths and interests in order to uncover passion and purpose. This work is reached through the development of classrooms that are learner-driven, rather than teacher-centered. Innovative practices that LME utilizes to achieve this autonomy and ownership of learning include: Genius Hour, Project Based-Learning, Makerspace, Legos and Passion-Based Projects. LME leverages digital tools to support personalized learning and student success for all. You will see our staff integrating strategies that drive learner agency and motivation.

Examples can be seen when our Digital Literacy Specialist (DLS) coaches staff on the innovative use of digital tools and future ready skills to enhance student engagement at high levels of cognition. Once this coaching occurs, the partnership extends to the work with students. Students, under the tutelage of the DLS and teacher, integrate content standards with future ready skills to create authentic, real-world products that they gladly share with the school and global community through Learner Management Platforms and social media. Stressing the importance of digital footprints and digital citizenship, the DLS works closely with students and faculty to ensure safe use of technology in a global environment.

Lake Marion’s commitment to student learning not only embraces a rich focus on quality core instruction, but also supports a well-rounded education. Using student, family and staff feedback surveys, LME made significant changes over the years to meet the needs of our students. An example is the adjustment we made to our lunch/recess procedures. Previously, LME had students going to lunch first, followed by recess. After participating in a “Recess Moves” workshop provided by the Minnesota Department of Education, we learned to implement best practices to maximize physical activity during recess by switching the order to ensure active recess occurs before lunch. In one year, we saw a number of benefits to our students. Previously, students would rush through lunch, throwing away much of their meal to hurry to recess. Due to this change, students are enjoying and finishing their full meals. As an unanticipated benefit, we reduced our food waste in half.

Through collaborative planning, feedback and continuous improvement strategies centered on relationships and personalization, LME believes we have a model that welcomes all diverse learners and community members. We foster well-rounded experiences that support rigorous content standards and social/emotional learning needs while building future ready skills for global citizenship.