

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

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Kaye Kennedy

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

Official School Name Dundee Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 310 North 51st Street

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

City Omaha State NE Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 68132-2846

County Douglas

Telephone (402) 554-8424 Fax (402) 554-0303

Web site/URL http://dundee.ops.org E-mail kaye.kennedy@ops.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. Mark Evans E-mail mark.evans@ops.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Omaha Public School District Tel. (531) 299-0220

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. Lacey Merica  
(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):
- 63 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 13 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 8 High schools
  - 2 K-12 schools
- 86 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	2	0	2
K	28	32	60
1	36	46	82
2	36	37	73
3	46	43	89
4	41	37	78
5	39	39	78
6	40	42	82
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>	268	276	544

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 6 % Asian
  - 8 % Black or African American
  - 17 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 56 % White
  - 10 % 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: 14%

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	31
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	45
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	76
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	554
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.137
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	14

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 10 %  
57 Total number ELL

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

Amharic, Arabic, Behgali, Burmese, Chin, German, Hindi, Japanese, Karen, Karenni, Nepali, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 49 %  
Total number students who qualify: 268

8. Students receiving special education services: 23 %  
127 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>6</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>11</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>23</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>10</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>67</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>10</u> Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 7
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	7

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	95%	95%	95%	95%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
Yes  No  
If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2004

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.  
\*Educate all students to their maximum academic & social potential \*Provide an intentionally inviting environment focused on cultural diversity \*Promote parental and community involvement

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**

---

Dundee Elementary has a rich history of academic excellence and strong community involvement. In May 2014, the school celebrated 110 years of teaching and learning in Omaha, Nebraska.

The Dundee Elementary School mission is to 1) Educate all students to their maximum academic and social potential; 2) Provide an intentionally inviting, safe environment, focusing on the strengths of cultural diversity; 3) Develop respect, responsibility and resourcefulness; and 4) Promote parental and community involvement.

Dundee serves a diverse student body in kindergarten through sixth grade. The special education, gifted and talented, English Language Learners, Behavioral Skills Programs, and the services of our school counselor are some of the programs that supplement and support the regular classroom instruction. An extremely active parent-teacher organization and community business partners collaborate to provide the expertise and material resources that support and enhance the learning opportunities for students. Dundee Elementary's minority population has increased by 31% since 2001. Dundee looks at this type of change as an opportunity to have a diverse student population. Dundee is also one of ten schools in the district to have a behavioral skills special education program. There is a primary and intermediate program at Dundee which serves around 15 students with significant behavior disabilities. Parent and community volunteers and mentors play an important role in supporting the activities of the school as well. Parents participate in a wide range of roles: room parents, extra supervision on field trips, book fair coordinators, materials preparation for teachers, and running small group instructional practice. Dundee Elementary's parent-teacher organization has developed and sponsored a number of after-school opportunities that include science club, robotics club, chess club, garden club, word nerds club, sports club, foreign language club, and coding club. Evening family events provide a time for parents to enjoy learning with their children. Yearly events include Welcome Back to School Night, Curriculum Night, Open House, Reading Night, Science Fair, Craft Night and the Sock Hop.

The success of Dundee students is due in large part to the quality of relationships among adults at the school. Teachers and support staff are joined in the shared vision of providing the best possible educational setting for each child. Skilled, committed teachers believe in the potential of their students. It is recognized that individual students have individual needs. The school leadership philosophy is based on the belief that all students can be successful when high expectations are kept and support is provided not only in academic areas but also in the social emotional areas. Reflective practices among teachers result in fine tuning and modifying instructional practices to follow research-supported best practices that meet the instructional needs of the students. All teachers at Dundee participate in school-embedded professional development. In the past two years, Dundee administration has implemented professional development that is specifically geared to each teacher's needs and curricula area. For example, our math teachers have had two years of math professional development such as Math Talk and Math Engagement and our specialist teachers and support staff have received quality professional development in the area of increasing student engagement and brain development. Many staff members are currently pursuing advanced degrees.

Winning the National Blue Ribbon award in 2004 has been an amazing honor. Dundee Elementary prides itself on winning this prestigious award by flying our Blue Ribbon Award banner, buying every single child at Dundee a Blue Ribbon t-shirt, and buying staff members a Blue Ribbon jacket that staff continue to wear proudly in the winter months. Pride is still evident in the building many years later after winning the National Blue Ribbon award.

Providing a safe, secure and disciplined environment for learning is the goal behind the school's character development program. The character pillars of Citizenship, Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, and Caring are taught, practiced and celebrated. Staff, students and parents are proud of the tradition of excellence at Dundee Elementary School. True to its mission, Dundee School fosters an "intentionally inviting" environment where every child can learn and develop to his or her greatest potential.

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

---

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

The curriculum for elementary students in the Omaha Public Schools (OPS) aligns with national and state standards. Learning objectives are written as content standards in mathematics, reading, language arts, science, social studies, art, music, physical education, and library media. Grade-level expectations follow curriculum strands from kindergarten through sixth grade. Teachers and administrators monitor student progress toward mastery of the content standards through both formative and summative assessments.

The goal of the reading curriculum is to develop lifelong readers who have an appreciation and love of reading. At Dundee the curriculum that is used is StoryTown and Journeys. Students are taught how to apply skills and strategies to become active, purposeful, thoughtful, and competent readers, writers, listeners, and speakers. Students are prepared to participate as literate, contributing members in a global society with foundational skills and strategies in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. A variety of materials, such as guided level readers, Leveled Learning Instruction, and word work and instructional strategies, such as the Daily 5, are used to supplement the reading basal in order to meet the diverse learning needs of the students. Reading instruction includes phonics and word analysis, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development and written language skills. Students are assessed at the beginning of the year to determine the appropriate placement for instruction. Struggling students receive instruction at their level with the goal of reaching proficiency on grade level standards. Support includes smaller class sizes, and additional teacher support and instruction focused on their needs. Students who are performing above the grade level standard receive instruction that challenges their already proficient skills. Believing in a strong reading and writing connection leads to many reading activities that include expression through written language. As students write, they are also improving reading skills. Informal assessments continually monitor student progress. Data is collected quarterly for every student on fluency rate, writing proficiency, progress on acuity tests, and comprehension proficiency. Data is analyzed and discussed with student progress in mind. Plans are made to support students who continue to have difficulties. These plans include opportunities for parental support.

Through skillfully executed instruction in computation and problem solving, all students work toward proficiency in mathematics. The Dundee Elementary mathematics curriculum is aligned with the Nebraska Mathematics Standards and is supported by rigorous instructional practices as detailed in the OPS Action Plan for Student Achievement. The curriculum is balanced with curricular content and instructional approaches. These approaches include the use of the concrete to pictorial to abstract method to teach multiple representations of the math skills/concepts and literacy/language rich math classrooms where students talk and write about math to deepen their conceptual understanding. The adopted elementary mathematics resource is GO Math! Mathematics content standards build on each other with a progressive scope and sequence through the grade levels. For example, first graders are expected to identify fractional parts; second graders show understanding of fractional parts; third graders compare fractional parts and fourth, fifth and sixth graders use estimation and the four main operations to solve problems with fractions. When introducing a new concept, instruction and practice moves from a concrete model to the representation of the problem using standard math symbols. Math manipulatives help students visualize a new concept. Students are able to see a model of the problem. As their understanding increases, students can work with the concept using numbers and other math symbols without the aid of the concrete model. Kindergarten, first, and second graders practice proficiency in basic addition and subtraction skills. In third grade, multiplication and division facts are introduced. Fourth, fifth and sixth grade students are expected to be able to demonstrate proficiency using all four operations. Students practice a variety of problem solving skills. Strategies are taught to help students identify the problem and think through to the solution. Informal assessments continually monitor the progress of students. Data is collected quarterly on each student to monitor mastery of basic facts and progress on Acuity math assessments. When students experience difficulty with grade level math concepts, extra support is given through smaller class sizes and additional teacher support. Students who have mastered grade level concepts are challenged with increasingly difficult math situations. Whenever possible, math skills are practiced across the curriculum and applied to every-day situations.

The science curriculum includes a content standard for inquiry and a content standard for science process skills at each grade level. Each grade level also has a content standards for physical science, earth science, and life science. Inquiry experiences where students ask questions and make discoveries are the basis of the curriculum. At Dundee, science is an interactive process consistent with the nature of science and reflective of scientific values. Science education provides all students with the opportunity to become scientifically literate. Using the knowledge and understanding of scientific inquiry, concepts and processes, students are able to make decisions and take action today and in the future.

Students experience an ever-widening spiral in the social studies curriculum. In kindergarten, the circle is small with a focus on self and family. Each successive year, the circle expands as the curriculum moves through the school, neighborhood, city, state, country, and western hemisphere. Through this progression, students begin to see their place as productive citizens of the United States and begin to understand their connection to the world.

At Dundee, it is understood that student engagement happens as a result of a teacher's careful planning and execution of specific strategies. Robert Marzano's book "The Highly Engaged Classroom" text provides in-depth understanding of how to generate high levels of student attention and engagement. Using the suggestions in this book, every teacher has created a classroom environment where engagement is the norm, not the exception. Research has shown that providing choices to students of all age levels often increases their intrinsic motivation. Choice in the classroom at Dundee has helped increase student effort, task performance, and subsequent learning.

The strands of the entire curriculum taught with our engagement strategies provide a balanced course that results in capable students ready to move on to the next level of learning.

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

The curriculum for elementary students in the Omaha Public School aligns with national and state standards. Students receive weekly instruction from teachers specializing in art, music, physical education and library. Content standards are the basis of instruction in each area. Art curriculum through the grades revolves around five content standards: aesthetics, human diversity, art history, production, and criticism. The music curriculum includes experiences in vocal technique, melodic and rhythmic patterns, performance with pitched and unpitched instruments, and identification of symbols and musical language. Physical education standards focus on providing students with developmentally appropriate learning opportunities with meaningful content and instruction. All students are given the opportunity to develop health-related fitness, physical competence, cognitive understanding, and positive attitudes about physical activities that promote a healthy and physically fit lifestyle.

As part of our basic instructional program for elementary pupils, the Omaha Public Schools provides instrumental music instruction for intermediate pupils in each elementary building. Instruction in instrumental music education begins in the elementary level and continues through high school.

Beginning in 2002, Omaha Public Schools aligned its Art Standards, Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade to National Art Education Goals. In the summer of 2010, the art curriculum committee of Omaha Public Schools revised and reformatted the art curriculum. In the summer of 2012, final changes were made to our curriculum. Each grade level is organized with an aesthetic idea as the focus standard. Each grade level curriculum is organized around the following four general standards. The art curriculum focus on the production of art by using various art media, techniques and processes to teach students to communicate their ideas. It also focuses on the history and culture of art by having students reflect on the aesthetic issues of art in relation to history and culture. Students analyze art characteristics and merits of a work of art in class. Students are given opportunities to explore ways that art is connected to other things that they learn about in our curriculum. In OPS, our art curriculum is based on carefully planned and sequenced learning goals. We often hear the comment that these goals are quite ambitious for young students. Indeed they are! The Omaha Public School District has invested resources and time in developing an award-winning curriculum and a staff of art specialists who are committed to helping every student achieve every goal. For



students with special needs, we have worked with special education teachers to incorporate these goals into lessons that fit different developmental levels. Aesthetic awareness and understanding are the foundation of the K-6 art curriculum. Specific learning content is sequential and detailed at each grade level around varied themes. Art is integrated with varying subjects in each grade level as well.

Human Growth and Development provides students with decision-making skills about situations often faced in real life. Students discuss age appropriate topics related to self-identity, goal setting, growth and development, healthy relationships, communication, bullying, media influences, abstinence, sexuality, reproduction, reproductive options, LGBTQ, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases.

This year, Dundee Elementary was common sense certified. A Common Sense Certified School is dedicated to teaching digital citizenship to young people and engaging parents using Common Sense Education materials. Certified Schools can work with students in any grade, from kindergarten through 12th. Any interested school, after-school program, library, or other institution working with children and youth is eligible to apply. By earning recognition as a Certified School, administrators and educators are taking the necessary steps to equip students with the skills they need to be responsible online. Dundee has a specific technology curriculum and standards. The standards focus around learning the basic operations and concepts of technology, societal issues with technology, and how to make informed decisions when using technology resources. Students are taught how to develop strategies for solving problems in the real world. Dundee is proud of the certification of the Common Sense Media.

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

To meet the educational needs of over five hundred students, a variety of instructional methods are necessary. Every year the structure of the delivery of instruction looks a little different because every year the needs of the students may be different. Based on the data, knowledge of our students from working with them the previous year, and consideration of the needs of students new to Dundee each year, we look at the big picture and begin to create an instructional plan. Every year the goal is the same: lead students toward mastery of the content standards. The path we take toward that mastery is varied.

Many grade levels have found success with performance based groups and departmentalization for reading, writing, math and science. The groups are based on formal and informal assessments. Group placement remains fluid throughout the year. Performance based groups have allowed us to have smaller class sizes for students who are struggling and concentrate additional teacher support for those students. Students who have demonstrated mastery of grade level content standards are able to participate in instruction that continues to engage and challenge their learning. Special Education and English Language Learner teachers often are in co-teaching and multi-age situations with regular education classroom teachers to maximize the learning potential of the student. Continual movement of student progress helps keep instruction focused on individual student needs. When a student experiences difficulty, a plan is discussed to support the learner. Often the plan includes a component of responsibility for the parent and student as well as the school.

When students continue to have difficulty, additional time for instruction is sometimes needed. Before and after school instruction is seen as an additional support-not as a punishment. Teachers volunteer to spend one hour twice a week (sometimes more) to reinforce basic skills that may be lacking. Students frequently thrive with the extra attention after school support can provide. Multiple instructional methods work together to support student learning.

With proficiency as the goal, all conversation about the school performance are based on data. Bi-monthly grade level meetings revolve around topics of student achievement. Formative data (informal data from classroom observations and daily work) collected by classroom teachers and summative data compiled by the district is used to guide the discussion. Not only is achievement discussed in scheduled meeting times, teachers often meet informally to collaborate on ways to improve particular skills.

Data folders containing information about each of their students are kept by all teachers. Data from formative assessments is used to monitor and modify instruction with a focus toward mastery of content

standards. Re-teaching and extension activities are planned according to the needs of the students. The cycle of test, teach, test, reteach/extend, test continues throughout the year. As individual students continue to have difficulties, teachers meet to brainstorm additional support for the student. Activities and projects that stretch students beyond the knowledge and comprehension levels into analysis and synthesis of thought are planned for students who have mastered the basic skills of the content standards.

In addition to the assessment information in the data folders, administrators record grades from mid-term reports and quarterly standards-based report cards. The information helps provide an overall picture of student progress. Discussions are held about the progress of groups as well as individual students. By responding to the needs of our students with focused research-based instruction, Dundee Elementary has maintained a high level of achievement.

School Improvement Planning is the systemic process for school improvement at Dundee. It ensures continuous school improvement through analysis, action planning, professional development, implementation, monitoring and adjusting. The process is a cycle of predictable, repeatable steps to support schools in school improvement efforts. The School Improvement Planning process is a method in which schools meet the requirements of Rule 10, Nebraska Department of Education and our regional accrediting agency, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. Building data provided by the district is used in analyzing trends. By keeping in mind the instructional needs of students at all levels, both short and long term components are in place for continued school improvement.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

---

### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

The spirit of collegiality among schools benefits everyone. District principal meetings provide a forum for sharing ideas. Professional learning groups of principals meet for support and collaboration. Instructional Facilitators also meet once a month to discuss critical student achievement issues and to share best practice ideas. Instructional facilitators network among themselves to ask questions and gather ideas about successful strategies being implemented in other buildings.

Dundee staff members have made formal presentations to district groups and local and state conferences on numerous occasions. The presentation topics range from differentiated instruction to long-range planning to multi-age grouping for reading instruction.

Dundee Elementary teachers have been able to participate in projects that benefit the district. Teachers have produced detailed lesson plans for subjects that have served as model across the district. Teachers across the district have come to Dundee on multiple occasions to observe our teachers implement strategies and behavior plans. At Dundee, staff members engage students and motivate students by constantly looking at data that is collected on assignments and assessment. Students are given the data and teacher's goal set with each student and set up contracts of specific steps on how they can improve. This process is completed in academic areas and social emotional areas, if needed. Parents sign contracts and they are returned to school. Dundee strives on providing students with a positive environment that supports academic, social and emotional growth. Students are nominated throughout the year to participate in activities such as a student led student council, safety patrol, peer tutors, peer mentors, student of distinction squad members, classroom leaders, and buddies. Each quarter every student at Dundee participates in a celebration. The main purpose of this celebration that is stated to students is to celebrate that they are a student at Dundee. Staff members are treated with respect and integrity at Dundee. Staff believe that students will mimic how they see adults treating each other with their peers. Dundee staff work together during common plan times and motivate each other with new ideas and new research based strategies.

Dundee Elementary teachers have also developed lessons to support the teaching of the Character Pillars for our Life Skills program, Character Counts. Each month a character trait is focused on; and a student is nominated by their teacher and peers to win the Student of Distinction Award. An all school assembly is then held and students are presented with their award. A picture is taken of each student and the whole group which is then displayed on social media, our monthly all school newsletter and throughout the building on televisions after they are made into iMovies. Students, staff, parents, and community members enjoy seeing this positive activity displayed each month. Each grade level received lessons for teaching the virtue behind each pillar. Literature was used to support the teaching in many lessons. Binders of these lessons are now available to schools across the district. The process of sharing benefits everyone; ideas are refined; professional learning continues; teachers are validated for their efforts, and enthusiasm for teaching is maintained.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Communication is key at Dundee. It is important that all parties understand the goals and successes of the school. Parents are always welcome visitors at school. As a group, parent receive information about school performances on curriculum night. Teachers present the curriculum expectations at each grade level to parents. Parents are kept informed about school performance at monthly Parent Teacher Organization meetings.

Mid-term reports and report cards are sent home a total of eight times during the school year. Parents receive information about their child's academic performance at report card conferences twice a year and, if necessary, at additional scheduled meetings. For students who are experiencing difficulty with grade level standards, additional meetings are held to keep parents current on their child's progress. Weekly "Wednesday Folders" are sent home with samples of student work, important announcements, and school

news. A small percentage of students benefit from daily reporting to parents, often through a school-to-home notebook. Parents are viewed as critical components in the student's success. Communication is essential.

Students receive frequent feedback regarding their academic progress. Students set learning goals and work to achieve them. A specific example would be reading fluency. Students are aware of the grade-level fluency goal. Students know their current fluency score. Students make a specific weekly goal to improve fluency. At the end of the week, progress toward the goal is assessed. Students continue to set incremental goals on the way to reaching fluency.

Students receive feedback through report cards. Teachers go over the report card with each student individually to celebrate areas of success and discuss ways to improve areas of concern. Students begin to understand their role in taking ownership of their learning.

School performance data is shared with the community through the local newspaper, parent teacher organization meetings, and other media sources. Teachers are prepared to respond to community questions and educational issues that may be covered by the media. School performance data is also shared with the community through the Nebraska Department of Education website at <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/>.

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

The most reliable way to improve student achievement is to improve the quality of the teachers who are delivering the instruction. The best scenario for assuring student success has two components: relationships where teachers are able to communicate their belief in the ability to their students to succeed, and teachers who are equipped with knowledge and experience in using research based best practices to deliver instruction.

Based on those two components, Dundee teachers participate in a range of professional development opportunities. Teacher attendance at local and regional conferences is supported by the school budget. Conference attendance is available to every teacher. Teachers are encouraged to attend conferences that offer topics of concern and personal interest. Conference topics in the past year included: leveled literacy training, writing instruction, music in the classroom, engagement strategies, behavior management strategies, guided reading, and scientific inquiry. Teachers often attend conferences in grade-level groups on weekends. New ideas and strategies learned at conferences are shared with the rest of the staff as teachers give mini presentations about what they learned at the conference.

In addition to attending conferences, Dundee teachers participate in professional development at the building level. Over the past few years, Dundee has implemented professional development that specifically pertains to the subject area that the teacher teaches. Over the past three years, we have had professional development groups focus on engagement, reading and writing, and math strategies. Teachers are able to implement the strategies learned at these sessions immediately within their classroom the next day. Teachers within their professional development groups then observe one another to learn from each other as well as offer advice on how a specific targeted strategy can be implemented better. All staff members play an active role in the staff development sessions. The best instructional method is the combination of methods that connects with the student and results in academic success. Continuing professional development keeps teachers engaged in learning and excited about refining their skills.

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

School improvements rely heavily on the quality of the leader of the building. At Dundee Elementary School, the principal is respected because of her integrity. An Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) has been created to ensure that each staff member is given a voice in key decisions. This year the team consisted of the art teacher, a kindergarten teacher, assistant principal, principal, a sixth grade teacher, a third grade teacher and a fifth grade teacher. The team has made and implemented many different types of professional development and moral boosting activities with our staff. Our principal and team are committed to the success of every student. The team members are leaders in supporting families and

collaborating with staff to ensure that each child reaches their highest potential. They are innovative, compassionate, and respected. They are constantly asking staff, "What can we do together to improve our school, our classrooms, and our students' learning?" When it comes to individual students, staff are encouraged to ask not, "How can I stop this student from causing so many problems?" but rather, "What can I do to help this student overcome his or her difficulties?" The focus is always on the students and how we, as dedicated professionals, can work together to make a difference in their lives. The entire team of staff members at Dundee Elementary are strong leaders in the community as well. They attend students' basketball games, and summer baseball games, area concerts of current and former students.

Our principal understands the strengths and needs of our students and she knows what is happening in each classroom. She plays an active role in planning and supporting instruction that is appropriate for our students, and she ensures that school time and resources are focused on student achievement. The principal is an instructional leader who guides the staff in the best interest of student learning; she does not micro-manage her teachers. Instead, teachers are given respect to be included in decision making processes and able to give input within the building. At Dundee, there is a palpable spirit because of our school leader. It can be felt when listening to her laugh, hearing her morning announcements, and being seen in the hallway. Everything is a celebration, and everyone in the school is happy to be there. Academic success is cheered just as athletics are, and teachers and students know they are valued. Visitors, teachers and parents who come into the building constantly comment, "This would be a great place to work or send my child!" Even though there is a sense of urgency concerning learning and student achievement, everyone from the cafeteria staff and the custodians to the students, teachers and office staff will announce with pride that they have the best school and wouldn't want to be anywhere else!

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

---

Dundee teachers and staff are committed to the continual learning of new instructional strategies that promote learning. Communication is key so that all parties understand the goals and successes of the school. Administrators, teachers, parent, and support staff are committed to the success of every student. Extra time is put in daily and on weekends to provide students with what they need academically and emotionally. For students who experience difficulty with grade level standards, additional meetings are held to keep parents current on their child's progress. These meetings are referred to as Student Assistant Team meetings (SAT's). The process begins with a teacher expressing a concern that they have for a student either academically or socially. The teacher brings the team together that consists of administrators, school psychologist, grade level teachers and parents. The teacher presents the data and strategies that have been tried in the classroom. Then the team, brainstorms strategies that could also help the student. Baseline data is taken and data is tracked with the new intervention(s) for six weeks. The team will then meet again to discuss the interventions. The team then decided the next steps at these meeting.

Consistent frequent feedback is essential to learning. Students receive feedback each day. Teachers are able to specifically tell each student how they are able to improve and where mistakes have been while also celebrating the growth and progress they have achieved. Staff members are proud of Dundee. They enjoy coming to work because the culture has been set up as a fun learning environment.

Students at Dundee are achieving beyond what the statistical calculations would expect, taking into account the socio-economic level of the school. Dundee is beating the odds; success is a reality for our students. Dundee is proud of our accomplishments.