

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 Mrs. Kelly J. Ballinger

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

Official School Name Pender Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 609 Whitney Street

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

City Pender State NE Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 68047-5036

County Thurston

Telephone (402) 385-3244 Fax (402) 385-3324

Web site/URL http://www.penderschools.org E-mail keballi1@penderschools.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. Jason Dolliver E-mail jadolli1@penderschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Pender Public School District Tel. (402) 385-3244

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Matt Peters
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	25	15	40
K	20	15	35
1	13	15	28
2	16	19	35
3	13	8	21
4	18	8	26
5	10	10	20
6	8	24	32
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	123	114	237

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 93 % 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: 13%

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	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	25
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	191
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.131
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
10 Total number ELL

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 40 %
Total number students who qualify: 79
8. Students receiving special education services: 23 %
54 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.

- 1 Autism
- 1 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 2 Mental Retardation
- 1 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 6 Other Health Impaired
- 16 Specific Learning Disability
- 11 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 15 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	13
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	13
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.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1
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%	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 X

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

The mission of the Pender Public School District is to provide quality educational opportunities in a safe, positive learning environment that motivates and challenges all students to become productive and responsible citizens.

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

Pender Public Schools (PPS) is a P-12 school district serving approximately 378 students this school year. The school serves residents of Pender and Thurston as well as the rural areas surrounding those two communities. The community of Pender has a population of approximately 1000 people and is located in Thurston County in Northeast Nebraska. The district as a whole is rural in nature and relies heavily on a successful agriculture economy. The community boasts a diverse business district with a mix of professional and retail businesses as well as a new critical access hospital, medical clinic, rehabilitation/living center and an assisted living facility. The students and families served are primarily traditional in nature, with average to low-average income.

Our student population is minimally diverse with low mobility and high attendance rates. PPS's enrollment trend is unlike many rural districts in Nebraska and across the country. The K-12 enrollment is as high as it has been since the 2004-2005 school year. The birth to age 4 census data indicates strong numbers for the future. The enrollment trends are strong, and that is a promising sign for our small rural district.

PPS continues to be in a strong financial position, which has been the case for several years. The financial condition, however, is going to potentially be challenged in the years ahead. Fortunately, those individuals responsible for the governance of PPS have worked tirelessly in planning for the future, in the event that financial challenges present themselves.

The history of the school is rich with tradition. The school was built in 1922 with additions in 1949, 1961 and 1975. New construction of K-6 building, gymnasium, multi-purpose room and secondary science rooms occurred in 2001. The Nebraska Department of Education has accredited Pender Public Schools since 1917. In the 2014-2015 school year, the district worked through the AdvancED accreditation process. An AdvancED external accreditation visit was conducted in Pender in April of 2015, resulting in a recommendation to fully accredit the district.

One unique feature of the school district is its mascot. Pender is the only school in Nebraska and possibly the United States that is proud to call its mascot the Pendragon. The Pendragon name is not just a simple combination of Pender and Dragon. The Pendragon comes from medieval times when dragons were the leaders of clans. The most powerful dragons were called Pendragons.

Pender is classified as a D-1 high school by the Nebraska School Activities Association and is a member of the East Husker Conference from which competitive events are provided for students. Other East Husker Conference schools include Oakland-Craig, Tekamah-Herman, North Bend Central, Lyons-Decatur Northeast, Logan View, Scribner-Snyder, Stanton, Wisner-Pilger, West Point, Clarkson-Leigh, Howells-Dodge, Twin River, Humphrey-Lindsay Holy Family, Madison, and Bancroft-Rosalie.

The mission of the Pender Public School District is to provide quality educational opportunities in a safe, positive learning environment that motivates and challenges all students to become productive and responsible citizens. The district features high quality educational and extra curricular facilities that more than meet the needs of its students and its patrons. Led by an excellent certified and classified staff of 60 people, the school district provides educational opportunities that will lead students down the path to success.

One of the outcomes of our AdvancED feedback was the creation of a slogan. PPS has had a mission statement for quite some time. A more succinct and recognizable phrase was needed however. After a process that included staff, students, and patrons, "It's a Great Day to be a Pendragon" was adopted as the District's slogan.

Several key strategies are in place within the district to help students reach their maximum potential. The district is a proud member of the TeamMates mentoring program. The goal of TeamMates is to positively impact the world by inspiring youth to reach their full potential through mentoring. The district staffs a Beyond the Bell afterschool program, which is free of charge to parents. Students who attend receive a

snack, help with homework, and participate in planned activities until their parents arrive. The district also partners with the local ministerium to provide backpacks of food each weekend for any family who may be in need. PPS has a school-wide title program as well as a top-notch special education program to help meet the diverse needs of all of our learners. Guidance and nursing programs round out a broad range of services provided to reach all students.

Finally, PPS continues its focus on PRIDE, which is an acronym for Preparation, Respect, Integrity, Determination, and Excellence. PRIDE is a P-12 initiative that began in the 2014-15 school year. Elementary students have PRIDE assemblies one time per quarter to recognize positive behavior, classroom success, and more. P-12 students are awarded PRIDE t-shirts when they are caught doing the right thing. Our community, parents and students embrace our focus on PRIDE and are active participants in this district initiative.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Reading/Language Arts

The reading/language arts curriculum was locally developed. Its foundation is found in the Nebraska State Standards with a rich blend of local input and influence as well. We feel the state and local standards together create a well-rounded English/Language Arts curriculum. We have implemented a standards-based grading system that gives students, teachers and parents great feedback regarding proficiency and performance on the established standards. The materials used by Pender Elementary to meet curricular standards are two-fold. First, the core reading series and secondly, our guided reading program. The core reading series used is the MacMillan/McGraw Hill Treasures Reading Series. Treasures is a research based, comprehensive K-6 reading program. Priority skills include differentiated instructional resources in the areas of comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, phonics, spelling and writing. There are a variety of assessments included that measure the priority areas of the program. Our core program is supplemented strongly by our Guided Reading program. Guided reading is one component of the shared reading block during which the teacher provides support for small, flexible groups of readers. The teacher helps students learn to use reading strategies, such as context clues, letter and sound knowledge, and syntax or word structure, as they read a text or book that is unfamiliar to them. The goal of guided reading is for students to use these strategies independently on their way to becoming fluent, skilled readers. Guided reading also incorporates the use of The Daily 5 (Read to Self, Read to Someone, Word Work, Work on Writing, Listen to Reading) in every lesson. The Daily 5 holds the literacy block together. It allows students to do meaningful work independently while the teacher is working with small groups. The Daily 5 helps build learning stamina and independence. At the 4th, 5th and 6th grade levels there is also an increased focus on writing. We implemented a 40-minute block of writing instruction daily for all 4th, 5th and 6th graders. This allows us to focus on the writing skills necessary to be successful, not only on assessments, but as students enter junior high and high school as well.

Mathematics

The mathematics curriculum was also locally developed. Its foundation is found in the Nebraska State Standards with local input and influence as well. We feel the state and local standards together create a well-rounded mathematics curriculum. We have implemented a standards-based grading system which gives students, teachers and parents great feedback regarding proficiency and performance on the established standards. The materials used by Pender Elementary to meet curricular standards come from the Saxon math program. The Saxon Math curriculum has an incremental structure that distributes content throughout the year. This integrated and connected approach provides deep, long-term mastery of the content and skills associated with local mathematics standards. No matter how well students initially learn a concept, if they are not able to retain their learning, connect it to other concepts, and apply it in problem-solving situations, they have not reached mastery. Saxon Math is designed to support the long-term mastery and applications that will make a difference during testing and in students' future education and careers. We found that this incremental approach enhances overall comprehension and skill development. In the same way that our Guided Reading program meets the individual needs of learners with small, flexible groupings we do something similar in the area of math as well. Currently these groupings occur only in grade level bands, but we hope to expand that philosophy to a lower/upper elementary grouping as well. Mathematics skills are integrated into morning meetings and study time throughout the day. This philosophy also helps with skill retention and content readiness. Students are set up for success on assessments as well as being exceptionally prepared for entry into junior high and high school.

Science

The science curriculum was locally developed. Its foundation is found in the Nebraska State Standards with local input and influence as well. We feel the state and local standards together create a well-rounded science curriculum. We have also implemented a standards-based grading system that gives students, teachers and parents great feedback regarding proficiency and performance on established standards. The materials used by Pender Elementary to meet curricular standards come from the Science Fusion program. Science Fusion is a comprehensive elementary science program. The print, hands-on, and digital curriculum

provide options for all students in any learning environment (home or school, traditional or paperless) and align to the Framework for K–12 Science Education/Next Generation Science Standards. We believe, even at the elementary level, in a STEM focus. Science, technology, engineering and math together help develop important critical-thinking skills that prepare students for success in future science courses. A science night/science fair is also held in the spring, which culminates with a science show designed to intrigue and excite students about science education.

Social Studies/Civic Learning

The social studies/civic-learning curriculum was locally developed. Its foundation is found in the Nebraska State Standards with local input and influence as well. We feel the state and local standards together create a well-rounded social studies/civic-learning curriculum. We have implemented a standards-based grading system which gives students, teachers and parents great feedback regarding proficiency and performance on the established standards. The materials used by Pender Elementary to meet curricular standards originate from the McGraw Hill Social Studies program. In kindergarten, we focus on living, learning and working together. First grade focus is on our community and its assets. Second grade spends much of their time talking about what it means to be an American. Third grade centers on the United States and its neighbors. Fourth grade is traditionally Nebraska studies. Fifth grade paints a broader stroke of American History. Sixth grade tackles history of the World in modern times. Multiple activities over the course of the year focus on civic learning/responsibility. In the fall the elementary students adopted the MCPOD (Main Command Post Operational Detachment) division of the First Infantry serving in Iraq. They penned letters to the troops and sponsored a drive for treats/useful items for the troops. Through this process they learned about military service and the needs of our soldiers. The students also lead the charge in a Thanksgiving food drive to stock our local food bank prior to the holidays. Not only do students donate the food but they pack it and deliver it as well. Finally, one important project we handle on a weekly basis is packing food bags for disadvantaged families. Our upper elementary students donate their time to pack the bags. They have learned a great deal about civic responsibility and giving back to their community through these projects.

Preschool

Our preschool program boasts a strong enrollment each year. The program is organized into nine areas of development and learning. The first four are major areas of child development and learning: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language and Cognitive. The content learning is organized into the areas of: Literacy, Mathematics, Science/Technology, Social Studies and The Arts. Students in preschool are assessed in these nine areas using Teaching Strategies Gold (Objectives for Development and Learning). Teaching Strategies Gold is an authentic, observational assessment system for children from birth to through kindergarten. It is designed to get to know what children know, can do, and their strengths, needs, and interests. The Teaching Strategies Gold assessments are shared with Kindergarten teachers prior to kindergarten round up and then again at the end of the school year. This ongoing conversation between preschool and elementary staff provides for a seamless transition between our preschool and elementary programming. Our preschool teacher is also well versed in Nebraska State Standards and works toward them when it is developmentally appropriate. Having a preschool in our K-12 building has provided so many opportunities for our youngest children. They become accustomed to their surroundings, are introduced to their future teachers, and naturally prepare for entrance in the K-12 world. There are obvious, notable benefits of early education on school readiness including but not limited to socialization, language development, cognitive growth and fine/gross motor improvements. Long term success of students who attend preschool is also noted.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Pender Elementary School also has a strong non-core curriculum. These non-core subjects are arguably what make us who we are. They develop us as complete human beings and make us well-rounded people. Research tells us that participation in non-core areas is a key component in improving learning throughout all core academic areas. There is evidence that involvement in areas such as fine arts, physical education, and foreign language instruction reduce student dropout rates and raise student attendance. Therefore, we do not lose sight of these important areas of study.

Visual Arts - All K-6 students participate in a visual arts curriculum. Our students all attend an art class

twice a week. The course supports the acquisition of skills through a purposeful exposure to a wide variety of media and methods. Kids are encouraged to work on projects that are meaningful as well as challenging to them. Vocal Music - All P-6 students participate in a vocal music education curriculum. Our students all attend a vocal music class twice a week. The course supports the acquisition of skills through classroom work and performance based learning. They incorporate dance, rhythm and percussion into their learning as well. Opportunities for additional learning are supported through an elementary honor choir held during our after-school program. This program is open to all students in grades 4-6.

Band - All 4-6 students have the opportunity to participate in an instrumental music education curriculum. We have approximately 90% participation in elementary band. The course supports the acquisition of skills through exposure to a wide variety of instruments prior to students selecting their instrument of choice. There is a strong focus on individual lessons and learning as well as group performance. Opportunities for additional learning are supported through private lessons held during our after-school program.

Physical Education/Health/Nutrition - All P-6 students participate in a Physical Education, Health and Nutrition curriculum. Our students all attend a physical education class twice a week. The course supports the acquisition of skills through variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Students learn recreational games with individual and team based focus. They also learn about health, wellness and proper nutrition.

Foreign Language - All 4-6 students participate in a foreign language education curriculum. Our 4-6 grade students all attend a Spanish class twice a week. The course supports the acquisition of skills through exposure to the Spanish language, culture and environment. This is an exposure-based class that hopes to peak the interest of our upper elementary students. It also promotes knowledge of and tolerance for other cultures and beliefs.

Technology - All K-6 students participate in a technology education curriculum. Our students all attend a technology education class once a week. The course supports the acquisition of skills through exposure to and education regarding numerous forms of technology. Keyboarding education begins early so that students are as proficient as possible. Students are exposed to computers and the programs associated with them. They are also exposed to iPads and learning apps. Technology education and preparing our students for the world they are entering into is a high priority for us.

Library - All K-3 students participate in a Library education curriculum. Our K-3 students all go to the library once a week. They learn about how the library works, how to check out materials and items available in the library. The course supports the acquisition of skills through multiple opportunities to check out books, use reference materials and research topics of interest.

Guidance - All P-6 students are fortunate enough to meet with our guidance counselor. All students attend a guidance class one time per week. The course supports the acquisition of skills through a focus on character education, career/college exploration and review of appropriate ways to deal with feelings. These skills play an extremely important role in the well-being and emotion growth of our students.

We are very fortunate to have the ability to expose our students to this wide variety of non-core area curriculums. Guidance, Art, Vocal Music, Technology, Library, Physical Education, Band and Foreign Language are integral parts of our educational system. Participation in these curricular areas broadens the horizons of our students and helps create strong, well-rounded learners.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Pender Public Schools provides our students with a three-tiered approach to reading and math instruction. In reading, classroom teachers provide high quality classroom instruction using the Treasures Core Reading Series and leveled group instruction in Guided Reading, which allows teachers to differentiate instruction based on student need. The teachers provide age appropriate explicit instruction using the five components of reading; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In math, instruction has an incremental structure that distributes content throughout the year. This integrated and connected approach

provides deep, long-term mastery of the content and skills associated with local mathematics standards. In the same way that our Guided Reading program meets the individual needs of learners with small, flexible groupings, our grade band grouping used with the Saxon Math series differentiates learning as well.

Within the first few weeks of the school year, our RtI (Response to Intervention)/MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) team evaluates students using three benchmarks systems: MAPS (Measures of Academic Progress), AIMSweb, and the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System. This is done to determine students' abilities and make programming decisions. This data is also used to provide classroom teachers with reading levels to establish differentiated Guided Reading Groups. Following benchmark completion, our RtI/MTSS Team spends a day triangulating data to determine the appropriate services for students. We address those students needing targeted and/or intensive interventions and identify those students who will be recommended for our High Ability Learners program.

MAPs testing and AIMSweb testing take place in the fall, winter and spring. During each assessment window, our RtI/MTSS Team meets to review new data and compare testing data to classroom performance. Intervention groups are recalculated and reviewed at this time. The results from these assessments provide significant, on-going data used to support educational decision-making and instruction throughout the year.

Classroom teachers provide Tier I interventions as needed and monitor student progress in core curricular areas to determine effectiveness. Students in need of additional Tier II interventions will receive them in the least restrictive environment using the appropriate research based interventions. Examples of such interventions are as follows: Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR), Level Literacy Interventions (LLI), Sound Partners, and PRESS Interventions from the Minnesota Center for Reading Research. The classroom teacher, the interventionist, and the assessment team monitor student progress. The AIMSweb system progress-monitoring component is used for this purpose.

Pender Public Schools has purposely developed a 30-minute block of intervention and enrichment time for each grade level K-6. During this intervention block, a majority of our necessary interventions are delivered. This time typically follows our Guided Reading block. Interventions are delivered by our interventionist, classrooms teachers, and paraprofessionals. The intervention teacher and paraprofessionals provide the lower elementary interventions in the classroom while the rest of the students have Guided Reading and Daily 5 Stations.

Student growth rates and levels of performance are reviewed and analyzed carefully following progress monitoring sessions. Consideration of progress monitoring data, classroom performance data, intervention accuracy and professional judgment will be used to determine effectiveness of the intervention. Following at least six data points, decisions are made to maintain the program, change the program, or discontinue the intervention. If a student is discontinued from their intervention program, they will still receive progress monitoring to ensure the student is successful without the additional support.

Students showing insufficient improvement based on the established growth rate may be referred to the SAT (Student Assistance Team) and/or referred for Special Education assessment. Our Special Education programs are definitely a strength of our district. Two multi-categorical classrooms serve our PK-6 students needing Tier III interventions. We also have recently established our own Autism program to serve students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

We continue to be pleased with overall student performance district wide. Subgroup performance on assessments is monitored closely and gaps are addressed each year during our data retreat. While our gaps are not great, we do continue to be vigilant in addressing subgroup needs as part of our school improvement plan and goals. Our data retreat conversation also allows us to address what is working so that we can continue to maintain high levels of achievement and success.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Pender Elementary School works very hard to engage and motivate students and teachers. Engaged, motivated students make things happen. They learn at higher levels and attack new skills with vigor. Teachers who feel valued and cared for make students feel valued and cared for. We have several initiatives that we turn to in this regard.

Pendragon PRIDE is a school wide initiative designed to promote the skills we want to see most from our students. PRIDE is an acronym that stands for preparation, respect, integrity, determination and excellence. We spend a great deal of time teaching the definition of those terms and discussing ways to exhibit those characteristics.

Quarterly PRIDE assemblies showcase students and teachers who have been caught doing the right things (showing PRIDE), honor roll, quarterly birthdays, classroom awards, spelling bee winners, science fair awards and numerous other things. Our Parent-Teacher organization often uses this time to positively recognize students as well. We often conclude these assemblies with some team building activities or games.

Other events used to motivate and engage students would be our NeSA kick off assembly. We kick off testing season with a K-6 assembly put on by the staff to encourage and excite students about the upcoming tests. We encourage them to do their very best. We also remind them about getting extra sleep, eating right and having a positive attitude. Catchy slogans and songs are often performed and used throughout the testing window.

A showcase event that we are very proud of is our NeSA awards assembly. We recognize students who achieve perfect or near perfect scores on their NeSA tests. This event is quite a party, complete with balloons and the red carpet! We turn off the lights, have our very own tunnel walk and spotlight the students as they are announced. Parents receive special invitations to the event. It is important to us that we create an environment that supports and recognizes academic achievement as well as extra curricular activities.

Social and emotional growth and support can mean different things to different kids. We work very hard to recognize what those individual needs are. Meeting those needs definitely requires a multi-faceted approach. We incorporate a high ability learners program for grades 3-6, which meets 4 times a week. Our TeamMates mentoring chapter has been active for 3 years and is available to our 3-6 graders as well. Our Beyond the Bell after school program is available to all students K-6 and is free of charge to our parents. All parents P-6 are able to sign their children up at no cost for our Back Pack Food Program. This provides a bag of healthy food and snacks for each student on the weekend. While our list of programs is not complete, we are working hard to meet the needs of all of our students.

Creating an environment where teachers feel valued and supported is paramount to our success. Like anyone in any profession, knowing that what you do is appreciated and valued makes all the difference. Our district wide policies and procedures reflect this thinking, as do our day-to-day staff development activities. Celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week and American Education week are also very important to us. Listening to teacher concerns, opinions and being present for them on a daily basis may be the most important thing we can do.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Involving our community and families in the school environment has been a renewed focus for Pender Elementary School. We know that for optimum student engagement we need to include families. Our community has so many strengths and our people so many gifts; we hope to utilize them as much as possible.

Family based activities in the school have been very successful for us. We hold multiple events over the course of the school year. Parent participation with their students has been very high.

Back-to-School night is an open house held before school starts. Our booster club serves a light supper for all our parents, students and community members. This gives students and parents an opportunity to meet their teacher and drop off their supplies. Community members are able to buy new Pender attire and see any changes or updates that have been done to the building.

Pendragon Literacy Night is also held in the fall. Our fall sports athletes pair up with elementary students to read between JV and varsity volleyball games. We usually have a theme for this event such as “Read in your PJ’s” or “Red Out to Read”. We invite the opponents and their elementary students to participate as well.

A Mock Election/Family Reading Night is held in November. Students and parents again are fed a light supper. They learn about the election process, local candidates, national candidates, and participate in a Pender Elementary election. “If I Could Pick Our President...” is always a fun part of our evening.

Science Night is held in March. Older students participate in a Science Fair contest with projects and judging. Younger students and parents are treated to a wild and crazy science show put on by a local college professor. The night always includes a meal and snacks for participants.

Read Across America is an annual celebration at Pender Elementary. We celebrate the birthday of Dr. Seuss with all sorts of fun activities including a community read-in. Local community members that our students recognize are invited to come and read to our students. This has included our ministers, doctors, postal workers, coaches, hair stylists, therapists, and alumni. Our parent-teacher organization gives each of our students a book of choice.

All of our parent/community events always include an education component. We provide parents with strategies for improving learning at home. We also try to give them information for additional resources available to parents and students in need.

Parents and local community members play a vital role in our school leadership and support systems. Their involvement in school improvement processes, Title One teams and various committees is vital. We have several support organizations that are comprised of community members/parents including the Pender Booster Club, Pender Music Boosters and our Parent-Teacher Organization.

We have a very good relationship with Wayne State College in Wayne, Nebraska. WSC is our closest post-secondary partner. We host many clinical students, practicum students and student teachers each year. We know this practice is helping better our future educators.

3. Professional Development:

The professional development approach of Pender Elementary is two-fold. First, we ask that all professional development be related to current school improvement goals. Secondly, professional development should be in a content area/area of need for the teacher. We feel this approach helps us streamline and focus the vast array of staff development opportunities available to us.

Our school-based staff development topics are planned prior to the school year. There is always room for flexibility and change as needed. Additional staff development opportunities are available at our local educational service unit. Our staff and administration often take advantage of these ESU#1 opportunities. Another resource for staff development is our closest higher education partner, Wayne State College.

School-based staff development focuses on areas of need for that school year. An early centerpiece of our staff development is always examining multiple sources of student data from the previous year to change and guide further instruction. Keeping apprised of student data and performance is the basis for what we

do.

One area of need established during our data retreat has been writing. We have written an action plan for this area of staff development, which helps guide our future planning. Working on our writing curriculum with the help of a statewide writing expert has been an area of focus. Allowing teachers time to align their practices to this work is also important.

School safety has been another vital topic in our staff development conversations. We have rewritten some of our safety/crisis plans. We also have provided specific, dynamic school crisis training to our entire staff with the help of Chad Sheehan of Sheehan Solutions. Live intruder/school shooter drills were conducted as well as post-drill debriefing to gain the most knowledge about our processes and where improvement is necessary.

Another major topic of conversation for our staff development time has been the review and revision of the teacher and administrator evaluation system. Quality teacher and administrator evaluations systems are vital to student achievement but also take buy-in from those involved. We have worked closely with our staff and administration during this process to assure an understanding and commitment to this new process.

Additional topics of professional development have included professional reading, development of student learning objectives, AdvancED school improvement goal work and textbook selection. Again, most activities are planned prior to the school year with time allowed for flexibility as needed, maintaining a focus on school improvement goals and areas of teacher need.

4. School Leadership:

Pender Elementary School is driven by the District's mission, which reads, "The mission of the Pender Public School District is to provide quality educational opportunities in a safe, positive learning environment that motivates and challenges all students to become productive and responsible citizens." The elements of this mission statement are expanded upon when articulating the leadership philosophy.

School leaders strive to maximize the potential of each and every student. This can be done by knowing and understanding that all students have a unique set of needs and doing everything possible to meet those needs. It is also important for leadership to ensure students are provided with high-quality programs, opportunities, and resources that serve as the foundation for their educational experience and lifelong success.

A positive learning environment that encourages students to be lifelong learners is yet another essential component of the leadership philosophy. High expectations are set and students are held accountable when those expectations are not met because school leaders believe students are capable of hitting any target they are challenged to hit. It is also essential for diversity to be embraced and serve as an enhancement to the learning process. In other words, an environment that encourages and expects respect amongst and between students, staff, family members, and district patrons is essential.

These philosophies can only become reality with an appropriate leadership structure. Pender Public Schools believes in the team concept. We believe that we are only able to reach our potential as a District if a collaborative effort exists between students, staff, family members, and district patrons. For obvious reasons, a typical organizational structure or chain of command exists. That being said, input from all stakeholders is consistently requested and utilized to improve educational opportunities for students.

Finally, policies, programs, relationships, and resources consistently focus on student achievement. One of the more recent policy changes was in the area of grading when a standards-based grading and reporting approach to grading was implemented. The intent was and still remains to give students and their family members better feedback about student learning and achievement. This approach has had a positive impact on students and their learning. Another example would be the implementation of a guided reading program. Prior to its implementation, differentiated instruction in the area of English/Language Arts was

minimal. District personnel saw this weakness and addressed it. Pender Elementary students now participate in daily instruction that is differentiated to meet the needs of each student. Since implementation, this approach to English/Language Arts instruction has had a significantly positive impact on student achievement.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Upon reflection, I believe there are three main practices that together make our school successful. They are our Pendragon PRIDE initiative, a strong core curriculum and a multi-tiered system of support for students who need assistance. The combination of these practices creates an environment of commitment and achievement at Pender Elementary School.

PRIDE, is an acronym for Preparation, Respect, Integrity, Determination, and Excellence. PRIDE is an initiative that began in the 2014-15 school year. PRIDE is everywhere you look in our building including hallway banners, classroom signs, and school communications. Elementary students have PRIDE assemblies one time per quarter to recognize positive behavior, classroom success, and more. Students are awarded PRIDE t-shirts when they are caught exhibiting PRIDE characteristics. Most importantly our community and parents embrace our focus on PRIDE and are active participants in this district initiative.

Strong core curriculums are also a huge strength for us. The core reading series prioritizes differentiated instruction in the areas of comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, phonics, spelling and writing. It is supplemented strongly by our Guided Reading program, which provides support for small, flexible groups of readers. The teacher helps students learn to use reading strategies, such as context clues, letter and sound knowledge, and syntax or word structure, as they read a text or book that is unfamiliar to them.

The core math curriculum has an incremental structure that distributes content throughout the year. This integrated and connected approach provides deep, long-term mastery of the content and skills associated with local mathematics standards. It is designed to support the long-term mastery and applications that will make a difference during testing and in students' future education and careers. The reading and math core curriculums are the foundations for our academic success.

Pender Public Schools also provides students who struggle with an extremely strong and effective three-tiered system of intervention support. Classroom teachers provide high quality classroom instruction with a strong core curriculum. Within the first few weeks of the school year our assessment team assesses students using three benchmarks systems, MAPS, AIMSweb, and the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System. Following benchmark completion, our RtI/MTSS Team spends a day triangulating data to determine the appropriate services for students needing targeted and/or intensive interventions. Classroom teachers will provide Tier I interventions using standard curricular materials as needed and monitor student progress to determine effectiveness. Students in need of Tier II interventions will receive them from an interventionist in the least restrictive environment using appropriate, research based intervention programs. Students showing insufficient improvement based on the established growth rates may be referred to the SAT and/or Special Education for Tier III services. This process allows us to meet the unique, individual needs of every learner.

The PRIDE program, a strong core curriculum and a multi-tiered system of support for student who struggle are our keys for success. We give students a foundation for expected behavior, we provide them with a strong base of core curricular instruction and we have supports in place when additional assistance is needed. When combined with the variety of other amazing things happening at Pender Elementary, it is definitely a GREAT day to be a Pendragon!