

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Paige Elizabeth Sanders

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

Official School Name Woodland Park Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1010 E. Woodland Park Road

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

City Sheridan State WY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 82801-9366

County Wyoming

Telephone (307) 674-7937 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://www.scsd2.com/woodland-park-elementary-school/ E-mail paige.sanders@scsd2.com

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. Craig Dougherty E-mail craig.dougherty@scsd2.com  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Sheridan County School District #2 Tel. (307) 674-7405

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

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mrs. Ann Perkins  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2011 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
10. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
11. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 2 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 10 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	32	17	49
1	18	31	49
2	22	27	49
3	27	17	44
4	24	32	56
5	22	24	46
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	145	148	293

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 4 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 85 % 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: 15%

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	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	35
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	48
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	316
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.152
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
6 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 36 %  
Total number students who qualify: 104

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %  
46 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	18
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
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 17:1
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	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.

<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.

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

Woodland Park Elementary is a Community that Inspires and Empowers EVERYONE to Reach Their Full Potential.

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**

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The community Woodland Park Elementary serves is a small, rural community of hard-working families. Our students come from varied backgrounds, and bring their own flare to our educational community. The community inside our school walls has a profound effect on the success of our students.

Henry Ford once said, “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” Evidence of our collaborative teams working together pours out of every classroom in our building. This continuity did not happen by chance. A great deal of work, dedication, and reflection created it.

If you had the opportunity to wander from classroom to classroom in our school you would find teachers within a grade level who share a common objective. The walls of our school clearly display our collective commitments. Along with the mission statement proudly communicated in the entryway of our school, an evolving poster hangs in our conference room titled, “At Woodland Park We CHOOSE to Believe.” This chart serves as an anchor for our shared beliefs. We have specifically listed what we believe, as a community, makes us who we are. We have outlined, together, what we are ‘tight’ on to fulfill our commitment of student learning.

As you make your way around our school, you will see evidence of a growth mindset, one piece of our Professional Learning Community that holds us together. While many schools boast of using a growth mindset to empower their students, we did not stop there. We are empowering our students through our own growth mindset. We are constantly striving to learn how to better help our students. From the exhibits of the language of a growth mindset, to the objectives posted for intervention and enrichment groups that remind students of their potential, our walls portray a pledge of growth.

To build upon the dedication of our physical walls, the atmosphere of our school proves that our school wide goals drive our decisions. Simply listening in on a PLC meeting will show our dedication to achievement for all. We talk about learning, not teaching. We review data, not assumptions. We reflect, not justify. We intervene and enrich our students, not settle.

In relation, our staff meetings no longer drag out the logistics of our everyday procedures. We learn about these through simple emails, and use our staff meetings to develop as a community and learn from each other.

Laughing as we get to know and trust each other helps keep us a strong team. Last year, we played a mystery game where we learned surprising information about members of our staff. We even have a member of our staff who was in the Peace Corps in Mexico, and another who did an interview for People Magazine!

We also spotlight a grade level that is able to teach the remainder of our staff about the amazing things going on in their classrooms. Recently, our dedicated fifth grade team shared their way of fulfilling our school wide commitment to data tracking. Their students keep a ‘data notebook’ where they are able to evaluate their progress on specific standards with their teacher. Because of this, each grade level has adopted a similar practice that also meets this collective commitment. How incredibly powerful!

These pieces demonstrate our commitment to being a Professional Learning Community, who constantly reflects and refines to ensure we are enhancing student learning, which is our number one priority. Well-intended solutions like smaller class sizes, schools of choice, stronger curriculum, retention of students, higher funding, and longer school years (just to name a few) have been attempted. Using over 1,200 meta-analyses, John Hattie explored these failed proposals, explaining that their impact on student learning was minimal. Through this same research, Hattie conclusively resolved, “the greatest influence on student progression in learning is having highly expert...teachers... to maximize the effect of their teaching on all students in their care” (Hattie, 2015). This research corroborates our philosophy of ensuring high levels of learning for all students at Woodland Park Elementary.

Another piece of evidence which demonstrates our commitment to ALL students achieving their potential relates to our 15% mobility rate. In large, this is due to our fluctuating economy. We ensure these students needs are addressed by maintaining fluid interventions. This allows new students to be served, as well as students who require extra help at any point in the year to participate in necessary interventions. Our consistent monitoring of students' current level of performance, including new students, helps us determine when these interventions are needed.

We know that no program or website, both of which can aid a trained individual in supporting student learning, can replace the value of an effective educator. We not only consider our certified teachers essential in this initiative, but also our paraprofessionals who bear the responsibility of assisting in the preparedness of every student in our building. We choose to use as much of our precious time and funding to ensure every member of our staff is providing the most informed instruction.

These pieces, among so many others, demonstrate our staff commitment to our mission, which truly makes Woodland Park a community where all are empowered to achieve.

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

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

At Woodland Park Elementary, we understand that delivering a rigorous and viable curriculum is essential to student success. However, we also understand that programs and teacher’s guides do not ensure this, and have limited impact on student learning. With this in mind, we have trudged a long road to decipher what we want our kids to know, how we will know when they have learned it, what we will do when they achieve proficiency, and what we will do when they do not.

In reading, we began with the Common Core State Standards as the foundation. Each grade level spent time analyzing their grade-level standards to determine what each standard means, and develop essential learning targets for their students. This process was effective, not because of the product we created, but rather the process we went through. Conversations regarding the learning intentions presented by each standard are priceless when translated into learning experiences for students. Following the designation of learning targets, each team collaborated to establish how each target converts into proficiency. Analyzing proficiency led teams to determine which standards should be ‘priority standards’, which are non-negotiable for accelerated achievement in following grade levels. These priority standards were connected to supporting standards to ensure our students gained expertise in every Common Core Standard.

Finally, after laying a solid foundation, we began to build quality common formative assessments to gauge our students progress, provide focused intervention and enrichment, and, possibly most importantly, reflect on our practice. To do this, we seek support from experts. Book studies and professional development brought by Marzano’s team were two endeavors which helped us construct quality assessments.

Using data from these assessments, not teacher assumptions or predictions, we form systematic intervention and enrichment groups focused on students’ specific needs. For example, we group students based on their understanding of text features. Some would be grouped in an intervention group learning to identify features, a foundational skill of utilizing text features to learn, while other students are in a group researching to create their own informational text inclusive of text features. After providing this assistance, our students are offered additional opportunities to demonstrate proficiency.

Also relative to reading and writing, our school’s philosophy is one of Balanced Literacy. This methodology seamlessly integrates opportunities to differentiate, including the acquisition of foundational skills. For example, in guided reading, a component of Balanced Literacy, students are instructed in skills and behaviors necessary to increase their independence. Whether the student requires instruction far below or far above grade level, their specific needs are consistently met. As our mission states, this is our priority.

In mathematics, our school is in a transition, however, we remain dedicated to the proficiency of every student. Much like reading, we have taken the time to analyze and understand the Common Core State Standards. This process aids us in the delivery of our math curriculum, as well as the supplementation necessary to ensure our students reach their potential. Whether, the grade level is piloting Everyday Mathematics 2016 or Eureka, ongoing formative assessment and intervention is regular. Our teachers are trained in Strength in Numbers and Developing Number Knowledge, which outline the foundational knowledge children must conceptually understand to be successful. For example, we teach students to ‘structure numbers’, which includes grasping how numbers work and how to break them apart flexibly. In science and social studies, we focus on an integrated approach. It is clear that these content areas rarely exist in isolation from reading, writing, and mathematics. Each grade level has mapped out units of study which guide instruction. Collaboratively, teams plan how to teach these content areas, using reading, writing, and math as their launch point. For example, in fifth grade, students learn about the Revolutionary War. In reading, students read articles, biographies, informational text, and primary accounts to learn what it was like during that era of history. In writing, students write opinion pieces from the viewpoint of the colonists or the loyalists, and debate their rationales. In math, they are presented with challenges relevant to that point in history, like analyzing the taxation of colonists. Integration helps advance academic achievement in two major ways. First, our students reap the benefits of time because they are learning more

than one curriculum area at once. Also, our students remain more engaged because they experience content that is multi-faceted.

Another example of social studies content integration occurs in our fourth grade. They study Wyoming history in one of their units. During this unit, students read about how Wyoming was explored, settled, and developed. In addition, students participate in an interactive journey across the Oregon Trail. During the journey, they must collaborate with peers, some of whom are on the same wagon, to make the best decisions possible for their group. They must calculate food rations, miles remaining, and probability of survival, among other things. Relatedly, the fourth graders write narratives from the point of view of influential people in Wyoming's history.

In third grade, our students learn about our community's history. During their study of Sheridan History, our students visit several places in the community which influenced Sheridan History. These interactive field trips allow our students to experience and learn about places many have never been. For example, the Kendrick Mansion housed several meaningful people who shaped our community. Our students are able to go to the mansion and learn about its history. Our students create brochures to attract visitors to our community, create maps showing important places, and they even travel around the community on our trolley to see significant outdoor places.

Our science curriculum is based on Wyoming Science Standards, and is integrated as well. For example, one first grade life-science unit focuses on animals. From habitats to adaptations, our first grade students research animals from all over the world. During their integrated unit, they write informational research papers about an animal of their choosing. They create interactive books based on their research. As a culminating project, students host an 'Animal Wax Museum' where the community, as well as parents and other students, are invited to tour their projects. The audience pushes a 'button' to activate the wax animal (which is the researcher) and the animal teaches the audience about the animal!

In third grade, our students learn about simple machines. They write how-to articles to teach someone how to create a simple machine. During reading, they participate in a web-quest to learn about various simple machines, taking notes and sharing their findings. Finally, they go on a virtual hunt, finding everyday samples of simple machines and how they have impacted our lives.

Another example comes from second grade. These students read about many dinosaurs, the time period they lived in, their habitat, and much more. Following the reading, students chose a dinosaur that is of interest to them. They spend time researching, taking notes, and learning about their dinosaur. After learning, they write a piece to teach their peers. Watercolor paintings illustrate their writing. The grade level culminates the study by visiting the Tate Museum of Dinosaurs in Casper, where students see skeletons of the dinosaurs they studied up close.

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

We understand the importance of educating the whole child and providing opportunities for students to stretch their minds in other curricular areas. The arts play a prominent role at Woodland Park Elementary. Our students participate in visual art education once per week. Every student participates in a yearlong study of a different period of art each year. For example, last year our students learned about Renaissance art. During this unit of study, students developed knowledge regarding the time period and how the events of the period affected the art of that era. For example, with the invention of the printing press and a new system of astronomy, philosophy flourished, and with it, a new style of art focused on the individual and the mystery of the natural world. This allowed our students to appreciate areas of content not fully mastered in the regular classroom. Students are also taught elements of art like patterns, angles, lines of perspective, space, and measurement, which are all essential learnings in math. This integrated approach ensures our students' time is capitalized upon.

The performing arts are also a priority at Woodland Park. A traditional approach to performance education begins our students learning as they participate twice per week in music class. Every student is afforded this opportunity, where they develop talents like singing, playing the piano, drums, and wind instruments, as

well as understand musical theory and history, like how to read music and features of music from different parts of the world. Also, once per week, our students, first through fifth grades, have the option to participate in orchestra or piano. These courses encourage our students to deepen their capacity, and further appreciate music.

A course on health education is supplied weekly to our students in grades 1-5 and physical education is supplied twice per week in grades K-5. In each grade level, the content covered is developmentally appropriate, changing at each level. Our second graders, for example, are learning about nutrition and healthy eating, while our fifth graders are learning about the consequences of substance abuse. These components are crucial to a rounded education, and are life-skills we insist upon routinely delivering to our students.

Developing technology skills prepares our students to be productive citizens. We understand that the use of technology is multi-faceted. Primarily, we use technology in two ways. First, we use technology to provide our students with skills necessary for the 21st century. Understanding how to create and produce presentations, written pieces, and reports. This is inclusive of typing, researching, and evaluating sources, a few of the skills taught. Additionally, we use technology to enhance instructional practices. Listening to fluent reading and practicing math computation are two simple enhancements we are able to implement because of technology. Technology serves as a method to promote learning, not as an additional curriculum component which exists in isolation. We are fortunate enough to have one-to-one technology across our school. Kindergarten through second grade have iPads and third through fifth have Chromebooks. With this in mind, it is difficult to provide a schedule for technology instruction. We utilize them in every classroom on a daily basis. In addition, each classroom has a weekly time scheduled to receive instruction from our media specialist.

In connection to technology, each student participates in a library class. In this class, they fulfill objectives based on author and genre study. For example, all of our students are learning about and analyzing poetry in library this month. This provides additional instruction on reading standards, while exposing students to diverse text.

Finally, our students benefit from a curriculum delivered from our counselor focusing on social and life skills. This curriculum is relevant to every student in our school and teaches important concepts like how to deliver an apology, what it means to have empathy, why lunchroom procedures are important, and how perseverance impacts a person's life.

At Woodland Park Elementary we value the experiences our children receive which encourage exploration of talent and community, while strengthening core curricular areas.

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

It is our belief that we owe every student who walks through our doors the best and most beneficial learning experience possible. To guide this, our philosophy is one of a Professional Learning Community.

We collaborate consistently. Procedures are set up, like common planning time and systematic intervention and enrichment, and we take PLCs very seriously for student learning. Our PLCs exemplify Hattie's determination that collective teacher efficacy has an extremely high impact on student learning.

We do not utilize a canned curriculum. Hattie has proven that "a one-size-fits-all approach does not work". We also take Hattie's conclusion that seemingly sensible initiatives, like matching teaching to styles of learning, student control over learning, and whole-language learning prove to have very limited impact on student learning.

What we take very seriously is apprenticeship style learning where students move through the gradual release of responsibility, eventually leading to the ultimate goal of independence. Since Pearson and Gallagher have conducted the research, numerous literacy experts have reinforced the value of teaching using this strategy. Our students experience instruction with this at its core.

As a school, differentiation, intervention, and enrichment prove to have a profound impact on student learning. These pieces are not in place by chance, but are intentionally woven into every student's day. They are systematic and consistent. Based on our common formative assessment data, we break students into groups daily focused on their specific needs. We call these "WIN" groups: What I Need! Students with significant deficits are placed in small groups with a highly effective teacher (proven by results). In these groups, they focus on specific skills and strategies to quickly impact their progress, allowing them to accelerate to proficiency. Students who demonstrate proficiency, are placed in groups charged with enriching their knowledge through critical thinking, creation, and evaluation. We call these groups challenge groups in order for students to not be misled by any notion that there is no need to learn further due to their success in meeting proficiency but a challenge to go deeper and create an environment that promotes growth on both ends of goal.

Data analysis is part of our collaboration. We use the data from both long-term assessments, and intermittent formative assessment results to provide intervention enrichment, as well as reflect on effective practice. This allows us to learn from each other. If one teacher achieved outstanding student performance, the rest of us can benefit from learning the strategies used, and by observing them in action! The data from both of these types of assessments is used to develop goals. Our school determines goals at the beginning of each school year to focus upon. These goals are school-wide and linked directly to our data. Also, each PLC team creates goals, focused on data, that their team needs to pursue to increase student learning. Finally, our students use their assessment results to set personal goals for their own learning. From the school-wide view, to the personal student view setting specific goals improves progress.

Our philosophy is grounded in Professional Learning Communities, our Title I program works in conjunction with many other programs. One example is our Reading and Math Recovery Programs. Our Title I staff meets regularly with these specialists to study professional text, reflect on teaching, and gain insight into effective practices.

To maintain our high performance, we implement two important initiatives. First, we are a community of learners. Each week, every team partakes in a professional book study focused on their goal. To increase effective practice even further, we video tape lessons and reflect on them as a team. Second, we strive to maintain fidelity with our students, not a program or regimen. We work at each child's 'cutting edge' and focus on providing instruction which meets their specific needs. From intervention and enrichment to classroom differentiation- we teach with each child in mind.

Without question, Woodland Park Elementary values student learning. Through collaboration between programs and teams, sustainable initiatives, and ongoing professional development, we ensure a high-quality program for our students, that aligns with our mission: A Community that Inspires and Empowers EVERYONE to Achieve.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Culture is essential to learning. At Woodland Park Elementary, we know that as educators, our approach to learning impacts the way our students approach learning.

For our students, we seek to motivate them through two key components. Invariably, we hold high expectations for our students. These high-expectations create a sense of belief and determination in our students. Even throughout intervention opportunities, the goal is always mastery. Each classroom has clearly displayed learning targets, as well as individual student data binders where students set their own goals and track progress. This allows our students to understand what is being taught and participate in self-reflection, both of which have been proven by Hattie to impact learning.

Our culture provides an environment that supports growth in several ways. One way social growth is fostered is through our social skills program. On a regular basis, our counselor provides specific instruction focused on healthy social relationships and emotional growth. As a school, we sustain and encourage a growth mindset. Each classroom explicitly teaches how to change thinking to value growth and progress. This has shown our students that hard work and perseverance help you learn! Our classroom teachers also dedicate time each week to work with another class in a buddy system. This promotes a camaraderie among the students across grade levels.

In addition, each week we have a school-wide “Monday Mini” put together by our counselor and principal. Along with these messages classroom teachers also facilitate morning meetings, mindfulness practice, and PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support) expectations. This encourages an engaged and motivated student body because it is proactive. Rather than spending a great deal of time intervening in unsafe situations or deflating arguments among students, we spend our time teaching and learning.

Finally, as a school we integrate a vocabulary focus which builds vocabulary while encouraging ethical behavior. Each classroom integrates the terms into their instruction and they are reviewed on the announcements daily. Our students are learning the language of compassion and compromise, which promotes a healthy learning environment.

We also understand how necessary it is for teachers to feel valued and supported. Our staff community begins with our staff development which includes a variety of team building exercises. We set time aside to build relationships with each other through ropes courses, games and even staff painting lessons. We also honor a staff member each week with special parking. We also partake in a climate survey each year in order to have an important voice in the culture of our school.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parents and community members are involved in numerous ways at Woodland Park. We have a very strong and involved Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The group meets once a month, and is active in supporting classroom teachers, promoting family participation, and fundraising for school projects. The goal of the fundraising is to improve the learning environment for our students. The PTO receives support from the community to complete large projects, such as our recent playground addition that provides additional space for students to be active and healthy. PTO has made a significant impact in the school community. The PTO helps organize opportunities for the staff to join with the community to raise funds for our students. One event is sponsored by McDonald’s wherein the staff works for a portion of the sales on a yearly McTeacher Night.

Our students attend numerous field trip experiences that the community provides for them. Sheridan embraces education, and businesses are often asking our students and staff to come and learn about their business or experiences. We also invite the community in to share their expertise during career day, or to support grade level teams in their content curriculum. One example of many is our third grades yearly visit

to the Sheridan Museum, where they learn about notable contributors to our community, as well as how our town developed. Another example, is our first grade's community service project, which supported their opinion writing unit. The students visited numerous charitable organizations in our community and developed opinion pieces surrounding the effects their favorite organization has on the community. Finally, the first graders conducted a fundraiser, by auctioning off their artwork, and donated the funds to the organizations! As a result, we have a wonderful working relationship with our community leaders, and they are willing to support everything we do.

We have an open door philosophy at Woodland Park. Teachers are in constant contact with our parents. We strive to engage the support system of our students in order to reach each child's full potential. We bring our parents in whenever possible, for reading, math and After School Program night's, safe school discussions, or celebrations.

In conjunction with this, each grade level suggests a "preferral" student who they create a short narrative on. The narrative focuses on the positive influence the student continually has on the school and classroom. These students are then called to the office and have their parents contacted by the principal for a positive phone call home! Parents love to hear how their student is helping to create an environment focused on learning and growth!

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

Teachers prove to have the greatest impact on student learning. We do not take this responsibility lightly at Woodland Park. Because our ultimate goal is student achievement, our staff is unarguably dedicated to two objectives: staying abreast of current, best practice and continual reflection. Our belief in Professional Learning Communities is more than just a 'philosophy' at Woodland Park. It's our passion. To stay well-informed of current, best practice, we meet in teams weekly to discuss research-based professional text and determine what will positively impact our students' learning. Immediately implementing this learning into our practice is a priority. This improvement of pedagogy is of the utmost importance to us. During this collaborative time we also allot time for viewing of professional videos, which are also grounded in research. This allows us to learn from the experts and continually integrate effective practices.

These professional communities afford us the opportunity to meet the second objective of continual reflection. Data analysis offers us team evaluation. We use our data to learn from each other. Open communication and trust among team members create a culture of systematic learning. If a team member has been highly successful teaching an outcome, they are willing to share their methods and tools to impact students beyond their classroom. This same openness is present when the contrary occurs. If a team member does not feel fully-equipped for an upcoming outcome, or feels they are not reaching their students with the desired rigor, they ask for help! These communities are the perfect places to reflect upon our practice and ensure our high expectations are met - for every student.

Observing other teachers is another powerful element of our professional development philosophy. On a monthly basis, different grade levels are provided substitute teachers which allow them time to watch other teachers in our building, or teachers in other buildings. The reflection on this experience always proves to be a powerful learning tool.

Directives and updates are communicated through our "Weekly Wrangler" from our principal. This allows us to take full advantage of staff meetings to develop ourselves professionally. From discussing the most current research from the International Literacy Association, to sharing findings on current practice, to participating in professional book studies, and vertically analyzing standards; our learning is embedded and continual.

Of course, we value the opportunity to learn from experts in the field first hand by attending conferences and hearing from speakers during in-service days. These invaluable experiences help to keep us current and versed in best practice.

Our belief, philosophy, and, most of all, our passion to persistently evolve as educators is apparent when you enter our school. We truly are a community of professionals dedicated to learning for our students.

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

Our leadership philosophy at Woodland Park is best described as collaborative.

We are fortunate enough to have a principal who supports and argues on behalf of our mission of high learning for every student. Her role is diverse, but ultimately, she serves as an agent of trust, communication, and sustainability. Our principal values three major premises: first, real successes come from bottom-up interactions driven by day to day efforts of teachers and teacher teams, second, core policies and initiatives are effective only through sustainability, and third, building teacher capacity is one of the only undertakings proven to highly impact student learning without fail.

Using these philosophies, our principal provides guidance and chooses to learn with us by always participating. From professional development days to PLC meetings, she participates as a member of the team.

One example of this is our vertical meetings organized by both our literacy coordinator and principal. This year we are focused on aligning and reflecting on our Common Formative Reading Assessments. Each grade level is afforded the opportunity to examine their standard, their assessment, the grade levels above and below, as well as their proficiency scale to evaluate rigor and complexity. Our principal partakes in the discussion with a grade level at each meeting.

Our teams are a large part of our school's leadership. We are fortunate enough to utilize our expertise, data, standards, and collaboration to shape our curriculum, rather than a boxed program or teacher's guide. Each grade level partakes in the critical work of identifying power standards, aligning supporting standards, creating a timeline, developing common assessments, gathering data, and responding appropriately to the data. The DuFour's clearly state that NO teacher should be allowed to skip any of these steps. At Woodland Park, we understand the advantage our students secure when WE do this complex work ourselves. Culturally, we value this work, and are constantly refining it. For example, our fourth grade team noticed they were not providing enough opportunity for enrichment on their assessment of point of view. As a result, our team plans to sit down next week, review the assessment and collaborate for revisions to ensure this opportunity is supplied to our students.

Collaboration, trust, and sustainability allow our leadership to be positive and supportive. This key component to student success is irreplaceable.

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

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At Woodland Park Elementary, our mission statement is, “A Community that Empowers and Inspires Everyone to Reach their Full Potential”. To guide this, our philosophy is one of a Professional Learning Community. PLC is not something we do, it is embedded into who we are as a school. Because of this philosophy, we collaborate consistently. While we have the procedural structure set up, like common planning time and embedded time for intervention and enrichment, we also take the focus of our PLCs very seriously: student learning. Hattie has determined that collective teacher efficacy has an extremely high impact on student learning. Our PLCs exemplify this.

In reading, we do not utilize a canned curriculum. Research has proven that “a one-size-fits-all approach does not work”. We take very seriously the research-based practice of apprenticeship style learning where students are moved through the gradual release of responsibility as they take on new concepts, eventually leading to independence.

With the gradual release model, we continue to add and refine our instructional strategies. We understand the importance of differentiation. One way we ensure differentiation is through guided reading. Students are taught to read increasingly complex text using Jerome Bruner’s theory of scaffolding. Guided reading provides a context for responsive teaching, within a continually evolving process, which provides just the right amount of challenge for the learner to take different paths to common outcomes.

In mathematics, we allow Robert J. Wright’s 20 years of research to guide us. His research suggests that math instruction needs to be inquiry based, focused just beyond a child’s cutting edge, and assessment based. Just as in reading, the teacher plays a pivotal role in student learning. Teachers must be trained to provide ongoing, intensive observation, the importance of verbal-based strategies, professional judgment, and progressive mathematics, just to name a few.

As mentioned before, we understand the value and remain dedicated to collaboration. Collaboration provides professional development for all involved. Job-embedded professional development is one of the most powerful benefits provided by our PLCs. Through weekly collaboration, each staff member participates in a study of professional text to ensure we are current with best practice. We watch videos of each other’s teaching and provide actionable feedback to enhance instruction. We analyze assessment data to develop interventions and enrichment that will impact student learning. We compare assessment results to identify teaching strategies and lessons that had the highest success rate, and make change to ensure high levels of success. Finally, we celebrate small victories!

Without question, Woodland Park Elementary values student learning. Through collaboration, sustainable initiatives, and embedded professional development, we ensure a high-quality program for our students, that aligns with our mission: A Community that Inspires and Empowers Everyone to Reach their Full Potential.