

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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 25 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 11 High schools
 - 6 K-12 schools
- 47 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	7	2	9
K	32	25	57
1	33	30	63
2	31	41	72
3	39	33	72
4	34	30	64
5	50	36	86
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	226	197	423

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 10 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 76 % White
 - 7 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 15%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	35
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	28
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	63
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	423
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.15
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 32 %
Total number students who qualify: 135

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %
70 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>7</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>17</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>30</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 25:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	94%	94%	93%	94%	92%
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 2017.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

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

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

Working together with families and communities to provide a safe, positive learning environment where all students can be successful, life-long learners.

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

Pioneer Peak Elementary School is a large elementary school in Palmer, Alaska, located in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. Our student population and community are diverse, reflecting a wide spectrum of values, beliefs and cultures. Our entire school community has embraced our mission statement and has worked diligently to create and maintain a school culture that is positive, motivational, and promotes not only students' academic success, but also overall personal growth.

Pioneer Peak Elementary opened in 1985; and it has upheld a tradition of excellence since its opening. Our school has welcomed generations of students living in Palmer, Wasilla, and across the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. We are the Pioneer Peak Mountaineers and encourage our children and staff to be climbing toward their own personal peak each day.

Our mission statement is “Pioneer Peak Elementary: Working together with families to provide a safe, positive learning environment where all students can be successful, life-long learners.” We demonstrate our commitment to the mission in a variety of ways, ranging from our Peak Promise (recited daily by students and staff) to our Mountaineer Network and data dialogue meetings held every six weeks. We are committed to all students getting what they need to be successful in school and life. We create a safe and inviting environment where all students can learn, want to learn, and build on their success.

Each day, students recite our Peak Promise:

I promise to cooperate with others, learn self-control; I will be honest, be respectful and responsible, so I can climb the peak for success.

These words have meanings in our daily interactions and are referenced throughout each Mountaineer's day. We teach students to use these words to guide their decisions related to school, interactions with others, and their surrounding environment. We support good character and citizenship and are proud to have been the first elementary school in our district to implement daily Social Emotional Learning into our instructional schedule.

We have also supported our learners by creating the Mountaineer Network. Our network serves students that have indicated through words, behavior, or observation that they may not feel connected to school. The Mountaineer Network pairs such students up with staff to help develop multi-year relationships that will lead to a more positive school experience and a stronger connection to our school community. Staff interact with their assigned Mountaineer a minimum of twice each week. We believe students that feel safe, cared for, and expected at school have a stronger likelihood of achieving academic and personal success.

Our teachers and staff have high academic standards for themselves as well as students. Our teams (consisting of our classroom and special education teachers, principal, instructional coach, and school psychologist) meet a minimum of every six weeks to review student academic and behavioral data. After reviewing data, we determine how best to promote individualized growth, either through our daily skills block sessions, with supplemental curricula, or with referrals to special education or community resources. Our professional development schedule is created and revised throughout the year; our trainings are based on student data, teacher input, and research-based trends in education. It is our firm belief that all students can succeed and we are here to ensure that happens; good data provides guidance in making sound decisions for each of our children. Our school supports a myriad of extracurricular activities, both academic and athletic-based. Depending on the season, you will see students headed to band or choir, Battle of the Books, volleyball, basketball, cross country or track, Spelling Bee, Science Olympiad, Junior Native Youth Olympics, yearbook, student council, or many others.

We offer a variety of family-participation events as well. While parents are always welcome in the building to volunteer, we have an active PTA. Through the support of the PTA, we are able to offer monthly family movie nights, bingo nights, dances, all-school barbecues, etc.

Pioneer Peak Elementary currently serves approximately 450 students in grades PreK-5. Our classes average

25 students per room (with the exception of the preschool program serving 10 students per session). Our school population has grown steadily over the last five years. The community recognizes and supports our commitment to children and their success.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Core curriculum at Pioneer Peak Elementary includes the district-wide curriculum of Journeys for language arts and GoMath! for math. Our district adopted these core curricula as they are comprehensive programs that develop not only student basic skills, but higher order thinking by targeting skills such as text dependent analysis in language arts and problem-solving in math that requires students to explain how and why they've created an answer. Our core curriculum is researched-based and taught with fidelity to ensure students are getting the best instruction possible. By providing sound instruction with quality curriculum, we are able to ensure students are receiving a solid foundation for learning. We use a variety of interventions for both content areas, with a tiered approach to instruction. All students participate in 40-minute, ability-grouped skills block sessions four times per week. Skills block is a time for all students to receive instruction geared specifically toward their abilities. We use the data from our data dialogue to move students between skills block groups; the groups remain fluid as the students' needs change.

Our Tier One interventions include our core curriculum, in addition to Lexia, Moby Reading or Math, Step Up To Writing, Spelling City, Grab and Go kits from either or both of the core curriculum kits, ALEKS, MAP to Khan, etc.

If additional interventions are necessary, we consider the following as Tier Two Interventions: REWARDS, Reading Mastery (strand specific), Read Naturally, Language for Learning, Corrective Reading or Mathematics, Decoding Power Kits, etc. We typically add Tier Two as an additional layer to the Tier One Intervention already in place.

If students are still struggling, our team considers Tier Three Interventions. This is typically a complete replacement curriculum for reading or math. We have found most success with Reading Mastery (all strands) as well as Connecting Math Concepts.

Again, we typically find most success with a combination of interventions, in addition to fidelity checks on behalf of the instructor to ensure each student's every minute at school is spent engaged in exactly what that student needs to promote ongoing growth.

Our preschool is for students age three to five with special education services. This is the first year of our program (though there was a program several years ago). We value the opportunity in having students stay with us from age three to eleven. By having a few extra years with our youngest students, we are better able to ensure students' needs are identified and met. Our preschool curriculum is from the same publisher as our K-5 literacy curriculum, and encompasses both literacy and early math skills. The preschool program works to help students with special needs master early learning standards for students ages three to five, as well as teach school readiness skills. The preschool staff work to help their young learners understand the routines of school, important social skills like sharing and conversing with peers, and instill an excitement for school. Students who have attended a district preschool program benefit from attaining skills such as waiting their turn, sharing, lining up, taking part in large and small group activities, raising their hands when they are ready to contribute information, etc. Primary grade testing scores are typically higher for students that have attended formal preschool, as compared to those that have not. Our preschool teacher often invites students from other grades into the preschool environment to mentor, assist, and promote a feeling of inclusion in our community.

We also piloted a blended program this year at our school. The students in this multi-age (grades three and four) class receive their core instruction via an online curriculum. The students each have individualized learning plans and receive individualized instruction through the software, which then allows the teacher to do small group and individual instruction with other students. The students also spend each afternoon engaged in project-based service learning activities. Most recently, they researched the history of the original Matanuska Colonists, created three-dimensional maps of the original colonies, and wrote/performed/produced a play demonstrating the experience of the colonists. Due to the popularity and

success of this unique classroom, we plan to grow the program by an additional classroom next year. This will enable us to offer a multi-age, technology and project-learning based program to second, third, fourth and fifth graders. This new blended program is just one more way Pioneer Peak serves students on an individualized level to ensure all students get what they need to be successful.

Science and social studies are taught specifically to the Alaska State Standards for each grade level. In social studies, this includes a variety of concepts related to community, geography, Alaskan culture and history, US history, and government. Science standards address concepts such as the scientific method, physical science, life science, and earth science. Teachers work diligently to involve students in their community and greater environment to promote higher levels of engagement, more meaningful instruction, and a connection to the world around them. Instructional strategies include a variety of materials and delivery methods, including hands-on projects, novel studies, online supplemental items, FOSS kits, field trips, and guest speakers.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at Pioneer Peak benefit from a rotating schedule for library/technology, physical education, and music. We have a three-day rotation for specials, in which kids attend one of three classes for 45 minutes daily. Our specialists collaborate with classroom teachers to supplement classroom instruction when possible.

In library/technology classes, students are exposed to both literary and computer instruction. The instructional specialist develops lessons that blend both print and digital material to foster a love of reading, research, and learning. The students are taught digital citizenship, as well as the skills needed at each grade level to independently access online curriculum and resources.

Our music specialist teaches rhythm, movement, and the basics of music theory. The students are exposed to a wide variety of musical genres, as well as musical instruments. All students are given the opportunity to experience performing in front of a crowd a minimum of once per year, and older students have the chance to join band and/or choir. We value our school-based music instruction; for many students, this may be the only exposure to music and/or music theory. It is one more way for kids to feel connected to and part of something bigger than themselves.

Our physical education instruction is strongly connected to our community. Not only do we provide instruction in accordance with state standards (about motor skills, fitness, etc.), we also promote an overall healthy lifestyle. Our PE teacher provides an optional recess club for students wanting extra movement throughout their day. We regularly participate in state and nation-wide events such as Jump Rope for Heart, Alaska Positive Leadership for Active Alaska Youth (PLAAY) day, Healthy Futures exercise challenges, etc. Our PE teacher hosts a bi-annual community-wide dance for families at the end of the dance instruction unit. Our newsletters have a recurring column outlining upcoming opportunities for exercise and fun within our school and greater community. We understand that, in educating a whole child, success comes from not just studying academics; kids need time to move, laugh, and have fun, as well as learn about sportsmanship, turn taking, and healthy competition.

For the past three years, our school staff has taught daily social emotional learning lessons using Positive Actions. We believe students benefit from explicit instruction in character education, social skills training, and developing a positive self-concept. By ensuring students in grades K-5 are receiving this instruction each day, students are able to make better choices, have higher self-esteem, and fewer behavior concerns. Students that can find ways to respond positively to situations are going to develop into effective, responsible, and conscientious citizens in the future.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

At Pioneer Peak Elementary, one of our primary goals is to closely monitor our students' achievement and growth. We are consistently a high performing school within our district (on district and state assessments). To ensure our students continue to be successful, and that all students are making growth, we frequently

review data and review our instructional strategies.

We triangulate AIMSweb, Children's Progress of Academic Assessment (CPAA) and/or Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data, in conjunction with classroom achievement data. We very carefully analyze the data to align student need with appropriate intervention, take another six weeks of data, and then make recommendations based on student response to the intervention. Over the past three years, this process has enabled us to reduce the number of students both in special education and referred for special education. Our tiered approach to instruction is helping to identify gaps in children's learning and reduce the risk of students falling behind their peers. All students receiving Tier Two or Three interventions are progress monitored in their area(s) of need once per week or twice per month.

We also understand the importance of sound instruction; we encourage movement throughout the day, engagement strategies that incorporate cooperative learning, and close communication with parents related to student progress. Students showing gaps or unexpected trends in data serve as our triggers to reflect upon our teaching practices. At times, teachers are able to self-identify areas that need change. Other situations may require observations from the principal, colleagues, and/or the instructional coach. These observations provide yet another data point in a variety of areas such as time on task, rates of engagement, opportunities to respond, etc. Just as we use data to ensure kids are making progress, our teachers appreciate and value feedback that will help drive instructional practices as well.

Our instructional goal is to ensure each child receives what he or she needs to continue to progress as a learner, citizen, and member of our community. Teachers differentiate their instruction for all students in the class through the use of centers, small groups, and online curriculum. Students that are performing above their grade level skill are offered enrichment not just through our talented and gifted program, but also from their classroom teacher. Often this takes on the form of extension activities for lessons, side-projects unique to the child's strengths, or with the use of online curriculum, predominately in math. Students are provided opportunities to extend their reading capabilities by participating in our school's annual competition in which we reward bikes for summer to four students that have completed the most Accelerated Reader tests. We also provide incentives for our primary age students to complete each level of their supplemental online reading program and celebrate their success with an end-of-year party.

Our teachers typically are invited to join one to three professional development courses throughout the school year (in conjunction with the University of Alaska) for credit. These courses are developed based on the needs identified in our students and staff. Over the past three years, we have offered to host classes in the areas of effective discipline, technology for the classroom, how to effectively manage and analyze data, the Daily 5 approach to literacy instruction, Kagan Cooperative Learning strategies, etc. Our students' needs drive our professional development; this results in sound instruction and higher rates of success for our students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The school culture at Pioneer Peak is one based in compassion and optimism. We believe all students can learn and succeed. The staff and community work diligently to ensure all students get what they need to be successful and mindful learners. We work to educate children not just in academics, but also in social/emotional areas to develop the whole child. Our mission statement is prevalent throughout our building; it is not just on letterhead– it is palpable when you walk in. We start every day with the Pledge of Allegiance, our Peak Promise to selves and each other, and by reminding each other, “You feel good about yourselves when you do positive actions and there is a positive way to do everything.” All staff greet students in this building when they walk through the hall, often by name. We value nurturing students’ hearts by making kids feel safe and cared for so they can focus on learning.

This year, our students, staff, and parents participated in a survey related to the culture of our school. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Given a list of words to describe how they feel about school, students chose happy, challenged, supported, and excited as their top four. They also rated the statement, “I am safe at school,” as one of the highest descriptors of their school experience. Parents echoed these sentiments in their surveys as well; 85% of parents reported their child feels safe at school and 94% agreed with the statement, “Staff at this school are caring, helpful, and fair to students.” Nearly 95% of parents indicated that parents/families who visit the school “are welcomed and treated with respect.” Teachers reported feeling that interactions with their colleagues were respectful, supportive, helpful, and collaborative. We are proud of this data. We like to say we are the biggest little school in the Matanuska Susitna Valley. Though our enrollment grows closer and closer to 500 students every year, we stay connected and supportive of each member of our school community.

Most teachers in our school have been part of our family for over ten years. It is our goal that, through our staff relationships and leadership team, each teacher feels heard when he or she may have a need or concern. Pioneer Peak Elementary has been fortunate to have teachers that are committed not only to a child's education, but a child's well-being. We interact regularly with family members, feel their successes and losses as our own, and work diligently to have relationships among all adults that are cooperative and collaborative in nature. As a staff, we have participated in each other's life events and have ties to each other that extend beyond our four walls. Though every school experiences difficult moments as a staff, it is the hope of this administration and leadership team that staff continue to work together to keep moving our community forward. We have a strong PTA that supports our teachers' classroom wishes financially and with labor. As a staff, we celebrate birthdays, check in with each other during ill health, and work to support each other as humans so we can support our students as learners.

Pioneer Peak: Working together with families and community to provide a safe, positive learning environment where all students can be successful, life-long learners.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parents are always welcome (and often present) at Pioneer Peak Elementary. Our staff promote open and frequent communication between home and school by maintaining informational websites, sending out weekly classroom newsletters and twice-monthly school newsletters, using web-based apps such as Remind and Class Dojo, and by holding conferences with parents. We believe that including parents in the educational process is a key factor to student success.

Parents and families demonstrate engagement by participating in classroom-based projects, supporting fundraising efforts, and joining our PTA. Parents are encouraged to provide feedback to teachers and administration about their child’s education; we truly rely on the expertise of parents to help us to best teach their children. Many of our families have been a part of our school for several years; we’ve supported each other through celebrations and sadness. Several of our parents went to Pioneer Peak themselves and have enrolled their students here (even if out of our boundary) because they know their positive school

experience is replicated for their children.

Pioneer Peak engages with the surrounding community by hosting a number of after-school activities not only for our kids, but also for other community agencies. Nearly every night, we host basketball leagues for a non-profit youth group. We also host an adult volleyball league, adult soccer league, Boy and Girl Scout Troops, and lend our soccer field to a dog-training group. We also have visits in the spring from the local Forest Service smoke jumpers as they play rugby on our field before school starts! The kids are always excited to see them when the busses pull into our lot on warm spring days.

We collaborate with the surrounding businesses for not only fundraising efforts, but also for safety measures. Last year we partnered with a nearby grocer, Three Bears Alaska, to practice a school-wide evacuation during an ALICE drill. We safely and successfully evacuated over 500 students and staff across a street and into a “musk-ox” formation (older students formed circles around younger students) in the store’s parking lot. This evacuation was the largest we had ever attempted, was supported by numerous community and state agencies, and included many parent volunteers. We have collaborated with a local midwifery to give presentations to parents about natural ways to keep kids healthy and, in turn, to have less absenteeism at school. Because of the dedication of our parents, community partnerships, and our dedicated staff, we are completely confident in our ability to not only educate students but also keep them safe and healthy. Our neighboring businesses also have students enrolled at Pioneer Peak; they see the value in what our school is able to do and we work to maintain a friendly and supportive relationship.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development is on-going and imperative to student success. Our professional development schedule is two-fold: staff attend district-wide offered trainings or classes/trainings specific to our building. Pioneer Peak is often one of the first schools to provide for-credit trainings on various topics for teachers to better enhance their professional practice.

Teachers are encouraged to attend any district-provided training that improves their instructional methods or sense of efficacy. Recent trainings attended by Pioneer Peak staff include: Kagan Cooperative Learning Strategies, Love and Logic, Mandt System, Growing our Social Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Academy for future district administrators, etc. Our teachers often serve on various district-wide committees, including those responsible for curriculum adoption, report card development/revisions, academic calendar creation, and more.

The trainings within our building are driven by student and teacher need. We develop and offer many courses for credit (in conjunction with University of Alaska Anchorage) based on our student population. Over the past calendar year, teachers have requested and participated in classes related to Daily 5 literacy instruction, data management specific to the district’s new online software, web page development for more timely and accurate communication with families, and ongoing training related to our language arts and math curriculum. Several of our teachers serve as trainers themselves on district-related curriculum. The principal is a trainer district-wide for Love and Logic.

Many of our teachers have enrolled in programs for or already have their master’s degrees. Two of our teachers have obtained their doctorate degrees. Ongoing professional development and education is a priority for our team; it is through the continuous assessment of our practice and ourselves that we are able to identify areas needing additional support. If there is an identified area of need, and there are not yet district supports in place for that specific need, we work diligently to find resources.

4. School Leadership:

School leadership sets the tone for a school’s culture and community. Pioneer Peak relies on a shared leadership model; most decisions are made after being considered by the administrator, instructional coach, and our leadership team. Our school has relatively low turnover rates for staff; this enables our leadership team to continue to develop strong school-wide procedures and protocols, as well as implement positive behavioral supports for all of our students.

Our administrator has been part of the Pioneer Peak family for nine years. After having taught special education for six years, she applied for the role of principal in spring of 2015. The principal brought years of experience in behavior management and advocacy for students of underserved populations. As a teacher, she was part of the initial leadership team developed and was able to assist the school in developing guidelines for success and other positive behavioral interventions and supports (using the Safe and Civil Schools model from Dr. Randy Sprick). These interventions continue to evolve to support our school community.

Our school instructional coach has been part of Pioneer Peak for ten years. She is vital in the process of making data-driven decisions. Our school relies on the instructional coach to provide observations and feedback for instruction, school-wide procedures, and small group interventions. Our instructional coach is able to quickly assemble resources for teachers and other staff as dictated by student need. Our instructional coach organizes and follows through with data dialogue discussions to ensure that intervention ideas for students are implemented in a timely manner and reviewed for fidelity and efficacy. She works collaboratively with teachers and the principal to arrange testing schedules building-wide that have the least impact on instruction, while simultaneously promoting a positive testing environment that allows for accurate data collection.

The final leg of our leadership triad is the PEAK team. PEAK is an acronym for the mission guiding our leadership team: Powerful Education for All Kids. This drives our decision-making process when we meet. Our team is comprised of one special education teacher, a teacher from each of the six grade levels, a specialist, the instructional coach, and the principal. Each grade level and department is able to choose their PEAK representative at the beginning of the school year. The team meets twice per month either to work on large projects (such as writing our initial Guidelines for Success and Peak Promise) or to make smaller decisions related to our community. Representatives from each area of the building bring forth concerns from their colleagues and the group problem-solves the various items. Each decision we make is guided by one major question: Is it good for kids? If our decisions do not have a positive impact on the students, we work to create a solution that is to the students' benefit. We have several team members that have been at our school for ten years or more, providing a rich history from which we can continue to build. Conversely, our new team members bring forth fresh ideas that keep us balanced between our history and our future.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The strategy for academic success that is most prevalent and has the most significant impact on our students' achievements is our community-wide commitment to success. We believe all children can and will learn; this mantra guides us through each lesson planned and taught, each decision made, each procedure and protocol implemented. Our school community is driven to find creative ways to support every child's individual progress and growth. Sometimes this requires us to rearrange schedules, purchase additional curricular materials, brainstorm with parents or other schools, etc. Though these actions can be quite time consuming and difficult to complete, our entire staff believes it is vital to look at creative solutions when a problem is blocking a student's progress. Though we are a public school and we are, at times, limited by financial and staffing constraints, we are committed to pushing past those constraints to do what is best for kids.

Each data dialogue meeting provides us with the opportunity to review student progress. When we have data to support a need for change in instruction, our team (including classroom teachers, school psychologist, principal, and special education teachers) is able to collaboratively and constructively find solutions. We then check back within 3-4 weeks to see if the data trend has changed, ensure curricula is being taught with fidelity, and discuss as a team how the intervention is impacting a child.

Similarly, for students that are gifted and/or needing extension activities, we look for ways to promote continuous growth. Though the student may have demonstrated grade-level mastery of any given standard, it is important to the Pioneer Peak team that the student continue to grow. We rely on extension activities and projects, online curriculum, compacted instruction with grade level materials to free up time for deeper exploration of student interests.

It is through our commitment to ongoing growth, the belief that all children can and will learn, that we continue to be a school community rich in student academic, behavioral, and social progress.