

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Jim Murray

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

Official School Name Tilford Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 308 E 13th Street

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

Vinton IA 52349-1420
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County__

Telephone (319) 436-5803 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.vscsd.org/ E-mail jim.murray@vscsd.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*Mrs. Mary Jo Hainstock
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail maryjo.hainstock@vscsd.org

District Name Vinton-Shellsburg Community School District Tel. _____ (319) 436-5680

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. Rob Levis
(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 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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	32	20	52
K	40	40	80
1	38	36	74
2	41	47	88
3	38	42	80
4	37	44	81
5	0	0	0
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	229	455

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 96 % White
 - 2 % 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: 4%

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	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	403
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
3 Total number ELL

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

Spanish, Albanian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 42%
Total number students who qualify: 191

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
41 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>3</u> Autism | <u>4</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>10</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>12</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: 15
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.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
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 20:1

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	96%	96%	96%	95%	95%
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.

To improve the quality of lives and assist individuals in becoming contributing members of society through the accumulation and application of knowledge.

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

Vinton, Iowa is a rural community located on the Cedar River. Approximately 5,200 citizens reside in Vinton. Vinton, the county seat, was founded in 1849 and has a rich history full of tradition. Fans of Little House on the Prairie, are interested in visiting The Iowa Braille School, previously known as the Iowa College for the Blind, where Mary Ingalls attended school in the 1860's. About 40 years ago, three factories were operating in Vinton. An economic blow took place when all three of the factories closed within a year. The result of these events was almost the complete loss of Vinton's middle-class families. Currently, most Tilford Elementary students come from either upper middle class or are considered economically disadvantaged. For the 2016-2017 years, 42 percent of the Tilford Elementary students qualify for free and reduced meals.

In the past ten years, Vinton families have survived four significant natural disasters. In 2008, the Cedar River crested at a new record of 24.7 feet, (flood stage:15 feet). Over 100 homes were destroyed; many more suffered significant damage, displacing families. The year 2011 delivered a derecho storm, which brought straight line sustained winds of 100 to 130 mph. Once again, many families lost homes and possessions. In 2016, an EF2 tornado hit Vinton. Two apartment complexes were deemed uninhabitable, and many families were displaced. A second flood in 2016 also affected rental and private housing in poverty areas. Several small businesses have closed during this period causing loss/reduction of employment. Accumulated losses have widened the disparity. New students to the district are likely those qualifying as low socioeconomic and live in subsidized housing. To bring together the diverse socio-economic population, Vinton hosts a variety annual events including Party in the Park, The Vinton Cruise, Boomtown and the Benton County Fair.

Like many school districts across the nation, providing an equitable education for an increasing number of students living in poverty is Tilford Elementary's most significant challenge. Closing the achievement gap for Tilford subgroups can be attributed to many sustainable systems of support in place that meet the needs of special education, ELL, and low socioeconomic students. Teachers are highly engaged and accountable during the Instructional Data Teams Process. Teams chart and analyze data, set measurable and attainable goals, collaboratively implement research-proven strategies, and monitor student progress. Intervention specialists use multiple assessments to determine student eligibility, for targeted instructional supports. Throughout the intervention process, parents participate as part of the team. The intervention team makes frequent instructional adjustments based on data analysis of individual students' progress monitoring. The master schedule is orchestrated to provide at least 90 minutes of uninterrupted literacy instruction, 60 minutes of math instruction, and sets aside times for intervention. All students receive differentiated small group instruction during reading and math. The schedule also controls the flow of students so that intervention specialists can work with manageable student group sizes. Paraprofessionals support students individually and in small groups to maximize student skill practice.

Beyond academics, Tilford offers supports to meet the needs of the whole child. The program entitled "Removing Obstacles" promotes the availability of resources like school supplies, clothing, transportation and snack fees for needy families. Tilford staff has organized drives for families in need of clothing, food, and Christmas gifts. Tilford participates in Operation Backpack. Targeted students receive food for the weekend. For the past two summers, Tilford participated in a federal program to provide free breakfast and lunch throughout the summer to students. Last summer, Tilford provided 2300 free breakfasts and 5900 free lunches for students. The district reserves funding for supporting homeless students. After registration, parents meet with the Student Services Coordinator to assess needs and provide information regarding school and community resources. Identified mental health needs are through a partnership with local agencies who provide therapeutic services to students. Licensed professionals come to Tilford to meet with students.

It is difficult to close the achievement gap for students who don't regularly attend school. Tilford Elementary staff collaborates with parents to design a plan for reducing student truancy issues. Five years ago it was common for 25% of students to miss thirteen or more days of school. Tilford staff were strategic in building relationships with parents and students, providing attendance plans and recognition, primarily

focused on students taking ownership. The percentage has continually dropped with last year's percentage down to 12%.

Tilford Elementary staff are proud to have been nominated as a National Blue Ribbon School representing the State of Iowa. Our state has a rich tradition of excellence in education. Tilford Elementary faculty and administration, and the Vinton-Shellsburg community at-large are committed to our mission. Our school culture is focused and dedicated entirely to the education, well-being, and success of our students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Tilford Elementary staff provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum to all learners. Teachers have reviewed the Iowa Core Standards and focused on what we consider "high priority" or "Essential Standards" that all students at each grade level must demonstrate. Teachers weave Iowa's 21st Century Core which includes citizenship, health, financial literacy, and technology into the pre-K-12 curriculums. Purchased, scripted curriculum materials are present, but teaching staff collaboratively plan instruction utilizing a variety of enhancing resources and research-proven strategies. Curriculum materials are aligned with district developed "Essential Standards." Instructional strategies are selected based on diagnostic and formative assessment data. All students receive whole group instruction. All students also receive differentiated, small group instruction.

Tilford's lower elementary reading resources integrate a systemic approach through explicit instruction that builds foundational skills and aligns with Iowa Common Core. Teachers implement instruction through decodable texts that integrate reading, spelling, handwriting, grammar, and writing. Staff uses engaging and motivating materials that connect the texts to the students' everyday world. The goal is for all students to read accurately and fluently and to comprehend a variety of literature. At the upper-grade levels, learning to read transitions into reading to learn. Explicit instruction is provided through the use of print and digital resources to enrich student understanding of phonemic awareness, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, writing, and comprehension. Students read engaging selections consisting of 50% narrative and 50% informational text that connect to essential questions. Students read the text, think about the text, and write about the text. Students incorporate text evidence into their writing. The inquiry process encourages students to question and research. Students explore different genres via differentiated readers, paired readings, and quality literature.

The core math curriculum at Tilford has a solid research foundation that includes using verbal, pictorial, and concrete representations. Real-life examples, repeated exposure to mathematical concepts, the frequent practice of fundamental computation skills, and use of multiple methods and problem-solving strategies drive instruction. Geometry, number sense, operations, algebraic thinking, and problem-solving skills are explicitly taught using the Gradual Release Model of "I Do," "We Do," and "You Do." All students receive whole group instruction which is followed by differentiated small group instruction. Teachers provide intervention for students in need of support, and extensions are offered to challenge students above proficiency.

Social Studies Curriculum includes applying 21st Century Skills in the pursuit of active, informed citizenship. Junior Achievement supports students in the area of financial literacy and applications to self and community. Interactions with one another and community members enhance behavioral sciences. The study of community, state, and national governments enrich civics and government instruction. Geography is taught using digital and print resources. Students discover their place in the world and gain an appreciation of the history of the great state of Iowa.

The school's science curriculum provides opportunities to learn using hands-on investigations, which develop critical thinking skills through an inquiry model. These science experiences are cross-curricular, integrating reading, writing, and mathematics. The progression starts with grade-to-grade learning, which builds on each student opportunity leading to the essential concepts of science literacy.

Tiny Vikes 4-Year-Old Preschool follows the Iowa Learning Standards. The preschool program meets Iowa Quality Preschool Program (IQPPS) criteria. Home visits provide teachers and parents the opportunity to establish a partnership. Preschool Teachers utilize The Creative Curriculum, and the Read It Once Again Curriculum promote learning and development in each of the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive. The program is informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to provide information on children's learning and development. Preschool Teachers utilize the

GOLD assessment system to organize data to provide comprehensive learning reports for families and other stakeholders.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Tilford staff provides an enriching and diverse curriculum to all students Kindergarten through 4th grades including Art, Music, Physical Education (PE), and Guidance classes. These curricula allow access to lifelong skills and enhance the student as a whole person.

Tilford Elementary guidance focuses on American School Counselor Association essential standards while reinforcing Tilford Elementary's expectations and common language. Character Counts instruction includes each of the six pillars taught through student-friendly definitions and role-playing. Bullying prevention comprises a four-step process which directs students to self-advocate with adult intervention as the 4th step. The Child Protection Center annually partners with the guidance counselor for teaching important "Touches" lessons. "Social Thinking" developed by Dr. Michelle Garcia-Winner is implemented in kindergarten through second grade. All classroom teachers received training and lessons were co-taught with the guidance counselor. The result is a building-wide common vocabulary understood by all. Now phrases such as "The Group Plan," "Expected Behavior," "Whole Body Listening," and "Think with your Eyes" can be heard multiple times a day throughout the building. Most importantly, parents received a description of the program's expectations and can utilize the language at home. Tilford Elementary's multi-tiered system of support identifies students for social-emotional interventions requiring personalized instruction and coaching. Data is collected based specific, individualized goals. Explicit skills-based teaching occurs during the Check in/Check out process. The counselor works closely with parents and service providers to provide professional mental health support.

The philosophy of the physical education program at Tilford Elementary is to safely provide the means for all students to enjoy physical activity. All grades enjoy a 90 minutes per cycle of instruction aligned with the National PE Standards. Instruction promotes responsibility, sharing, teamwork, and good sportsmanship. Accommodations are readily available to adapt the activities for students with disabilities. The physical education teacher employs the same explicit "I do," "You do," "We do" teaching philosophy that the classroom teachers utilize. The Expanded Expression Tool (EET) is used at the beginning and end of units to check for students knowledge and understanding. The PE Teacher integrates Health concepts, such as stress reduction, healthy eating, sleep habits, and exercise. Guest speakers visit when appropriate. Most recently, a Vinton-Shellsburg alumni returned to speak to the third and fourth graders about playing football at Kansas State University. He spoke about homework, commitment, diversity of teammates, and nutrition. Upper elementary students raised \$3500 for the American Heart Association during "Jump Rope for Heart."

All students receive 45 minutes of Art Education per cycle. Visual art is an integral part of a student's complete education. The curriculum is aligned to the National Core Arts Standards in the categories of Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting. Lessons teach students to observe, reflect, make decisions, express themselves, succeed, fail, and problem-solve. Through art, students can hone a sense of value and accomplishment in their ideas and approaches to learning as well as foster an individual sense of identity. Art students are asked to observe art and artist's styles, identify what they see, reflect on the successes and how they could use those concepts in their work and then present their ideas in their artwork. Student work may sacrifice craftsmanship for creativity at times but all artwork reflects the thinking, experimenting and playing that makes our students better learners.

Aligned with the National Content Music Standards, 90 minutes of music literacy instruction per cycle allows Tilford students the opportunity to Create, Perform, Respond, and Connect with music. Elementary students love the chance to use their imaginations to create music. They practice sensing and moving to the beat. They listen for and develop music patterns. Students are thoughtful in their planning for utilizing the written language of music, "notation," to express feelings and ideas to others. Through teacher and peer feedback, students can evaluate and refine their compositions. Performance opportunities are available from the level of peer to peer to an annual concert for parents. Elementary music educators help develop the awareness and skills for a lifetime of music appreciation and enjoyment.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Leaders attribute building-wide and subgroup student achievement success to Tilford's robust systems of academic and behavioral support. Systems and routines are in place for data analysis, intervention, collaborative planning, goal setting, personalized teacher support, and professional development. The collaborative support and teamwork ensure no student falls through the cracks and teachers are not working in isolation.

Differentiated accountability is a "balcony view" approach where Tilford leadership, Grant Wood Area Education Agency school improvement specialists, and a representative from the Iowa Department of Education analyze and organize formative, diagnostic, and summative data. The team compares building and subgroup data to healthy indicator benchmarks and then creates action steps for improvement. The Differentiated Accountability Team examines subgroup data progress over several testing periods. Intervention flowcharts and fidelity checklists are examples of areas that leaders are recently strengthening. The differentiated accountability team compiles data and shares recommendations for systems improvement with the Building Decision Team teacher leaders who then plan and facilitate professional development.

General education teachers work interdependently in teams to achieve a common goal to which members are highly accountable. Grade level learning teams meet bimonthly and utilize the Instructional Data Teams Process as a vehicle to reaching all levels of learners. The work is embedded, systematic, and sustainable. Teachers share the responsibility for learning for all students in their grade level, not just kids from their classroom who are not meeting performance benchmarks. Teams utilize multiple assessments to design instructional intervention and progress monitor. Teachers implement collaboratively agreed on explicit strategies to meet the needs of groups of students at all academic levels. The Instructional Data Teams process focuses on DuFour's four intervention questions stated above in the Core Curriculum section.

Students, who have not met the Fastbridge Early Reading/CBMR (Curriculum-Based Measurement for Reading) achievement benchmarks in two of the three consecutive screening periods are progress monitored weekly using FASTBridge CBM Reading and Early Reading measures. The graphs generated by this data are analyzed to determine if the current level of support is sufficient to ensure students' adequate progress toward the benchmark. Additionally, students are monitored on CBM Math, aReading, and aMath as needed. Teachers sort student graphs into one of the following categories: negative trendline, flat trendline, trendline moving, following aim line and accelerated growth. Teachers determine next action steps and when an intervention change is appropriate.

Intervention specialists utilize Fastbridge Early Reading/CBMR and Iowa Assessments for selecting students for supplemental and intensive academic assistance. Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment scores are also an indicator. Other collected data include nonsense word fluency, sight words, and other diagnostic tools in reading, such as the Phonological Awareness Test, the Phonemic Awareness Manipulation of phonemes, and the Walpole Informal Inventory for decodable sounds. Data is utilized to assign students to differentiated, small groups.

Teachers identify and select students for math intervention using the Iowa Assessments and Fastbridge aMath Concepts and Applications, General Outcome Measures, and Automaticity. Teachers plan and provide explicit, scaffolded instruction at the concrete, pictorial, and abstract levels. Manipulatives are essential instructional components for effective math intervention. Like reading, teachers utilize progress monitoring graphs and adjust instruction accordingly.

Once a month, classroom grade-level teachers are provided two hours of designated collaborative planning time. Teachers discuss and determine core lessons for meeting the district's essential skills criteria. Teachers make adaptations to differentiate learning for small group instruction. They anticipate and prepare necessary accommodations for qualifying students. Teachers compare student work samples to establish standards for written work. The collaborative planning time also allows for team training and follow-up for continuing learning and meeting professional development implementation expectations. Teachers collaboratively design strategies and activities so all students can have access to paraprofessional support, technology integration, and student inquiry.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Building positive student relationships is priority one. Teachers have implemented Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset work. Staff focus student celebrations and recognition on learning and growth. Teachers provide explicit, positive feedback to reinforce effort and attitude. Teachers regularly notify parents for recognizing their child's goal achievement. Students thrive in the Tilford environment thanks to clarity and consistency in expectations. Staff uses a positive, universal building language for behavior expectations. Students are involved with the teacher during individual goal setting, and they assist with graphing their progress. Referencing the Character Counts Pillars, teachers nominate "Kids of Character" which are announced each week with a specific description praising the improvement efforts of individual students. Perfect attendance is celebrated, but Tilford Elementary staff promote "Employable Attendance". Students who miss two or fewer days each trimester are also recognized. Students chronically absent have a personalized plan for improvement. The Principal and Student Services Coordinator take those students meeting goals on after school hours field trips to waterparks, trampoline places, and bowling alleys.

Tilford's tiered system of support is not limited to academics. The building's intervention team supports teachers in meeting the student's social-emotional needs. Proactively focused, the team identifies struggling students and designs interventions. For some students, mental health is a challenge. Those students receive support during their school day from licensed professionals facilitated through community partnerships. The intervention team also designs and implements student behavior supports. Like reading achievement, student progress is graphed and closely monitored.

Tilford school has a positive climate. Staff members have trained in 21 Keys for High-Performance Teaching and Learning. Innovative ideas are welcome as the principal's motto is, "We will try anything once!" Employees are supported and valued with several activities including breakfast for paraprofessionals, "Difference Maker" t-shirts, and Teacher Appreciation Week. Staff participates in soup contests, food days, Casual for A Cause Fridays, and birthday celebrations. Staff members receive specific praise for their contribution to the building goals in the principal's weekly bulletin. Monthly staff meetings open with the "Viking Awards" when staff members nominate and recognize peers for their contribution to the building's positive culture and goals. Teacher supports such as collaborative planning, peer coaching, and intervention teamwork are embedded in the school day. Intervention Specialists appreciate that Reading and math times are strategically scheduled which helps manage student group numbers. Staff input is welcomed during cultural and school calendar surveys. Tilford's outstanding cultural blueprint score was 707. Six hundred is considered a good score.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Establishing and maintaining partnerships and relationships with all stakeholders is critical to Tilford's success. Tilford's caring environment nurtures parents, programs, and partnerships.

Kindergarten parents participate in personalized conferences at the beginning of the year to clarify expectations and establish the home-school partnership. During Back To School Night, families bring student supplies and familiarize themselves with teachers and classroom routines. About 96% percent of parents attend Parent-Teacher conferences twice each year. Teachers communicate to parents regularly through weekly newsletters, the Remind app, School Messenger, phone calls, and emails for sharing student accomplishments and concerns. Reports cards and student progress graphs are sent home three times per year. Parents participate on the intervention team in developing and monitoring their child's intervention. Tilford offers after-school tutoring, math lab, and summer school. A Family Fun Night for identified students is well attended. The school provides a meal and free movie theater tickets. After the meal and before the movie, Intervention Teachers model explicit teaching strategies for home practice. The district website includes a plethora of educational elementary programs, activities, and resources. As a result of parent survey feedback, Tilford Elementary associate staff partner with the Parent-Teacher organization to provide activities during early dismissals. The activities alleviate daycare issues. All

events, such as Family Movie Night, the End of the Year Party, Music Concert Ice Cream Socials and PTO activities, are free.

Tilford Elementary has many stakeholder partnerships. Approximately forty volunteers spend time working with students each week. The school has established a relationship with several mental health organizations. Students receive therapy services at school, removing transportation and scheduling obstacles. There are many extended community partnerships. The local food pantry and churches provide needy families with school supplies and milk/juice fees. The Iowa State University (ISU) Extension Office offers healthy snacks and recipes to families during parent activities as part of the district's Farm to School Program. Farm Bureau and ISU Extension enhance social studies and science curriculum by providing hands-on, authentic agricultural experiences. Two local newspapers publish school activities and accomplishments. A local business, Click Stop, sponsors the Junior Achievement program in which community volunteers teach financial literacy. Benton County Naturalists provide monthly environmental sciences instruction. Community organizations, such as the Lions and Kiwanis, read with students, provide dictionaries, and host a holiday party for exceptional learners. First-grade students routinely visit senior care centers. Tilford participates in Operation Backpack. The district partners with Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) and local business, Monkey Town for food delivery.

3. Professional Development:

The Tilford Elementary staff have committed to the Professional Learning Community (PLC) work developed by Dr. Rick and Dr. Becky DuFour and Mike Mattos. The following four questions guide professional development:

1. What do we want students to be able to know and do?
2. How will we assess and know when they have learned it?
3. What strategies and intervention support can we give to those not meeting essential standards?
4. What strategies and intervention support can we give to those already meeting essential standards?

During professional development, administrators and teachers review the Iowa Core and develop Essential Standards that all students must demonstrate proficiency in before moving to the next grade level. Teachers routinely reexamine and update essential standards.

Professional development time is set aside for the PLC work, The Instructional Data Teams Process. Teachers work interdependently in teams to achieve a common goal for which members are mutually accountable. Teams meet bimonthly and utilize the Instructional Data Teams Process as a vehicle to reaching all levels of learners. The work is embedded, systematic, and sustainable. Teachers share the responsibility for the learning of ALL students, not just students in their classroom. Teams chart and analyze assessment data, set achievement SMART goals, design explicit instruction for intervention, and progress monitor using agreed upon formative assessment.

The Tilford principal and teachers participated in the following training throughout the last two years: Anita Archer's engagement strategies, LETRS- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling, and utilizing Expanding Expression Tool. Lower elementary teachers were observed and coached by a reading curriculum specialist. The principal provides embedded opportunities for personalized coaching. Teachers receive release time for collaborative grade level planning. The planning opportunity ensures curriculum fidelity. Teams collaboratively plan for differentiated small group instruction and personalized independent seatwork.

The Building Decision Team comprised of Teacher Leaders, the principal, and instructional coaches compile school-wide assessment data. This data drives professional development goals within our building. The Building Decision Team meets monthly to analyze teacher feedback and adjust professional development accordingly. Contracting out professional development leadership would be easy. Instead, Teacher Leaders and the principal design and facilitate professional development. They model explicit teaching strategies and assessment protocols. Professional development focuses on researching best practices, and then follows an "I do," "We do," "You do" format for teacher implementation. There isn't

any "sit and get." Professional development is ongoing as teachers implement, reflect, collaboratively adjust, and then implement new learning.

The Principal and teachers collaborate and develop Individual Career Development Plans. All teachers participate in annual coaching cycles aligned to those plans. Instructional Coaches provide a personalized approach including reflection, goal setting, modeling, and coaching.

4. School Leadership:

A philosophy of shared leadership contributes to Tilford Elementary's achievement success. The Principal utilizes a facilitative leadership style to focus teacher leaders and staff on the "right work," but leadership isn't confined to administrative positions. Tilford's success is a result of multiple opportunities for teachers to serve and contribute as leaders. Collaboratively, the principal and teacher leaders facilitate change through a continuous improvement practice. Teams closely examine achievement data, research best practices, and then lead improvement by strategically aligning district resources. The building principal leads monthly Building Decision Team and Data Team Facilitator meetings. Every meeting incorporates a learning component to stay abreast of best practices. Teacher feedback and building achievement data are routinely analyzed. Achievement celebrations and staff culture are also monthly agenda items.

Teacher Data Team Facilitators lead learning communities who analyze student achievement data, implement research-proven instructional strategies, monitor progress, and design intervention. Data Team Facilitators solicit intervention fidelity feedback and provide coaching support for teammates.

Building Decision Team Teacher Leaders meet and utilize data to design achievement goals. They use student achievement data and teacher feedback and develop professional development. Participating in the Elmore Instructional Rounds Process to gather systematic data about teaching strategies and student engagement is an example of their work. These leaders also lead professional development. "A Team" Teacher Leaders facilitate the development of curriculum and essential standards. They also utilize achievement data and staff feedback for district-wide professional development.

Instructional Coaches assist teachers with analyzing classroom assessment data to set learning goals, implement changes, and reflect on practice. Coaches support teachers in planning and differentiating instruction to meet needs of their students. Coaches meet regularly with teachers to develop and provide support for achieving their career development plans.

District Principals and Instructional Coaches meet regularly to examine data aligned with Iowa's success indicators and monitor progress toward goal achievement. This leadership team also meets three times a year with representatives from Grant Wood Area Education Agency and the Iowa Department of Education to examine subgroup achievement data. Past actions include staff utilizing a student progress instrument for more in-depth discussions at intervention team meetings. Intentionally selecting appropriate seatwork practice and incorporating more repeated reading opportunities are examples of action from this leadership work. Implementing multi-syllabic words with upper elementary grades during small group instruction increased student achievement, as did providing classwide reading intervention for six of thirty-two classrooms having less than sixty percent of students meeting the benchmark.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Tilford Elementary's success in closing the achievement gap is to a robust multi-tiered system of intervention, primarily through the Instructional Data Teams Process and its high expectations for general education teachers. At Tilford Elementary, general education teachers work interdependently in teams to achieve a common goal which members are mutually accountable. The Principal and grade level teams meet bimonthly and utilize the Instructional Data Teams Process as a vehicle to reaching all levels of learners. The work is embedded, systematic, and sustainable. Teachers share the responsibility for learning for ALL students, not just their classroom. Teams utilize multiple assessments to design instructional intervention and progress monitor. Since the process can meet the needs of all students, results show the staff's ability to close the achievement gap for subgroups. The process focuses on DuFour's four intervention questions:

1. What do we want students to be able to know and do?
2. How will we assess and know when they have learned it?
3. What strategies and intervention support can we give to those not meeting essential standards?
4. What strategies and intervention support can we give to those already meeting essential standards?

The district has greatly invested in training and supporting the Instructional Data Team Teacher Leaders. The building Principal facilitates a The Data Team Leaders afternoon of learning each month. Leaders collaboratively examine team progress, solicit advice, and research ways to strengthen the process. Recently, the Data Team Leaders read the article, "Monitoring Fidelity of Implementation" from the Center on Innovation and Improvement. After reading and discussing the article, leaders decided to reduce the likelihood of achievement gaps by implementing more peer observation and using a strengthened intervention fidelity checklist. Instructional Coaches and interventionist also serve on the leadership team and provide strategy and assessment support. Data Team Teacher Leaders recently led professional development to ensure staff, especially new teachers understood the Instructional Data Teams Process. The following are examples taken out of their PowerPoint:

"The data teams process is a collaborative, sustainable process to raise student achievement for ALL students. Essential standards are assessed. We collaborate. We select and commit to research-proven strategies. We provide intervention."

"By team, we do not mean groups who assemble for traditional grade-level and department meetings. The act of meeting together does not define a group of people as a team. The purpose of a professional learning community is to ensure high levels of learning for every student. There is not an educational lottery."

"To be successful, we must: collaborate with colleagues to align curriculum, instruction, and assessments with the common core. Provide shared leadership and take collective responsibility for achieving goals. Have high expectations for student achievement and student improvement. Make sure our professional development is cohesive and sustainable."