

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 Mrs. Monique English

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

Official School Name Garwood Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 17506 N. Ramsey Road PO Box 990

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

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| <u>Rathdrum</u> | <u>ID</u> | <u>83858-0990</u> |
| City | State | Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) |

County Kootenai County

Telephone (208) 687-1265

Fax (208) 687-4310

Web site/URL http://gweweb.lakeland272.org/

E-mail monique.english@lakeland272.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*Dr. Becky Meyer

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail becky.meyer@lakeland272.org

District Name Lakeland School District Tel. (208) 687-0431

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. Larry Brown

(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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 3 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

11 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 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| K | 31 | 14 | 45 |
| 1 | 25 | 24 | 49 |
| 2 | 29 | 27 | 56 |
| 3 | 11 | 37 | 48 |
| 4 | 32 | 32 | 64 |
| 5 | 38 | 29 | 67 |
| 6 | 32 | 28 | 60 |
| 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 | 198 | 191 | 389 |

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 91 % White
 - 4 % 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: 16%

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

Garwood Elementary changed boundaries before the 2016-2017 school year. This Boundary change included annexing in the fastest developing area in the district. This caused new students to come in but also caused out of zone transfers to transfer out to another school due to occupancy rates.

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 | 27 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year | 30 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 57 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016 | 362 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.16 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 16 |

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 40 %
 Total number students who qualify: 157

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
52 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>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>3</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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: 1
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 | 2 |
| Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 16 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc. | 7 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 10 |
| Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 7 |

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 241:1

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 | 95% | 95% | 94% | 94% | 5% |
| 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.

Provide a positive, supportive learning environment encouraging students to discover individual talents while acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to participate in society.

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

Garwood Elementary is a school perhaps best described in photos: from the impressive, eight foot tall, hand-carved wooden grizzly bear greeting families, students, and patrons at the front entrance to the 120 foot stretch of gorgeous, floor to ceiling mural lining our hallways. Garwood Elementary is classic, open, and inviting.

Named for the road that lines the North side of the school, Garwood is tucked into the fields, homes, and rural neighborhoods of Rathdrum, Idaho. A number of our patrons own or are employed by private businesses including construction, logging, milling, and paper, while many others drive to the nearby, larger cities of Coeur d'Alene and Spokane for employment. Many people who choose the Rathdrum community enjoy the acreage and the affordability compared to neighboring cities, and the smalltown-feel Rathdrum has maintained as North Idaho experiences a boom in developments and transplants from other states.

Garwood Elementary teachers and staff see our school as a microcosm of this community and are committed to providing a caring, nurturing, highly engaging learning environment where students feel safe, valued, and eager to learn. Our mission is to provide a positive and supportive learning environment encouraging students to discover individual talents and strengths while acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to be responsible and contributing members of a flourishing and productive society. We believe every child is unique, and so through purposeful planning that includes the incorporation of differentiation and productive and varied learning experiences, we strive to guide each student forward in his/her learning. Garwood staff see the child for their strengths, uniqueness, vulnerability, and potential. We nurture the child, and grow the student.

Garwood educators receive professional development and collaborate regularly around the Idaho Content Standards for ELA and Math through our PLC time and during district-provided collaboration days. While Garwood commits to data-driven conversations and high standards for learning, and while every grade level commits to common assessments and pacing, Garwood teachers are also cognizant of, and responsive to, the unique needs of our community of learners. Teachers are afforded the respect and autonomy to make instructional decisions that honor the authenticity of the students in their classrooms.

Our culture of learning is safe; we encourage our learners to be brave, curious, and engaged when it comes to learning, and this is modeled at every level from student to support staff to teachers and administrators. A common expression heard in our classrooms is, "Let's be brave!" Our teachers model both traditional and "outside of the box" thinking and provide students opportunities to experience and develop 21st century skills through project based self-discovery as well as inquiry and STEM-focused learning.

Since its opening in the fall of 1991, Garwood has grown with two additional classrooms and a lunchroom expansion. The Rathdrum community Garwood serves continues to grow rapidly, with hundreds of houses set for construction in the coming year; the district Superintendent and Garwood principal, with stakeholders, keep a close watch on the influx of new families and will make adjustments to zoning, class assignments, and resource allocations as we welcome new families and keep our focus on preserving our school culture and commitment to keep every student visible and included. As our district grows, our commitment to manageable class sizes, academic excellence, and our rural atmosphere continues to be the heart of our identity.

At this time, each grade level has two teachers, and we also feature a 1-2 combo and a 4-5 combo class. All of our highly qualified teachers have a number of years in the classroom, and over half the teaching staff has worked at Garwood for eight years or longer. We are served by a full-time counselor, a recipient of Idaho Counselor of the Year (2016). We provide specials in music, technology, library, and PE, and 6th grade students have the opportunity to take beginning band, Gaming and Animation Design, or a STEAM course elective.

Throughout the year, Garwood teachers meet together in-building to celebrate student growth, explore data, and problem-solve. The Garwood staff is a tight-knit group of professionals who deeply respect, trust, and

inspire each other. Garwood Elementary, in partnership with home and community, provides opportunities and experiences to help build competent, caring, and responsible citizens. Our motto is "Garwood Grizzlies Grow With Greatness! We are: Brave, Engaged, Always Respectful, Responsible and Safe!"

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

English Language Arts.

Lakeland Joint School District adopted Journeys in grades K-5 and Collections in 6th grade as text resources that align with the Idaho Content Standards for ELA, both published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Additionally, primary grades utilize the VoWac program to teach foundational literacy skills. Each grade level has combed through their respective text and accompanying resources to identify key skills, optimal pacing and sequencing, and non-negotiables. Teachers have also selected input and materials from online resources, such as AchievetheCore.org and ReadWriteThink.org, to supplement and enrich lessons utilizing the textbook. The bones of which skills are attended to at different points in the year are laid out during district provided grade-level collaborations where, for example, all 14 of Lakeland SD's fourth-grade teachers come together to discuss, tweak, and reflect upon the ELA curriculum guides. When planning an instructional unit, grade level teams review the standards and assess how well Journeys/Collections meets the identified learning targets. While the textbook is a central component, it is also one of several resources utilized by our savvy and responsive teachers who have created skills-driven units that incorporate a variety of resources. Throughout the teaching of a unit, frequent formative assessments are given to determine where students would benefit from enrichment and/or additional instruction.

Math

Our district believes in meaningful and engaging math instruction. Teachers use Go Math, published by Houghton-Mifflin Harcourt, as well as AchieveTheCore.org, Rocket Math, and other resources where appropriate. Grade level teams reference guidance documents, tasks, and the mathematical practices to ensure students receive engaging, in-depth instruction to create lifelong problem solvers. Our belief is that all students are capable of being high achievers in mathematics, and that having a growth mindset is necessary for success. Our primary grade levels have worked to design units around number sense, and the intermediate grade levels have built upon that with in depth instruction designed around fractions. Real world applications of math skills are brought into our classrooms through integration into other content areas, meaningful math tasks, and hands-on collaborative instruction. Teachers are highly skilled at formative assessments that allow them to monitor students and scaffold instruction to meet needs. Skill specific interventions are provided to aid students who need additional support, while high achieving math students are challenged and stretched. We provide various opportunities for students to demonstrate their comprehension of the concepts in multiple ways, thus allowing differentiation and freedom for our students to demonstrate their problem solving abilities.

Science

Garwood teachers utilize the National Geographic Science textbook and digital resources to engage students in experimentation, exploration, and investigation aligned with grade level standards. Through the scientific process, primary grades develop foundational skills through the exploration of topics such as weather, matter, and life cycles; intermediate grades continue fostering critical thinking skills through topics such as land and watershed, conservation, energy, and ecosystems. Garwood also participated in the Invent Idaho contest and hosts a science night in partnership with the community and a variety of experts from the area who share and learn alongside our students.

Idaho recently adopted new content standards for Science, and Lakeland School District has responded to the need for a revamped science curriculum by hiring a full-time Science Instructional Coach, who will facilitate the creation of kits, units, and professional development to help Lakeland schools bolster the wonderful learning we're able to foster with our students.

History

In the primary grades, teachers utilize Scholastic News and access resources from a variety of websites to build on the ideas of freedom, liberty, justice, and exploration with students. Kindergarten and first grade collaborate and align lessons to bring help our youngest students understand the powerful and complex ideals of our Founding Fathers and Martin Luther King Jr. They explore inventors such as Benjamin

Franklin and focus on early America and the first Thanksgiving. Second and third grades initiate an examination of the American Revolution, Philadelphia, American colonies, westward expansion, Native Americans, Mesa Verde, and the symbols of our nation.

Intermediate teachers emphasize social studies through a number of hands-on, interactive projects and inquiry-based explorations. 5th grade teachers incorporate material and create lessons from a variety of resources in order to engage students in early US history, including the Revolution, slavery, and westward expansion. 6th grade teachers incorporate document-based inquiry and a lot of art projects to engage students in the exploration of the western hemisphere, including Canada, Mexico, and South America. We are especially proud of our 4th grade Rendezvous, a culminating year-end activity that incorporates the coursework, projects, and background knowledge students have gained throughout the year. Teachers arrange for Mountain Men and Frontier Infantry reenactors, gold panners, spinners, Native Storytellers, and more, to help bring Idaho History alive for our 4th grade students. It's a phenomenal experience.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Garwood Elementary ensures students are exposed to a well-rounded and expansive variety of special courses. We plan a number of field trips, including to the Spokane symphony, a musical performed by the Christian Youth Theater in Coeur d'Alene, a Farm to Table program hosted by community and 4-H leaders, swim lessons, pumpkin patches, Silverwood Theme Park, and a team-building training course. On-site, we host after-school Hunter Safety courses for students, and after school enrichment courses through our XSTREAM program which runs for several weeks each year and offers lessons including cake decorating, robotics, coding, Zumba, and 3D printing.

Music and Band

All of our students have at least two music classes per week in general music, advanced music, or band. Our two dedicated teachers create environments where students feel safe to express themselves through music--offering solos and small group arrangements in addition to whole class endeavors. Students explore world cultures through music, receive instruction in a variety of instruments, and perform for the community several times per year. Students learn how to put their instrument together properly and how to take care of it. The band teacher does a great job of streamlining the path from primary to secondary music participation by hosting a concert in the spring that combines four of the district's 6th grade bands. Garwood music teachers want to open up possibilities for students to one day teach, compose, perform, record, DJ, or edit audio, and they organize their classes to that end. Understanding that not all students will pursue such routes, our music and band teachers strive to instill an appreciation and aptitude for music and musicians that reaches a deeper level and resonates with students throughout their lives.

Technology

Lakeland SD has recently adopted a 1:1 technology initiative that is in the early stages of roll-out. Garwood is blessed to have a great technology integration teacher who facilitates K-6 classes. The goals of this program include building student confidence and success as they interact with programs like document creation, internet browsers, and search engines. By the time Garwood students enter junior high, they'll have had the chance to experience real world applications of the technology concepts they have learned about by coding robots, and in an elective class designing their own video games. Our goal is to help students acquire digital literacy and citizenship in their use of mobile and social technology, so there is a strong emphasis on safety and digital citizenship.

PE

Each student receives a weekly lesson from our kind and capable PE teacher. He organizes his instructional units to include age-appropriate motor skill development, components of fitness, teamwork, and a heavy dose of fun in a safe environment. It is important for Garwood students to learn about the components of fitness and aspects of health to ensure students live long and healthy lives. Our PE teacher introduces students to tracking their own fitness data, including and celebrating personal records, always with an emphasis on personal growth. Some students are natural athletes and some are not--the PE program at Garwood allows all students, regardless of their starting point, to connect with their personal potential, learn

a variety of ways to engage with fitness, and participate in team-building and sportsmanship.

Library

Garwood employs a wonderful librarian whose goal is to help students understand that every book is an adventure. She is skilled at helping students choose books that interest them, fostering them as readers, and helping to instill a love of reading. Learning outcomes for her program include teaching students to locate and return books from the shelf, utilize the Dewey filing system, and self-select appropriate books. Further, she teaches about multi-modal texts including audio and visual formats.

Counselor Curriculum

Our well-deserving, full-time counselor was selected as the Counselor of the Year in October, 2016, by the Idaho School Counselor Association (ISCA). The curriculum she utilizes is primarily Second Step Skills for Social and Academic Success, with supplemental lessons from Character Counts. She also includes social stories, team building, community development, and career and college exploration in her weekly classroom visits. The goal when working with students is for all students to develop skills which aid in their abilities to become successful citizens in our community. Skills taught include growth mindset, what learners look like in the classroom, problem solving, our BEARS motto (Brave, Engaged, Always Respectful, Responsible, and Safe), friendship, appropriate play, kindness, testing strategies, community building, emotional regulation, impulse control, and more.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Instructional Methods

Garwood Elementary takes the responsibility of ensuring our students succeed in reading and math seriously. Each teacher provides 45 minutes of core instruction in language arts and math daily, and this time is considered untouchable. We believe all students, regardless of which tier they fall within, need to have access to this instruction as it includes grade-level rich vocabulary, skills-focused learning and practice, opportunities for collaboration among students, and primary exposure to content, standards, and learning targets. Garwood teachers also believe in the power of students speaking and listening to each other as often as possible as a means of making sense of their learning, both understanding content and practicing skills.

Garwood is a community of teachers and staff working together to continually improve outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities. The building's former instructional coach, SWD teachers, and title teacher worked together to model strategies and best-practice instructional techniques to reach our variety of learners. During the years leading up to the success we experienced as a team, there was a concerted effort on the part of the building principal to promote inclusion of students with differing abilities across all grade levels and all settings. They recognized the importance of developing a professional learning team that could leverage each other's strengths to lift all students up socially as well as academically. Resources and time for collaboration between grade levels and across general and special education departments is given a high priority, as is the commitment to teaching all students using the grade level core curriculum wherever possible. Because teachers and special educators collaborate, resources and ideas for differentiation, accommodations and social supports are easily and regularly shared.

Interventions

Garwood employs two talented and dedicated SWD teachers and an excellent Title teacher who, with their exceptional paraprofessionals, are able to work with classroom teachers to ensure the needs of all learners are met. Through these partnerships, classroom teachers are able to utilize strategic interventions to support student growth, and there is a sense of shared ownership over student success. A key to Garwood's success is that we sustain a culture where our SWD and title teachers are valued and appreciated as thinking partners, not seen as having separate and isolated roles from general education teachers. The different strategies and resources used by our special educators are shared widely across all content and at every grade level.

Garwood advocates for full resource access to all SWD and title teachers. They receive full teacher

editions/kits to help reteach, deepen understanding and support student learning in the context of core instruction, not separate-track learning. Where possible, paraprofessionals utilize a “push-in” model, allowing them to help students access grade-level, rich and relevant content and standards. This model also supports general education teachers who practice differentiation through instructional groupings, flexing with other teachers, and utilizing centers.

In addition and thanks to many dedicated teachers and staff, Garwood boasts a Homework Club, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program, Extended Learning program, buddy readers, peer mentors, and an Ambassador program. These clubs and programs provide students opportunities to learn with and from each other, and to receive reteaching and enrichment within the school day and afterschool.

Assessments

Garwood Elementary has access to, and regularly utilizes, benchmarking tools such as Aimsweb, Renaissance 360’s Star Math and ELA assessments, Front Row, and the Idaho Reading Indicator. These tools are useful in helping teachers plan for instruction and interventions in general terms. However, when the rubber hits the road, Garwood teachers excel in delivering frequent formative assessments to determine next steps in real-time, often taking advantage of key reteaching and enrichment opportunities based on formative feedback from students. We rely on many practices including exit tickets, powerful questioning strategies during lessons, pair-share, and “teach a friend” strategies as formative assessment techniques.

Because Garwood has been piloting standards-based report cards in the years leading up to this year’s adoption of standards-based report cards, Garwood teachers collaborate extensively to determine what students need to know and be able to do to demonstrate mastery of a particular standard. Through trial, reflection, and feedback, teachers have been able to craft formative and summative assessments that pinpoint student learning. Shifting from a point system and letter grades to a system measuring mastery of skills is no small feat, and the process has ricocheted through every aspect of planning, teaching, assessment, and reflections on teaching we explore as a staff. Next year, we look forward to implementing a master schedule and student-led conferences as well, which will further shape the way we think and talk about student learning.

The current principal strives to maintain Garwood Elementary School’s status as a high-performing school through intentional, targeted, and quality professional development opportunities, most of which is facilitated by the building instructional coach and talented teacher leaders. This approach to PD ensures topics are relevant and tailored to the needs of our specific circumstances and the needs of our student population. We support consistent and open conversations throughout the building and district, and the expectation of shared-learning and continual improvement. Teachers at Garwood are open to learning with, and from, each other in many ways, including through professional development, collaboration, book studies, and observing each other teach.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The Garwood staff is unique in many ways. We adhere to beliefs in both actions and attire, selecting slogans for t-shirts such as “refuse to be ordinary,” “every child deserves a champion; let it be you,” and “Garwood chooses kindness.” Over half the staff has been part of this school for eight years or longer. Teachers are committed to each other as colleagues, friends, thinking partners, and allies. They know each other on professional and personal levels, and often congregate to share in each other’s successes and to support each other during difficult times.

The Garwood staff embodies community, a culture established and fostered by the former principal. We regularly “break bread” through staff lunches, salsa day, evening get-togethers, and even morning sweets furnished by one of our first grade teachers during teacher work days. Both the former and current principals have an intuition for hiring staff who are not only highly qualified and talented, but who also possess qualities of character that contribute to the “family” mentality.

Inside the building, the walls are covered with mural work, personalized tiles, colorful paint, and customized classroom environments. Student work adorns the hallways and classroom walls, and teachers greet students at the door with warm smiles, a hug, handshake, or high five.

This culture, the emphasis on inclusion, brings all stakeholders into the fold and sets the foundation for excellent design and planning, instruction, and teamwork. The positive energy at Garwood is palpable. Patrons, guest teachers, new-hires, and parents regularly comment on the inviting atmosphere, starting at the office with our wonderful administrative assistants. We have established kindness campaigns, lunch clubs, recess groups, social-skills groups, and staff training on life-awareness initiatives to support positive mental health.

Garwood teachers work diligently to foster relationships and academic achievement among students as well; not just through modeling it themselves, but through creating opportunities for students to learn together. We have a Reading Buddies program where intermediate students read with primary students; and we have an Ambassadors program where 6th grade Ambassadors provide all Garwood students peer role models who promote the areas of school climate, social emotional support, academic support, community building, and a growth mindset. Teachers facilitate a Read Week or Reading Olympics each year to promote a culture of literacy and camaraderie among students as they set class goals, challenges, and earn collective and individual recognition. To further support our culture of learning, one primary teacher dedicates portions of her week to providing enrichment activities and opportunities for extension in the primary grades.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

It was a daily ritual for Garwood’s former principal to greet families and students curbside each morning, reinforcing ongoing family connections, making each student feel valuable and welcome, and to address any potential concerns early by “taking a pulse” of how students were feeling as they began their school day. He kept a stash of Hershey kisses in his coat pockets to share, opened car doors, and dished up countless smiles and hugs. We continue this culture in his absence as the current principal and many teachers voluntarily join the bus and pick-up lines to ensure students end their day seen, greeted, and with a proper send off.

The staff, Parent-Teacher Organization, and local businesses frequently partner to host events at school including Title Nights focused on literacy, math, and science; the Fall Festival fundraiser and carnival; Santa and a Book event; and Field days, Cross Country, and “Fit for Bloomsday” fitness events.

We invite the public in to participate in our daytime music concerts, award and recognition assemblies, and Veterans Day assembly, to name a few. We’ve provided opportunities for parents to join their student for

lunches, volunteer in classrooms, help out at book fairs and in the library, and we participate wholeheartedly in McTeacher night, striving to keep our reputation for having the most fun and raising the most money for Ronald McDonald House. Several Garwood teachers also formed a rock band, Grizzle, a few years ago and perform for parents and students the last day of school each year.

Teachers communicate frequently with families about students via Remind101, phone calls, and email, and the school shares messages and reminders of upcoming events through the Reader Board out front, text messages, and email. Garwood publishes a monthly newsletter, the “Garwood Gazette,” to preview upcoming events, share celebrations, and provide a window into the schoolhouse and student work.

3. Professional Development:

It is common knowledge that education is in a constant state of change, but in recent years there has been an influx of initiatives undertaken at the state and district levels. Be it new standards for ELA, math, and science, the adoption of Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching as an evaluation tool, transitioning to standards-based report cards, or the purchase of a new SIS database, teachers’ attention spans and time are often spread thin between many valuable meetings and trainings.

Garwood staff have served as knowledgeable and dedicated participants in these larger conversations, but the former principal was also wholly committed to preserving time and space for staff to collaborate around student learning, to delve into the minute details of what we can do to ensure that each Garwood student is successful, supported, and seen. Professional learning communities promote frequent collaboration between grade level teams within the building, and time is protected for teacher conversation, inquiry, and collaboration. Teachers regularly meet with their grade level partners, the Title and SWD teachers, instructional coaches, and educational assistant to problem solve, gain perspective and understanding, and acquire new strategies to reach all students.

Lakeland School District, due in part to financial constraints, has moved to a more local, embedded form of professional development. Rather than sending teachers away to expensive conferences that yield small and isolated results, Lakeland has taken the approach of investing in its own talented staff to share, lead, collaborate, and inquire into vision-based topics and initiatives. To this end, Lakeland School District offers instructional coaches, the Lakeland Education Network, and Mentor Programs. Instructional coaches at the building and district levels provide professional development, support in planning and implementing best practice, and individual coaching to teachers. Garwood teachers regularly solicit the math, ELA, and technology-integration coaches to help plan, model, or co-teach. The Lakeland Education Network (LEN) brings K-12 teachers together to explore key shifts in teaching and learning, foster reading, writing, speaking, and listening in all contents, and create engaging, inquiry-based lessons which they share with each other and their buildings. In both the LEN and Mentor Programs, teachers grow forward in their learning and capacity to lead and teach each other. Teachers have the opportunity to visit each other’s classrooms, access mentor and lead teachers, and celebrate the profession within these great programs.

Lakeland School District also provides staff 90 minutes each Monday to focus on various collaboration. Emphasis rotates between technology training, grade level collaboration and PLC, and instruction in best practice. Additionally, Garwood teachers invest hours of time weekly outside of these collaborations in planning, research, implementation, and reflection. Teachers can frequently be overheard sharing ideas, resources, strategies, and stories with each other. It’s not unusual to run across an impromptu after-school congregation of staff gathered in the hallway discussing ideas and sharing their craft. “Talking shop” is part of the culture at Garwood. Teachers enjoy learning from and lending support to each other.

4. School Leadership:

The MTSS team is guided by Garwood’s commitment to keep every student visible. In previous years, this team was led by our wonderful instructional coach, and now this team consists of a lead teacher, principal, title teacher, SWD teachers, counselor, and grade level teachers. Each week, a different grade level convenes to discuss data, students with IEPs or 504s, service through Title, I-Plans for academic or behavioral supports, students in need of enrichment, or who are facing temporary or situational obstacles,

such as a death in the family. These rapid-fire meetings provide teachers with strategies, supports, interventions, and progress monitoring where needed. The grade level meetings, held once a week per grade level, provide regular check-ins to discuss the whole child and often lead to follow-up meetings, called side-team meetings, to problem-solve, discuss interventions, and implement solutions. Three times a year, the MTSS team meets with teachers to facilitate data-driven conversations about student learning and to set or reflect upon data-informed goals. These conversations are evolving as teachers become more confident in interpreting data and integrating feedback.

While PBIS is a newer concept at Garwood which promises to streamline the conversations, recognition, and behavior interventions we practice; Garwood has always been a strong promoter of kindness, inclusion, and honesty. Until this year, our motto was the three “B’s”: Be safe, be responsible, and be respectful. Over the summer, teachers participated in a book study, Pyramid of Behavior Interventions, 2011, and adopted a new motto: BEARS: Garwood grizzlies are brave, engaged, always respectful, responsible, and safe! The subtle, but significant change allows our community to emphasize not only respect, responsibility, and safety, but also the powerful traits and benefits of being brave and engaged. We often hear students encouraged by teachers and each other to “be brave” by trying a difficult problem, making a new friend, or letting go of a stubborn attitude. Adding the word “engaged” to our motto ties our focus on behavioral goals to academics, and it has helped the staff teacher to the speaking and listening standards as well as social etiquette.

Besides the core committee work of MTSS and PBIS teams, Garwood staff have created many additional committees over the years, including Assembly Committee, Social Committee, Read Week/Reading Olympics Committee, Volunteer Committee, and the Running and Fitness Committee, to name a few! On the surface, it might sound superfluous for one small school to have so many committees, but at Garwood, these voluntary committees ensure we are continually nurturing and promoting our relationships within staff, with and among our students, and with the community. Even the contracted nutritional aides in the lunchroom volunteer to participate. These committees are authentically teacher-powered; nearly every staff member proudly enlists in the work of one or more committees to ensure we follow through on events, uphold traditions, continue fostering our inclusive community, and preserve time to recognize and appreciate each other.

When asked about leadership, Garwood teachers, parents, and the students instantly conjure visions of Hershey kisses, warm hugs, a gentle smile, and the undivided attention of former principal. For twenty-four years, he opened car doors in the drop-off line to welcome students and greeted students arriving by bus with his personal attention and kindness. The former principal himself was a master at down-playing his role as a “leader.” He led with humility, trust, and a belief in the inseparable partnership between academic rigor and treating each child and colleague like family. The new principal perpetuates the positive culture established at Garwood by honoring traditions, values, and community. Yet she moves quickly and decisively, inspiring staff with her fresh and dynamic leadership style. She guides the staff in thoughtful, timely professional development, honors teachers’ expertise by preserving time for collaboration and teacher-led book studies, and serves as a trustworthy, positive leader.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Garwood Elementary draws upon numerous resources, maintains a solid understanding of current best practice and pedagogy, and strives for rigorous, ambitious academic goals. Our MTSS team provides every teacher the opportunity to utilize data and anecdotal information to discuss students of concern with a group of resourceful colleagues. We practice standards-based assessments, seek opportunities to learn more about the art and science of teaching, and participate in committees and opportunities provided at the district and state levels.

We don't do "one size fits all;" we have resources and apples-to-apples conversations; but our teachers also have autonomy to address student needs in authentic ways using outside the box efforts to meet our learners and support growth. Our staff explores resources and confidently makes instructional decisions that suit our learners, which might include drawing pieces and creating our own curriculum from many places. When it comes to instruction, pedagogy, and collaboration, the Garwood staff are among the top and most dedicated around.

However, whether it's why we have earned the Blue Ribbon nomination, why we have such a great reputation in the district and across North Idaho, or why Garwood students continually achieve on standardized tests, the answer is the same: we have cultivated a caring, kind community where teachers are invested in knowing, appreciating, and reaching each student on a personal level. It was the value most deeply-held by the former principal of 23 years, and two decades of instilling this philosophy in all staff has been successful. This culture of teaching the whole child is part of the air we breathe here at Garwood. Every member of our staff knows and cares about our students, and the staff knows and cares for each other. Garwood embraces what these days might come across as a sort of renegade, unapologetic belief that our students perform well because we make school fun, inclusive, safe, and memorable. We succeed because we love kids and want kids to love school. We provide a rigorous, well-organized and executed program of instruction, but we also care deeply and personally about our students and each other.