

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

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Public or  Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Debra Bradford

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

Official School Name Pine River Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1894 East Pine River Rd

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

Midland MI 48640-5002  
 City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Midland

Telephone (989) 631-5121

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Web site/URL http://www.bcreek.org

E-mail bradfordd@bcreek.org

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

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

Name of Superintendent\*Mr. Shawn Hale  
 (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail hales@bcreek.org

District Name Bullock Creek School District Tel. (989) 631-9022

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. Joel Beeck  
 (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

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

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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

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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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	12	14	26
<b>1</b>	12	12	24
<b>2</b>	0	0	0
<b>3</b>	45	42	87
<b>4</b>	42	37	79
<b>5</b>	46	30	76
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	157	135	292

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 91 % White
  - 3 % 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: 1%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	4
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	4
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	268
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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: 36 %  
Total number students who qualify: 106

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %  
39 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>0</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>11</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>22</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 14
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	11
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
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 26:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	96%	91%	97%	94%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

We welcome all students and will work toward helping all students achieve to the maximum of their potential by providing high quality instruction and programs.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Bullock Creek School District does accept Schools of Choice students. Parents who are interested in applying to any of the buildings within the Bullock Creek School District for Schools of Choice, fill out an application and submit it to the district office. It is then determined if there is room in the grade level the applicant is seeking. If space is available, the student will be accepted if the student meets the criteria as outlined by the Board of Education.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Originally Bullock Creek School District was a k-8 district with ninth grade students heading into the city of Midland for completion of high school. In 1961, citizens passed a bond to build a high school and in 1965, the first graduating class of students completed their entire k-12 education in Bullock Creek. Pine River Elementary was founded in 1966, consolidating many small buildings that housed small numbers of students. Historically, Bullock Creek is a proud community and has maintained a small town feel, even though it is only five miles from Midland. While there is no actual town of Bullock Creek; the school district is the cornerstone of the community. Our motto is "You Belong at Bullock Creek" and it truly exemplifies our sense of community and acceptance of all people.

Bullock Creek touches eight other school districts, is 26 miles wide and covers 77 square miles. The main industry is Dow-DuPont Incorporated, previously Dow Chemical Company and Dow Corning. The founding fathers of Dow Chemical and Dow Corning have been extremely philanthropic to the community and this has provided many additional opportunities for surrounding districts and for our students. In recent years, the district has benefited from grants from the Dow Foundation which have provided nature-based learning at Pine River Elementary in conjunction with the Chippewa Nature Center, which is housed directly across the road from our school. There is a unique relationship between the school district and Chippewa Nature Center, and the students at Pine River Elementary have benefitted greatly, from the proximity of the two facilities.

The demographics of our district are diverse, with Pine River Elementary at 36% free and reduced lunch and another elementary at 70% free and reduced lunch. Pine River Elementary serves students whose parents are Dow DuPont executives, physicians, teachers, laborers and fast food employees. The Bullock Creek School District accepts over 400 schools of choice students. This represents approximately 22% of our district population. The inclusion of these students also increases the diversity of our students. All students blend in and are accepted by one another at Pine River Elementary. In addition, many parent and community members volunteer on a regular basis to help in the Math Lab program, reading support and classroom activities.

Our mission statement declares, "Pine River Elementary, in partnership with the community, provides a positive climate that supports excellence in teaching and learning, thereby enabling students to realize their full potential." Through the relationship that has been developed with Chippewa Nature Center, students in grades kindergarten and first grade receive a weekly visit and lesson from a naturalist. In addition, all third, fourth and fifth grade classes spend one complete week at Chippewa Nature Center where all of the lessons are nature based. Many students, upon their return from the week-long visit state, "This is my favorite week of school!" Naturalists help teach the lessons and the students and teachers have full access to the facility. Also, all classrooms receive two additional programs at Chippewa Nature Center.

Through the work of the school counselor, fifth grade students participate in the Bullock Creek Challenge Project. The counselor created outdoor educational equipment to be used to focus on teaching students character qualities through experiential and adventure education methods. The character qualities include problem solving, respect, responsibility, conflict resolution, leadership, cooperation, asking for help, doing the right thing, listening, self-control, teamwork, communication, diligence, flexibility, forgiveness, patience, enthusiasm and determination. The goal eventually is to provide this two day experience to all of the third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms.

Students also have the opportunity to build leadership skills through participating as a Lancer Leader. This club is designed for students to be role models to other students, be a 'buddy' to those in need, and to plan and implement service projects at the school and for the community. This club meets weekly and leadership skills are taught to the students.

Students have the opportunity to participate in many other activities within and beyond the school day. Pine River Elementary has a large participation in the Battle of the Books competition. This is a county wide program in which students compete against other teams on their knowledge of selected library books. Girls

on the Run is offered after school for third through fifth grade girls. This program not only trains girls to participate in a 5k competition, but through the 12 week program provides lessons on self-esteem, character and positive body image. Students also have the opportunity to participate in an after school reading program, LEGO League Club, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Girl Scouts and many district sponsored sports activities.

The staff of Pine River Elementary is dedicated to teaching with fidelity and providing rich experiences for students to grow as learners to their fullest capacity. As is often stated in Bullock Creek, "It's a Great Day to be a Lancer."



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

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

The Bullock Creek School District has adopted the Core Curriculum for Mathematics and English Language Arts. To this end, Pine River Elementary works diligently to adhere to the Core Curriculum and to teach it with fidelity.

At Pine River Elementary we strive to help our students build their mathematical understanding by implementing a constructive mathematics approach. To make our math instruction more effective, we have moved away from emphasis on teaching math as a set of rote rules. For long-term learning to occur, students first need to obtain a solid foundation of conceptual understanding. Often times, teachers use math manipulatives to help bridge the learning from the conceptual understanding to the abstract. We focus on the relational understanding, which requires students to understand ‘what to do’ and ‘why it works that way.’ The goal is to develop students who are not only able to solve computational problems but also truly understand what is being computed. We also strive to build confidence in our students’ mathematical skills. Students with number sense are able to effectively reason and solve a math task many different ways. This helps students to become more familiar with numbers and develop a reliable mental picture of how they relate to each other. A firm grasp of comparative quantities fosters more varied problem-solving strategies, more courage to estimate, better judgment about the reasonableness of a solution, and even easier fact retrieval.

The reading program at Pine River Elementary uses a variety of components to reach all students. Readers Workshop allows teachers to work with students of all different levels and provide a rich learning environment for each of the groups. Readers Workshop allows students the opportunity to choose a book that is of interest for the individual student. Teachers design whole group lessons around specific learning targets and then teachers conference with each student and set individual goals. Book clubs are also created within the classroom which allows students to dialogue on a common book. The dialogue is used to teach essential skills of speaking, listening, debating and possibly broadening the opinions of group members. Book Clubs also afford teachers the opportunity to teach broad concepts, such as theme, moral of the story, cause and effect and story elements.

The organization of our social studies program takes a two-fold approach. First, each grade level has its own grade-specific context that connects the content from one grade to the next. The model is a growing circle with the child in the center. Each grade level expands their circle to include more of their world and their history. The Nature-Kindergarten focus is on recognizing “Myself and Others”, which leads to the Nature-First focus on family and school community. Third grade extends the circle to include Michigan and its history through statehood. Fourth grade includes the state history from statehood to present, and then to look at Michigan’s place in the United States through study of U.S. regions. The fifth grade then takes the idea of the regions and extends it to U.S. History through the Constitutional period. The second piece in the organization of our social studies program is the inclusion of history, geography, civics/government, and economics themes in each grade level’s ring of the circle. There is also a focus on the Core Democratic Values that explores the responsibilities of citizenship. It provides opportunities to respond to state and local issues using varying points-of-view. Students respond to the public issues through persuasive or argumentative essays.

Bullock Creek School District is in the process of full implementation of NGSX (Next Generation Science Exemplar System) for grades 4-12 and Phenomenal Science for grades k-3. The focus of NGSX and Phenomenal Science is “...integrating three dimensional learning into science classrooms, in which teachers support students in using science and engineering practices to develop, apply, and refine disciplinary and crosscutting ideas.” Teachers pose questions or problems to students and through the demonstration of the students’ knowledge base, determines the direction of the lesson/unit. One of the culminating projects for fifth graders is to design and create a container in which an egg can be placed and then dropped from 20 feet without cracking. The protective egg projects the students create show great ingenuity. The goal in science is to develop students into critical thinkers who can determine a problem and then work to find the solution.

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

Students at Pine River Elementary receive 200 minutes a week of additional curriculum support in the areas of physical education, library skills, art and computer skills. These classes are taught by certified teachers. All k-5 students at Pine River Elementary receive physical education class for 40 minutes two times a week. Library skills, art and computer skills are classes the students experience one time per week for 40 minutes. In addition, students in grades third through fifth grade receive additional math support.

### **Art Education**

All kindergarten through fifth grade art classes are taught using the Teaching for Artistic Behaviors approach in conjunction with the National Core Art Standards. Students are valued as artists who create art connected to their own unique interests and ideas. Students think of art ideas, plan what materials will work best, create, evaluate their own art, and share their art with others. They learn and explore skills in drawing, painting, collage, fiber arts, sculpture, and printmaking. Students are exposed to a variety of artwork from past and present artists as well as world cultures.

### **Library Skills**

All library skills classes learn about the areas of the library, call numbers, choosing good-fit books, and how to find those books in the library. They are also given time to have independent reading of a book of their choice. Many of the library lessons build on each other throughout the primary grades. Kindergarten students are introduced to book care, parts of books, the difference between fiction and nonfiction, parts of a story, and learn about authors and illustrators by reading many picture books. First grade continues with those skills and are introduced to dictionary skills, a few specific genres, informational research skills, and some aspect of poetry. Third grade builds on the previous skills, plus learns about informational text features. Fourth and fifth grades continue with the previous skills, along with learning about a variety of genres and becoming better at self-selection of good-fit books. They also spend time doing independent reading and then discussing their books with the teacher, a partner, a small group, or in front of the whole class.

### **Computer Skills**

Students in grades k-5 receive instruction in computer skills one time per week. For the kindergarten students, time is spent on the basics of computer instruction - logging into their account, finding keys on the keyboard, math and reading games and creating pages using a Word Art program. The skills continue to develop and increase as students move through the grade levels with fifth grade students able to type many words per minute and create reports using graphs or develop PowerPoint projects to demonstrate their knowledge on specific topics. The general education teachers work hand in hand with the computer skills teacher to enhance what is being taught in the classroom and prepare students for lifelong skills necessary for career and college and beyond.

### **Physical Education**

All k-5 students at Pine River Elementary receive physical education class two times a week. A variety of activities occur within the 40 minute period. Time is spent teaching the students the importance of stretching before any physical activity and then students are required to complete a series of stretching activities. In addition, skills are taught prior to playing organized games in order to build skill base and knowledge. Also included in the physical education classes are lessons around proper nutrition, bones and muscles. Movement activities are incorporated in gaining this knowledge to make the learning enjoyable and to help cement the information on how to live a healthy lifestyle.

### **Math Lab**

Beyond the core mathematics instruction that is delivered in the classrooms, all third through fifth grade students also participate in Math Lab for 35 minutes/day. Students are leveled into four groups depending upon the needs of the students. Additional support personnel work with the Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in

identifying the misconceptions in math and working towards closing the learning gaps of the students. Tier 1 students are placed in an extended math opportunity that addresses the need to enrich their mathematical understanding. The grouping is fluid and changes with each new unit based on the benchmark assessment.

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

At Pine River Elementary instructional decisions are driven by collected data and conversations based on classroom observations of students' needs.

An example of this would be the choice to adopt the Readers Workshop model. The staff and leadership recognized that many textbook-based reading systems were geared towards one specific reading level and were not sufficient for instructing our students with higher reading needs nor students who were ready for a greater challenge. The principal and a collaborative team researched the potential for instituting a Readers Workshop approach in our building. The approach seemed to fit our needs. Students with high needs could choose books within their "just right" reading level, meanwhile, students who were ready to be challenged could read "just right" books that challenged them. This has provided a sense of stability and consistency for the students as they progress from grade to grade. We use MAISA (Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators) units that provide instructional support with connections to the Common Core.

We use several methods for tracking student achievement and needs for intervention. Three times a year students are given the AIMSweb Plus assessment for reading and math. This data is used to demonstrate growth, but also is used to determine areas that need support. Grade level meetings are held weekly to make instructional decisions for math interventions and to disaggregate the data to drive reading instruction. Third grade uses this data plus the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to develop plans for reading instruction and intervention. This data is used to create Individual Reading Intervention Plans (IRIPs). If a student is in need of intervention, parents are contacted and a plan is created. One intervention being used to close reading gaps is the After School Reading Program; a program that is designed to work with identified third grade students in small groups who are one to two years below grade level. Lessons are created and implemented for the groups of students at their current reading level in an effort to close the gaps.

In math, we have adopted the Houghton Mifflin Expressions in Mathematics. The focus is deeper comprehension of the concepts. Rather than just teaching the algorithms, the goal is to provide students an understanding of what is actually occurring when they are using math skills, multiple ways to get to the answer, including the algorithm, and how those skills translate into real-world situations.

The School Improvement Team determined that there was a need for math intervention. The AIMSweb Plus data is used to place students into one of three tiers in a Math Lab dependent on their mathematical needs. Students are provided added support in helping them build their basic math skills and to close any gaps that may exist. Students are assessed through a progress monitoring assessment at the end of sessions to determine where extra help might be necessary.

Pine River has developed a strong partnership with our neighbor, the Chippewa Nature Center (CNC). This partnership is designed to provide additional support to students in the areas of science and social studies. Students attend intensive week-long learning institutes in which they are immersed in the concepts covered in the Core Curriculum. This hands on, minds on approach to learning has allowed the school to see an increase in science and social studies assessment scores as well as being very useful in meeting the needs of all learners since much of the time is exploratory and encourages the students to make meaning of the world around them through their observations and experiments.

The professional learning community (PLC) grade level teams and the staff as a whole have been using John Hattie's "Visible Learning" study to determine best instruction through the effect-size of different practices. This can be seen when a teacher intentionally begins a lesson with a goal, or what the student should be able to do by the end of the lesson, clearly written out and explained at the beginning of class. Another example

would be the use of short-cycle assessments to quickly determine a student's level of understanding of a standard before teaching it. The students set a learning goal based on the outcome of the first assessment. At the end of the instructional period they take a second short-cycle assessment and are able to review their improvement. This allows students to become invested stakeholders in their education.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

The climate and culture of Pine River Elementary is at the center of what makes this a successful school. All decisions concerning community programs and events, school activities, field trips and general interactions with our children tie back to the school district's core values: CARE (Collaboration, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence).

Collaboration plays an important role in determining our students' needs, and also in developing trust, respect, and a sense of professionalism among the staff. The teachers meet once a week to collaborate and evaluate the student data in reading and math, discuss current research, make classroom observations, and determine needs for students' social, emotional, and academic growth. The collaboration transfers into the classroom with students working in partnerships and book clubs during Readers Workshop, or helping critique each others' work during peer editing in Writers Workshop.

Respect is the linchpin for Pine River's climate and culture. We share a belief in modeling respect for the students. The Pine River staff's relationship is best summed up by a comment recently made by a parent to the principal, "It's evident that the teachers like one another." That quote can be expanded to include every employee of Pine River. Respect and "care" are further reinforced through programs like Lancer Leaders, which once a month has fifth graders greeting students as they come into the building; AAA Safety Patrol, which teaches students responsibility and care for the safety of others; and Kindergarten/First Grade "Bus Buddies", who each day are responsible for helping our youngest students find their buses.

Teachers are valued and supported through various activities that create a positive culture at Pine River Elementary. The principal, along with the teaching staff, develop attainable goals for the building and then teachers are supported through opportunities to attend professional development to help reach the goals. The principal understands the importance of maintaining realistic expectations and participates with staff in professional learning communities. She also encourages staff to take on leadership roles within the building and trusts the teachers within the leadership position. We also celebrate successes together within our building, whether it is student success or personal success.

We want the students to know that our definition of excellence is working to their full potential, while respecting that we are each unique and that success may look different for each of us. We use short cycle assessments with specific success criteria to monitor students' progress, and to allow them to self-evaluate and set goals for themselves. This data is displayed in each classroom and students work to achieve their individual goals and the classroom goals.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Pine River Elementary staff, the school improvement team, and a very active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) plan events throughout the year to engage both students and parents, as well as to guarantee students have the support they need to be successful. In addition, at the beginning of the year, an Open House is held for parents and students to meet the classroom teacher. In early September, each teacher schedules a "Curriculum Night" where the teacher presents the grade level curriculum and the expectations for the classroom. Formal Parent-Teacher Conferences are held two times a year and many informal meetings with parents occur throughout the school year.

One way our parents get involved is to participate in our daily Math Lab program. Parent volunteers help provide one-on-one help with students who need additional support in math. Battle of the Books parents helped read all 20 Battle of the Books this year, and provided practice questions for students. First Robot League parents and staff help students assemble and program the robots. The fifth grade is joined every year by approximately 25 parents on an overnight camping trip to Mystic Lake YMCA camp, where students and parents take part in team building activities, work on communication and listening skills, and

get a real camp experience.

Our PTO involves families in the school through activities like Creek Carnival, which brings families and staff together for an evening of games and interaction. The PTO focuses on community involvement and engagement which is open for all students and community members. Health and fitness play an important role in our school with walking clubs during lunch and nature hikes at the Chippewa Nature Center across the road from the school. The PTO has organized a 5k color run/walk. Families spend a morning walking a route that takes them through the heart of the district. Local businesses take part by providing healthy snacks, water, and prizes.

The Pine River Elementary community has been very supportive of our school and provides relevant connections to student learning and supports our students' overall welfare. Consumers Energy presents a program on conserving energy and resources for the fourth grade. Naturalists from the Chippewa Nature Center provide outdoor, hands-on experiences for kindergarten and first grade students. Fifth grade students study human impact on the environment with interpreters from the Bay City State Recreation Area. Connections with faith based organizations have provided our students with school supplies to start the year. A weekly "Back Pack Buddies" program provides students with food for the weekend.

The success we experience could not happen without the support of such an incredible community.

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

Through the School Improvement process, the staff at Pine River Elementary has identified areas in which teachers need support in the area of teaching and learning. It has been a concerted effort to provide sustained professional development in these areas and to limit the number of new programs that would require teacher training.

Seven years ago the decision was made to move to a Readers and Writers Workshop model to instruct reading and writing. Intense training was provided to teachers and a follow up training is provided on an annual basis. New teaching staff have also been trained through the county Educational Service Agency. The Readers Workshop model was chosen after reading through various research studies on the most effective way to teach reading. The one major factor of Readers Workshop that spoke to the staff was the idea of student choice in reading and finding their 'just right' book. The move to Readers Workshop has resulted in a higher level of stamina for reading with our students. Writers Workshop was chosen so that we had a consistent writing program. Our teachers use the same language when speaking to students about writing, for instance, writing a 'seed' story instead of a 'watermelon' story. As evidenced by student assessment scores, the Workshop models have been highly successful for our students.

Three years ago the district chose to provide professional development to staff on identifying priority standards and developing pre and post short cycle assessments. Teachers use the pre assessment to determine the level of knowledge students have prior to beginning a new topic. Once the unit has been taught, the post assessment is then given to students. This data is tracked and a plan is developed by grade level teams for reteaching the areas in which students did not perform well. This continues to be a work in progress and the district continues to provide training to the staff as we strive toward full implementation.

Another area of sustained professional development for the staff is in regards to the work of John Hattie and "Visible Learning." The staff has examined the effect size of teaching strategies and uses that information to make the best decisions on classroom teaching practices that are used in the classroom. One of the greatest effect sizes is collective efficacy. The staff has embraced this methodology and meet weekly to discuss data, student learning and best teaching practices.

The staff at Pine River Elementary continues to implement with fidelity the programs in which they have been trained. Student assessment results have proven that our plan is working and on target for continued

success.

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

Pine River is led by one administrator, although leadership responsibilities are shared between the administrator, teachers, and highly qualified support staff. All staff members work together to provide students with a safe, respectful, nurturing, learning environment while working towards high educational expectations. Student learning is the primary focus at Pine River.

Pine River's principal has 29 years of experience in elementary education, having been a classroom teacher for 12 years, a curriculum director for 3 years, and a principal for 14 years. Our principal treats all staff as professionals by honoring peoples' ideas, respecting their time, and minimizing distractions that divert the focus away from students. She takes her role very seriously, yet approaches students, parents, and staff with heart and humor. Parents appreciate her open and honest communication. She is never too busy to meet with parents or staff to discuss social, emotional, or academic concerns. In addition, the principal takes an active role in all responsibilities staff are asked to do – including covering recess or lunch duty, filling the role as a treasurer for PTO, and covering classrooms for teachers. She is the hub of communication between teachers, parents, students, and community organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters and Chippewa Nature Center.

The principal understands that teachers are leaders in their classrooms and that leaders do their best work when they feel supported and encouraged. The principal encourages staff members to seek out professional development, take on new professional challenges, and fulfill personal, as well as professional goals. She helps staff to go outside their comfort zones and grow as educators. She understands that one teacher's professional growth effects the entire school in a positive way and works to ensure all teachers continue to learn how to best reach students.

Pine River's leadership structure is based upon the Balanced Leadership Framework by Tim Waters and Greg Cameron. This work stresses the importance of building a purposeful community with a joint focus. Through her study of Marzano and John Hattie, she has led staff to examine current practices to evaluate their effectiveness on student learning. From this work, teachers have formed achievement teams to examine daily instructional practices based on data from short cycle assessments. Our principal's collaboration with teachers on these team meetings has led to increased conversation, dedication, and focus on learning by both staff and students. The alignment of shared focus among students, teachers, and administration is evident in all areas of the school, from student talk in classrooms to state test scores.

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

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Approximately seven years ago, the staff at Pine River Elementary was frustrated with the math scores of our students on the state assessment. Our students were scoring very high in the area of English Language Arts, with all grade levels showing 85-92% proficient; however, the math scores did not show the same success. As evidenced by the reading scores, we knew our students were extremely capable of performing equally as well on the math assessment. The question we asked ourselves - why the disconnect between ELA and mathematics?

A sub-committee of our School Improvement Team spent the year gathering data to determine the root cause of the issue and to develop a plan to improve our students' understanding of mathematical concepts. Through this group we determined that our students had a wide variety of misconceptions of mathematical concepts that were not being addressed through daily instruction; sometimes the gaps in student learning was up to two years behind. With this information, we set out to develop a program within our building to close the gap and increase the mathematical ability of all students.

Six years ago we implemented the Math Lab program at Pine River Elementary. We designed the program to provide additional mathematical instruction for ALL students, not only the students who had gaps in mathematical concepts. At the time we developed this program, Pine River Elementary was a 3rd - 5th grade building; therefore, we designed a program for 3rd - 5th grade students.

One of the highly skilled mathematics teachers at Pine River Elementary volunteered to lead the Math Lab program. This teacher was released for .5 FTE of her day to be the Math Lab teacher. In addition, another teacher, who has special education certification, has .5 FTE as an additional resource for Math Lab. Students are given the AIMSweb benchmark assessment at the start of the school year. This helps us to determine what gaps the students have and who the students are that need additional support. Then, using data from AIMSweb, classroom assessments and teacher observations, the students at the grade level are divided into four groups (there are three sections of each grade level). Two of the general education teachers take the two Tier 1 groups of students and provide enrichment activities. One general education teacher and the Math Lab teacher work with the Tier 2 students and the small group of Tier 3 students work with the additional support of the additional teacher.

Based on the information from teachers regarding what the misconceptions for a particular unit are for the students, the teachers look at the priority standards from the previous grade and develop a list of the essential skills that are necessary to master the standard that is being taught. The Tier 2 and 3 groups receive instruction to clarify the misconception and close the gap of understanding while the two groups of Tier 1 students are receiving enrichment activities for the same priority standard.

Math Lab is an additional support program and does not replace the regular classroom instruction for daily mathematics. One of the greatest benefits of Math Lab is the weekly grade level specific meetings that are held in which a multitude of topics are discussed: specific math misconceptions, best teaching practices and how to support each student at the grade level. In John Hattie's book, "Visible Learning," Collective Teacher Efficacy has an effect size of 1.57, which is strongly correlated with student achievement. Through the work of Math Lab, teachers at Pine River Elementary participate in Collective Teacher Efficacy on a weekly basis. This not only affects what occurs in Math Lab, but permeates through all that is done at Pine River Elementary.