



## **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):
- 14 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 3 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 19 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>	0	0	0
<b>1</b>	53	39	92
<b>2</b>	49	55	104
<b>3</b>	50	69	119
<b>4</b>	40	37	77
<b>5</b>	51	52	103
<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>	243	252	495

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 5 % Asian
  - 18 % Black or African American
  - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 70 % White
  - 2 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 16%

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

There have been three boundary changes in the last six years that have caused students to move in and out of our attendance area.

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	49
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	34
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	83
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	513
(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: 9%  
43 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Bosnian, Somali, Arabic, Nepali, Kurundi, Swahili, Spanish, Creoles and Pidgins, Punjabi, Indonesian, Tigrinya, Vietnamese, Chinese, Igbo, Gujarati

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 29%  
Total number students who qualify: 143

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %  
54 Total number of students served

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

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>3</u> Autism                  | <u>8</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>13</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</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: 6
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.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 23:1

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%	97%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

Every Child, Every Day. Helping every student display positive attitude, improve academic performance and position for a promising future.

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

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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When entering Freedom Elementary, visitors quickly notice the Freedom Shrine of United States documents posted on the wall donated by West Fargo Exchange Club. This highlights the importance of our school being named after veterans and being in close proximity to Veteran's Boulevard in the city of West Fargo. Staff, students, parents and visitors quickly recognize the family-style atmosphere that has been developed and the importance of our mascot, the American Flag. In our school, we are known as the Freedom Flyers, and the flag is a symbol of strength that brings our school community together. It symbolizes how our school community is one Freedom family striving to serve, support and care for one another.

Freedom Elementary was built in 2012 in one of the fastest growing cities in North Dakota. We are nestled into a busy southside neighborhood of businesses and multi-unit and single housing. As our school was developed, students and parents worked with staff and administration for months in meetings to design school processes, build relationships, tour the construction site, focus on safe routes to school, develop Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and allowing students to vote and select our mascot. Parent involvement is high with parents providing volunteer support at numerous functions. Over the past six-years, we have gone through three major boundary changes with new schools going up in our southside community. We have established roots with our families and have assisted with successful transitions of our students to different schools as the neighborhoods have grown. Through all of this, we have maintained our consistent high level of expectations and academic rigor. Our student population is diverse, yet we work to develop intervention and enrichment programming to meet our ever-changing student needs. We have implemented Lego League, an accelerated programming for students, along with reading and math interventions to help children with differentiated opportunities. Our free and reduced and English Language population has grown over the years, focusing our attention on how to better help our families and the programming we offer. We welcome parents and community into our school with volunteer opportunities and work to establish partnerships with businesses in our area. We have implemented a welcome back picnic in August to connect our students, parents and staff as one school community.

Our school helps students develop in all aspects of their lives. We have developed numerous strategies to help our students find success academically, physically, emotionally, socially and culturally. Our district works directly with schools to help provide guidance and support with curriculum pacing guides and materials to perform both interventions and enrichment. Our district is a leader in curriculum development and researching 21st Century skills, working with school leadership committees on how we can enhance our own programming based on student data, and teacher reflection of instruction to design customized learning for our students. Our school provides extra academic support through opportunities such as remedial reading (where we tie in Jan Richardson reading approaches); Design Engineering Process with science material to collaborate, build and test projects; local businesses coming to classrooms to instruct Junior Achievement; evening First Lego League opportunities for children to apply the 4Cs of critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration to design and use technology; and Multi-Tiered Support System where we work to define academic and behavioral plans to challenge our students. We also have AmeriCorps Tutoring, Homework Room, Dream Box math computer programming where students can work at school or at home with parents on math standards and concepts, guided reading and differentiated math approaches to provide instruction at the proper level for each student, English Language programming to focus on basic communication skills and academic language proficiency, and a strong Professional Learning Community (PLC) where our teachers meet once a week for an hour to review student data with data walls, design and review instructional goals, research and review strategies, and implement and assess results. Our goal is to provide the best opportunities for our students whether in regular core or receiving support through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

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

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

Instruction in all four core subjects at Freedom Elementary is based on our district's guaranteed, viable curriculum. This curriculum is continuously monitored and improved upon by the district's elementary leadership curriculum teams. The curriculum is focused on research-based instruction and best practices with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as the target. Our English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum is aligned vertically and horizontally ensuring that strategies and skills are built upon each school year. The scope and sequence provided by the district guides classroom instruction in the key comprehension strategies of visualizing, questioning, connecting, inference, analyzing and synthesizing. Teachers gradually release reading strategies and skills to students through the use of both fiction and nonfiction texts. Social Studies (SS) is embedded into the ELA curriculum giving students the opportunity to use the strategies and skills they are taught during ELA instruction to dive into non-fiction texts to learn about specific SS standards. Phonics/word study, academic vocabulary, grammar and writing is also aligned within the scope and sequence to ensure ELA/SS instruction is cohesive and instructional time is maximized. Academic schedules are structured so that each grade level can dedicate specific amounts of time to both whole group and small group ELA/SS instruction on a daily basis. Resources connected to ELA and SS standards are also provided for small group guided reading instruction so that students can continue to work toward proficiency and apply learning at their specific reading level. All Freedom classroom teachers have had extensive training focused on structuring Writer's Workshop in their classrooms, the writing process (prewrite, draft, edit, revise and publish) and specific writing genres including narrative, compare and contrast, opinion with evidence, synthesis, descriptive and expository. Similar to the comprehension skills and strategies mentioned above, teachers also model and gradually release the writing process through think alouds, think together, guided practice and independent practice. In addition to whole group focus lessons, teachers work with students in a small groups and individually using praise and prompt to highlight student writing success and set individual writing goals.

Math curriculum is laid out in a pacing guide format developed by district grade level math committees. Using Everyday Math (EDM) as their resource, teachers introduce and expand on multiple strategies to ensure students understand both the how and the why of mathematics. This understanding includes computation, problem solving, reasoning, justification and modeling. Teachers model and gradually release strategies to students through whole group focus lessons, hands-on activities with manipulatives, math games and small group math instruction. In addition to using the pre-teaching, re-teaching and enrichment activities laid out in the EDM, teachers also use instructional strategies and activities from Add+Vantage Math Recovery (AVMR) training provided by the district to meet the needs of students at all academic levels.

Our science curriculum is divided into a different focus in each of the three trimesters: earth, life or physical science and is implemented throughout the academic year within the math and science block. Through the use of resources such as Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and Engineering is Elementary (EiE), teachers engage students in a hands-on approach to learning scientific concepts. Students focus on real-world scenarios through project/problem-based learning encouraging them to think critically and creatively as well as work collaboratively to hypothesize, experiment and reflect upon different tasks. iPads are incorporated into the PLTW curriculum, providing students with interactive lessons as well as opportunities to create and showcase their learning.

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

All students, grades first through fifth, participate in visual arts at Freedom Elementary for two, thirty minute sessions, every six day rotation. Freedom Elementary's art curriculum is aligned to the National Core Arts Standards, with an emphasis on creating, presenting, responding, and connecting. Instruction is focused on design, expression, and exploration. All students use a variety of art mediums throughout the

year and incorporate the use of iPad technology to aide in their instruction and build student portfolios for sharing and reflection. Students are also provided with sketchbooks, which allows for extra opportunities for creativity and design.

All students, grades first through fifth, participate in music at Freedom Elementary for four, thirty minute sessions, every six day rotation. The music teachers throughout the district took it upon themselves to create the elementary music curriculum based off of the National Standards. Many resources are used in this curriculum, such as Spotlight on Music, MusicPlay, and Quaver Music. The curriculum focuses on the following key areas of learning: PERFORM, CREATE, RESPOND, CONNECT, and ENGAGE. In the area of PERFORM, the key components include understanding music and rehearsing music. Under the area of CREATE, students imagine, plan and make, and evaluate their musical instrument design. Under RESPOND, students will select and analyze, interpret, and evaluate their musical selection in order to gain a better understanding of different musical genres. With CONNECT, students connect the music to personal experiences, history, and cultures and look to identify what helps make up different styles and kinds of music. Finally, when it comes to the ENGAGE aspect, students take part in the entire realm of music, whether it be playing the instruments or reading and singing the notes and words for the songs. All of the lessons and objectives learned throughout the grades here at Freedom Elementary aid in setting up the students for success at the secondary level to pursue further musical interests.

All students, grades first through fifth, have Library and Media Skills for one, thirty minute session, every six day rotation. Freedom's Media Specialist follows the West Fargo Library Media Standards, which is based off the North Dakota state standards for Library Information and Technology, along with tying in grade appropriate ELA state standards into their lessons. Amongst the library and media skills covered are utilizing technology to locate library materials, properly taking care of library materials, different genres of books, and many others. There is also a major emphasis on technology safety, utilizing the district's Common Sense Media/Digital Citizenship lessons. These lessons focus on online safety, like safe websites, password creation, and cyberbullying. These skills that students develop are meant to keep all students up with the growth and changes of the technological community, while helping teach them to make safe and smart choices when using these devices and programs.

All students receive Physical Education for five, thirty minute sessions, every six day rotation. Our physical education staff at Freedom focuses on a sport/activity based curriculum, which emphasizes the basic fundamentals of a sport or activity, while also allowing for the overall play of the activity. Lessons typically go for a two week span and include a simple warm-up activity, a focus lesson for the sport/activity, and finally a length of time for the actual play. All students are assessed through standards, which vary from grade to grade. These focus skills are meant to develop an overall understanding of physical fitness and build life-long skills to live a healthy lifestyle.

All students at Freedom Elementary receive Health for one, thirty minute session, every six day rotation. Instruction is focused on the understanding of the basic functions of the human body, as well as making good choices for social, emotional, physiological, and physical health. This includes playground safety, emergency planning for different scenarios, the effects of drugs on the body, different body systems, etc. "I Can" statements are set up for the beginning of the lessons to help students identify the focus of the lesson and different teaching materials are used to help carry out instruction.

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

Freedom teachers use a variety of instructional methods and techniques to meet student learning needs. Teachers think aloud to explicitly model strategies and skills, making learning visible for their students. Based on teacher observation and formative assessment of student understanding, teachers move to thinking together, guided practice and finally independent practice. Teachers use a variety of strategies to engage students in learning. Frequent partner turn and talks during focus lessons allow students to process, explain and reflect on learning in addition to giving teachers the opportunity to formatively assess student understanding and plan future instruction. In addition, Freedom teachers use Whole Brain Teaching strategies to engage students in learning both verbally and physically.

Freedom classroom teachers and specialists strive to meet the individual academic needs of all students. Classroom teachers have studied and put into practice a number of small group instructional strategies in reading and math. Guided reading instruction is focused and purposeful through the use of Jan Richardson's guided reading lesson plan framework. Several classroom teachers have also been trained in AVMR to help struggling students learn essential math skills in order to close the achievement gap. In addition to the efforts made in the regular education classroom, Freedom also identifies students who would benefit from additional instruction as intervention or enrichment. Freedom's reading specialists meet with students in a small group setting using a variety of research-based methods and district selected resources. English language learners are also instructed in a small group setting using resources and curriculum focused on speaking, listening, reading and writing. Enrichment is offered to qualifying students in the areas of math and reading through the district's Gifted and Talented Education program. Freedom has a number of highly trained special educators to meet the needs and goals identified in student IEPs.

Student growth and achievement is assessed in a variety of ways throughout the school year. In each academic area, teachers use district provided standards-based proficiency scales and rubrics based on standards defined by the state of North Dakota to determine student whether a student is meeting grade level expectation. Teachers use the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) to determine reading level to guide them in selecting texts and instructional focus during small group reading instruction. Assessments included in AVMR training help teachers identify specific skills that need to be addressed during small group math instruction. In addition to these classroom assessments, student learning progress is also monitored throughout the year using standardized assessments such as the North Dakota State Assessment, STAR Reading, STAR Math and AIMS-web Reading and AIMS-web Math. Data gathered through these assessments guides grade level teams in their collaboration during PLC and also helps teachers identify those students that may benefit from the additional supports listed in the paragraph above. Students identified as English learners are also assessed annually to monitor their progress in acquiring academic English in the domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In order to maintain high levels of achievement, Freedom teachers participate in a variety of opportunities to improve instruction and student learning. All teachers observe colleagues and are observed during learning walks, giving teachers the opportunity to receive feedback and reflect on teaching strategies, student learning and engagement. During the 2017-18 school year, teachers recorded a self-selected lesson for the purpose of reflection and personal goal setting. Freedom's instructional coach works with individuals and teams of teachers to plan and reflect on instruction, analyze student work and set goals to improve student learning. All certified staff participates in weekly PLCs focused on student learning and determining next steps to ensure all students are growing academically. Teachers also participate in a number of professional development classes and book studies offered by West Fargo Public Schools.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

We are the Freedom Flyers. In our school, we work hard to support all students to become “High Flyers” by promoting a culture of respect. Our main theme is RICK, which stands for Respect, Inclusion, Compassion, and Kindness. It is a reminder that each one of us is unique and important and that we strive to treat others the way we want to be treated. The RICK philosophy is taught to the students in their classrooms and is used as a point of reference by the administration and staff when students do not make the best choices. The RICK philosophy results in treating each other with dignity, which is at the very heart of our educational process.

Our school implements the CHAMPS program (Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, and Success). It is a proactive and positive approach to classroom management. This program is designed to help teachers provide structure in their classrooms that will promote positive behaviors, to teach students how to behave responsibly, to focus more attention and energy on acknowledging responsible behaviors, and to be sure all respond in a calm and consistent manner.

Other things done around the school include the Golden Fork Award (cleanest lunch group), “I Got Flagged” awards and RICK Brick Award (daily positive behavior support plan), Fantastic Flyer Award (monthly positive behavior support plan), and finally the Trimester Award, where each teacher nominates up to three students from their class who exhibit outstanding behavior, attitude, academic performance, and overall improvement.

In the area of emotional needs, students at Freedom have access to the school counselor at any time. The counselor meets with students on an individual basis or in a group. There is a referral process in place so student are able to ask for assistance in a confidential way. Parents, teachers, or administrators can also refer students to the counselor. Second Step, a social-emotional curriculum that is research-based and follows the standards of the American Counseling Association, is taught at all grade levels by the school counselor in bi-weekly Group Guidance classes.

Our staff at Freedom is like a close-knit family. We have a Sunshine Committee that attends to the various events (funerals, weddings, etc.) of the entire staff. This allows us a formal and organized way to show support to our colleagues. We also host various gatherings in the community to get to know one another out of the educational setting. We hold a staff family picnic at the start of school to catch up and to once again feel the comfort and support of our Freedom Family before another academic year begins.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Our PTA provides an organized structure for our staff and parents to connect and become involved in the daily activities at Freedom. Yearly elections are held that give all parents the opportunity to share their leadership skills to support all children or to become involved in this active organization. Shortly before school starts, our PTA hosts a family picnic. All are welcome to enjoy a meal, visit with friends, and enjoy and night of music and games to kick off the school year. The PTA meets monthly throughout the year to discuss ways to support the educational process in our school. Parents, teachers, and students attend the meetings and various grade levels report on what the focus of study each grade level might be. The PTA also provides financial support for grade level field trips or other items needed by teachers. During parent-teacher conferences, they graciously provide meals for the teachers who would otherwise not have the opportunity to eat lunch, they help to organize and implement our annual fundraiser, members offer their volunteer assistance at various school events, the group helps celebrate staff members during American Education Week and for National Teacher Day, they organize and publish our yearbook annually, and provide snacks for various events in our school. Our families enjoy the various events sponsored by the PTA including Family Movie Night, Turkey Bingo, Games Galore Family Night, and the Veteran’s Walk.

Our parents provide a positive example of RICK to all of our staff and students. They are an integral part in supporting the entire faculty and all of the students.

Another way we connect with the community is through the support of Cass County Social Services. They provide training to our staff every two years so we know, understand, and implement all of the procedures and regulations to keep our students safe, happy, and healthy. Every November, our school takes part in FILL THE DOME. This is an activity that allows us to collect non-perishable food items to share with community agencies. This food eventually is passed on to those in need in our community. Our local Exchange Club is very supportive of our school. They provided extra snacks, winter wear, and other clothing items to our students in need. This service brings a smile to the faces of many children who don't have to be without these necessary items. Some local churches reach out to us to provide holiday gifts for needy families. They also send us money to purchase milk for snack breaks for needy students. They donate gently used clothing items that they no longer need. We have partnered with a large wholesale store that is in close vicinity to us. They have offered discounts to our staff and families. In return, our school received various school supply items as their generous donation to our school community. We have joined with several local veteran organizations to help promote the respect for our country, our veterans, our flag and our freedom. They have provided funds to send care packages of items collected by our families to veterans overseas. Groups of veterans have given flag etiquette presentations to our students. Also, they have supported our annual Veteran's Walk, a family event to support a survivor of heroes retreat. Another way we are involved with the community is through the support of a local implement dealership. They sponsor LEGO LEAGUE, a club that builds on the 4 C's of communication, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. We reach out to our parents of Freedom Flyers and offer them ways to become involved in our school. Many volunteer daily as lunchroom helpers and guide and assist students in the process of navigating the lunch and recess break. We also have an adult with multiple handicaps that come to volunteer in our school. She and her caretaker work on various clerical tasks in our school work area. We recently hosted a large benefit for one of our Freedom Flyers diagnosed with brain cancer. Our Freedom Family helped serve a meal, run a silent auction, and hosted carnival games for the entire community, showing the family spirit that is important to all of us. Providing opportunities for family and parent involvement with our students is a great source of pride for everybody. It allows the students to feel a sense of pride when the family and educational system come together to support them. It gives them the feeling of safety and security, two basic needs that positively influence both their academic and their emotional growth. One of the most effective ways we reach out to the community is through our on-line newsletter, website, Parent Portal, Seesaw, and Facebook page. The technology at Freedom has been a huge asset in keeping us connected with our stakeholders. Keeping parents informed has a very positive effect on their children in and out of school.

We work closely with other schools in the district to help our students transition to the middle school as well as helping kindergarten students to transition to us. We also host the bands, choirs, orchestras, and other clubs and groups from the schools to play for our students, providing them with the exposure necessary to choose to participate in those programs in the future.

The North Dakota Oral Health Program has worked with students at Freedom on the importance of dental hygiene. We have partnered with the Dakota Medical Foundation, Sanford FIT, and Schools Alive in the areas of health and wellness. We have connected with the business community through the Junior Achievement Program.

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

As a school, Freedom Elementary has made it a priority to provide staff with the professional development opportunities that they desire. Our Instructional Coach is a huge component of working with staff members and grade level teams to provide feedback regarding instruction. Our Instructional Coach meets with staff weekly and monthly. Our Coach serves as a mentor for all new staff that are working in their first three years in the district. The Instructional Coach's primary role is to hold those reflection discussions and also serve as a "go to" person when it comes to modeling a lesson or wanting to learn about the specific outcomes for a lesson.

Other opportunities that take place for Professional Development at Freedom include Learning Walks and POWER times. During a Learning Walk, staff get to step out of their own classroom and see what other teachers are doing. This can range from teaching practices, incorporating technology in a new way, or best teaching practices in the presentation of a lesson and engaging students. Another opportunity for feedback takes place during POWER times that the district assigns throughout the year. POWER stands for Principals Observing Work Engaged Rooms. Led by district curriculum leaders, this time brings together teachers and administrators throughout the district. The participants observe and give feedback for all staff.

Freedom Elementary's administrator performs both formal and informal walkthroughs in the classrooms. Utilizing the Charlotte Danielson domains, all staff members are assessed in the areas of Planning and Preparation, The Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Staff members are provided feedback in these areas and create goals that align to all four areas that will help all students grow.

Our administrator works closely with Valley City State University and their teaching program to bring in future educators and aspiring teachers into our school and utilize them in the classrooms. Their time in the rooms then frees up the classroom teachers to meet with their teams and plan for future instructional times or look at student data with their team members. The coverage by the VCSU students also opens up extra time slots for staff members to bring in parents to meet and discuss their students' academic growth and how to best meet their needs.

The district offers a menu of courses for teachers to grow professionally. These courses include opportunities for technology integration, instructional strategies and practices, student engagement techniques, book studies, mental health/trauma training for our students, etc. Staff members are able to choose an area that interests them the most and take those courses for credits.

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

Freedom's leadership philosophy is the core of how we educate today's learners for tomorrow's world. Being a newer school, we researched and developed our vision and operational framework with emphasis on serving, supporting and caring for each other and our students. We believe that every staff member plays a pivotal part in collaborating, learning, and teaching others. Everyone is a leader in his/her own way and inspires others by sharing his/her talents. Our vision of Every Child Every Day guides us to build a caring culture by providing guiding principles, values and operational framework for every interaction between students and adults, and among all adults in the system. We have designed a philosophy of no drama at our school, but instead we are professional problem-solvers who can tackle with confidence what comes our way. When something needs to be done, everyone chips in and helps by sharing ideas, brainstorming pathways to success, and functioning as a productive team.

We have a leadership team that meets consistently with the principal representing all grade levels and departments. The focus is on communication and problem-solving to enhance school culture and instruction. These individuals also serve as Professional Learning Community (PLC) leaders with their teams to answer questions of what do we want to do if students are struggling, how will we know they have learned it, etc. Our growth mindset is to work together for the betterment of student learning and to build the capacity to learn as instructors to deliver engaged and well-thought out instruction that meets the needs of each student. During Professional Learning Community times, scheduled every Wednesday from 3:00-4:00pm, our teams work together to discuss student Tier 1-3 intervention and enrichment needs, design instruction driven by data as outlined on pacing guides, and use data walls designated with student picture cards to show student growth based on meeting learning targets. We also provide area colleges opportunities to send licensed students to practice teaching techniques in classrooms to free up Freedom staff to collaborate and perform data digs with our principal, learning walks where we video tape our

classroom instruction and provide feedback to each other using the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool (ELEOT), and staff leading within their own classrooms and on teams based on the skill sets they have developed. These teams consist of district curriculum committees researching resources and designing pacing guides, AdvancED to work on school learning and climate goals with emphasis on parent involvement and student social/emotional needs, and Positive Behavior Support Intervention (PBIS) team that helps gather feedback and input from staff and students on how we set our Tier I level of expectations for learning and behavior.

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

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At Freedom Elementary, we believe in our Pathways to Success to help develop the whole child. Freedom faculty is ‘all in’ so that every adult and every student counts in a major way developing good relationships built on mutual respect, caring, trust and high expectations. We believe that building a caring culture provides guiding principles, values and operational framework for every interaction. We believe that the little things we do every day add up to create the whole and our students need to know we are committed to understanding them as individuals and caring about their personal circumstances in order to improve academically. The focus is helping every student display positive attitudes, improve their academic performance and position themselves for a promising future.

Freedom teachers are committed to following timelines laid out by the district within their pacing guides focusing on the guaranteed and viable curriculum. Our staff believes in working through the daily standards and curriculum using it like a road map. We envision ourselves driving down the path knowing that there are days we can go faster or slower depending on reflection of how lessons were understood by our students, but meeting the timelines to ensure coverage of material. We go off road when needed to provide more differentiation of enrichment or intervention, but we steer ourselves by staying true to the path and direction through commitment to the process. By doing so, we can evaluate our effectiveness of how we delivered the content, reflect on student progress using data to drive instruction, and work collaboratively as a staff to make effective changes to our delivery methods. Staff work effectively through the PLCs weekly to discuss, research, plan, assess, and develop instructional lessons that will challenge and meet the various learning levels of our students. Data walls are developed where each student has an individual card with their picture and goals listed and teachers slide the card around when discussing progress on specific learning targets. This ensures that each child is noticed with a face to a name and personalized to be connected to their teachers. As students grow within the goals laid out, determination is made through formal and informal assessments whether the curriculum has met their needs and what changes must occur within their programming. Having all teachers believe and follow the guaranteed viable curriculum allows rich discussion of what is working, what needs to be altered, and the data to back it up.