

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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	10	12	22
1	8	12	20
2	10	16	26
3	10	5	15
4	11	10	21
5	6	11	17
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	55	66	121

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 89 % White
 - 6 % 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: 21%

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

The largest employers in our school district beyond the school, are mining, two hydroelectric plants, and US Border Patrol. All three industries are prone to staff turn-over and transfers. Currently, the two hydro facilities are under re-licensing and bring in contractors to complete work, who then bring along their families short-term. In addition, a low rental options bring in families in poverty short-term, and then they transfer out.

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	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	26
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	121
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.21
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	21

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: 67 %
Total number students who qualify: 81

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %
20 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>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>4</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>3</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: 7
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	6
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	93%	92%	90%	92%	92%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Educating the whole child in a continuously improving system, with a focus on high standards, a positive climate, and a growth mentality.

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

Selkirk Elementary is the only elementary school in the school district. However, in Washington, students in neighboring districts may "choice in" to another district. Selkirk Elementary has two "choice in" students this year. If space is available in the class, students are generally accepted in.

PART III – SUMMARY

Selkirk Elementary School, the only elementary in the Selkirk Consolidated School District, houses approximately 120 students in grades K-5. Selkirk is a K-12 public school district serving the three small, rural communities of Ione, Metaline, and Metaline Falls in the northeastern corner of Washington State. The district has been consolidated since 1963 and draws its 250 students from approximately 700 square miles. Nestled in a valley of the Selkirk Mountains, bordered to the north by Canada, to the east by Idaho, and with the Pend Oreille River running its length, the area abounds in scenic beauty. Outdoor activities include hunting, fishing, hiking, and water and snow sports. In addition to school programs, drama and art interests are enhanced through a partnership with our local community theater, housed in an old 1912 brick school building. The economy centers around natural resource extraction (mining, logging, hydroelectricity) and the nearest urban center, Spokane, is approximately 90 miles to the south.

The people of Selkirk are justifiably proud of their schools with a long history of strong community support for school levies. Community support for children can also be seen in the high level non-school youth programs including 4-H, youth sports, youth drama and arts programs, scouts, and church youth groups that survive on volunteerism. Parent and community volunteers also participate in music, art, science, technology, and AVID classes. Some volunteers are in the school weekly while others participate for specific lessons or units. Either way, the Selkirk community's focus on education and youth translates into support for a variety of programs across content areas.

Currently over 50% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch services but while families in this small, rural district experience high levels of unemployment and poverty, student performance on state assessments rival that of more affluent districts and are generally all above the state average. The school culture is one of high expectations. One advantage of our small population is that it allows us to focus on educating the whole child; students do not easily slip through the cracks to anonymity. Dedication is high with teachers coming early and staying late to develop relevant educational experiences even though there are no extended contracts. Teachers are simply paid the state allocation in terms of salary. Our community cannot support with local levy funds those extra contracts that more affluent districts are able to offer. Certainly, many of our teachers are highly skilled and would be hired quickly if they chose to leave but they value the environment of a small, rural community. The district reaps the benefit of their commitment to education.

Beginning in the mid 1990's our district began looking at student achievement through the lenses of data available to us. At that time, students in grades K-5 were below the 35th percentile on the California Test of Basic Skills. Our journey began at that time, with scores significantly below state and national averages and evolved over many years. Fast forward to today when Selkirk Elementary scores exceed state averages as well as many districts, large and small across the state. Throughout that journey shared by many staff who still work here today, science provided the tools to help us; the science of data, science of poverty, science of child development, science of curriculum effectiveness, and the science of teaching and leadership all driven by unfailing belief that we could make a difference. We are far from a finished product and with an average performance of our student groups ranging from 73%-77% meeting standards in reading, math, and combined scores, we still have much work to do. While our process could likely be replicated in another small school, the tools and strategies may not make the same impact in a large district. However, in the approximately 36% of the school districts nation-wide considered small (populations 599 or less), and slightly higher in Washington State, our processes could be replicated.

The "formula" used at Selkirk Elementary could be summarized as continuous improvement in a positive climate for both students and staff. This drives the review of curriculum, instructional tools, and relationship-building strategies. Teachers are tasked with understanding the adopted standards, currently Common Core, and then moving students toward mastery. The focus is on teaching students where they are, utilizing the resources available (curriculum, support, family, etc.) toward the goal of achieving the standard. There is a strong tradition of hiring "the right fit", with an emphasis on introspective, mission-oriented teachers with a growth mindset and high level of personal responsibility, who have a desire to live in small community. We look for teachers and administrators who have an appreciation for "out-of-the-box"

thinking when looking at obstacles. We have even left positions unfilled rather than hire a bad fit. These combined approaches have resulted in a high achieving school.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

What seems more important than a specific curriculum which has changed often over the past 30 years is actually understanding the standards and then either finding or adapting the most effective materials to help students meet those targets, building relationships, and creating engaging learning environments. Standards-based report cards also keep the focus.

Math: Engage NY/Eureka Math (1-4), Ready Math (K), Summit (5), and strategies incorporating number talks and Youcubed.org curriculum. The underlying principle of developing number sense and rigorous application is used to guide lessons and what drove the consideration of Engage NY/Eureka Math. All K-5 teachers attended number talk workshops with teachers in grades 3-5 participating in an extended workshop with Jo Boaler from Stanford. The fifth grade teacher who was part of the Washington State Math Fellows cadre worked throughout the year with K-2 staff. Engage NY/Eureka Math proved difficult in kindergarten especially for a first year teacher, so we moved to Ready Math, aligned with the Common Core standards as a base curriculum. It is more teacher-friendly, but lacks rigor and the hands-on number sense activities, so the teacher supplements. Fifth grade recently began using a free curriculum from Summit. Summit is funded by Mark Zuckerberg, but with math curriculum vetted by the same Stanford math department developing number talks. The curriculum is part of a Fifth grade through Algebra II curriculum that will allow students to self-pace and accelerate. As a small school district with a single class per grade, acceleration in middle and high school is complex. Using Summit would allow a student to accelerate content (i.e., Algebra in 8th grade) while not being bumped out of sequence with peers.

Reading: Our goal is that students read at grade level no later than the end of third grade. A guided reading approach is used in grades K-3, with a strong emphasis on phonics and “heart” words in kindergarten and first grade. By the end of kindergarten, traditionally 80% of students are reading in leveled readers (Level .4 and higher). Reading is the primary focus of the early grades with interventions targeted for those struggling. DRA assessments and progress monitoring help teachers identify student levels and develop intervention plans throughout the year. Fourth grade uses Good Habits, Great Readers while Fifth grade uses primarily trade books. All grades supplement with online resources.

Science: Building Blocks of Science and Engineering is Elementary kits are used in grades K-5. Fifth grade experiences the first formal assessment in science on Next Generation standards, however, each grade has a minimum of four science units. Science content is developed into themes with reading and writing activities interwoven. For example, fifth graders put on an Invention Convention during an engineering unit. Students design an invention, develop posters, business cards, and brochures and then grades K-4 tour the convention. After making electronic devices in the fourth grade unit on electricity and magnets, students tour a local hydro-electric plant. During the third grade amphibians and reptiles unit, students design “frog traps” and then take a field trip to a nearby pond to catch tadpoles and frogs. A local biologist also provides information regarding pond life. First graders chart the progress of a fertilized egg in a science journal and watch as eggs hatch in an incubator while learning about living things. Each teacher strives to integrate reading and writing into science content, thus creating theme. Strengthening the content with other curriculum areas gives depth to the unit and incorporating local activities and volunteers gives students tools to make sense of the world and community we live in.

Social Studies: Washington State has designated concepts for grade levels. Similar to science, teachers in K-5 have developed themes with their grade-level social studies content at the heart but also infuse reading, writing, activities, and field trips. For example, third grade students culminate their historical figures unit with a "wax" museum, second graders build replicas of community buildings in their community units, and fifth graders create a Native American museum. The museum incorporates art (pottery and weaving), music (dance), oral storytelling, nutrition (traditional foods), history (creating replicas of dwellings), and writing (reports). Students in grades K-4 then experience the museum as a culminating event.

These are examples of how our curriculum is personalized by teachers but with a focus on the adopted

standards, currently those delineated in the Common Core and Washington State Learning Standards. Again, over the years curriculum has changed, but focusing on standards and finding ways to help students meet them has been a guiding principle.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at Selkirk Elementary experience music 25-30 minutes per day with instruments introduced at each grade level. The complete K-5 music class continuum includes vocal, instruments, rhythm, composition, and music theory. Research has shown a correlation between music and math, specifically spatial reasoning. In 2017, the music teacher began introducing drums and patterning to kindergartners. Research from the UK has shown that children who lacked executive functioning or have experienced trauma (both common in poverty), often respond when the primitive brain needs are addressed first. An intervention identified specifically was teaching drumming and patterns. This is an example of staff looking at the science of learning and integrating that into curriculum and effective teaching strategies.

Drama and performance are integrated into each grade from kindergarten puppet shows to first grade chicken plays, third grade magic shows, and fifth grade history re-enactments. Performing arts gives students the opportunity for creative expression and helps build confidence.

Physical education is taught by the classroom teacher. In addition to organized games, students in grades 1-5 cross country ski (ski equipment was purchased in 1996) during winter months, take short walks/hikes, learn Zumba from a community member, and take daily brain breaks (Go Noodle or Brain Gym). Health curriculum is taught by the classroom teacher, but supplemented by the school nurse and from Washington State University's (WSU) Extension Office. Once a month, WSU staff share nutrition lessons (Food Sense) with students in grades K-5. Using levy funds, the school district provides a daily fruit/vegetable snack for K-5 students. Parents provide the other snack so that students get two nutrition breaks per day in addition to a healthy breakfast and lunch program. Our lunch program is featured in a video on our website (www.selkirkschools.org). Good nutrition helps students focus and young brains grow.

Utilizing classroom teachers and community volunteers, students in K-5 learn keyboarding, basic word-processing skills, MS Publisher, and MS PowerPoint, and Google apps. Once a week, a volunteer teaches basic coding skills to grades 3-5. Coding is approached as a problem-solving activity using Code.org. Content areas are also enhanced with technology. In addition to the 1:1 iPads in grades 2-5, curriculum resources such as IXL and Dreambox, both of which can be accessed at school or home, are used to enhance ELA and math skills. Students are engaged with 1:1 technology and more apt to complete basic skills drills embedded in a technology activity. Just like repetition in physical activities builds muscle memory, repetition in basic skills in a fun, engaging platform, builds academic strength. Technology helps teachers put excitement and wonder back into learning.

After primitive brain needs are met, limbic needs usually are the next barrier on the highway to learning. Basic emotional needs and socio-emotional learning tools are important for student health and success. Children whose emotional needs are not met will have difficulties learning and navigating social situations. A school psychologist/counselor is on staff three days per week at Selkirk Elementary. Specialists teach Second Steps curriculum weekly to K-5 classes, often customizing lessons based on class need. For example, for a group with significant peer issues at recess, the psychologist might develop role play scenarios similar to those identified by the teacher or recess person. Counseling provided can be informal based on a short-term need (two kids arguing at recess) or a more formalized weekly meeting that deals with trauma or teaching specific social skills. Additionally, discipline situations are initially approached by the principal as problem-solving situations. More significant consequences may be implemented after that approach has been exhausted.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Selkirk Elementary operates a Title 1 Schoolwide program which provides short- or long-term academic interventions to any child in K-5. The Schoolwide program also results in smaller class sizes allowing

teachers to personalize instruction, develop relationships to meet students' needs, and differentiate instruction more readily. Professional development is extended to all teachers and paraeducators in the building which creates a uniform approach. Smaller class sizes, services for all, and the philosophy that this is a team effort, contributes to collaboration on student success.

Perhaps some of the more unique initiatives, although by no means exclusive to our small school, include iPads in grades K-5, AVID Elementary, guided reading, and Whole-Brain Teaching strategies (Chris Biffle). These strategies help students engage, take ownership of their learning, and build a growth mindset, a critical component of developing perseverance and grit.

When teachers know their standards and students, it allows flexibility and creativity in teaching strategies. One example of a teacher finding a strategy that fits with their personality but aligns with the building vision is the kindergarten teacher who began implementing Whole Brain Teaching strategies in 2016-17. It has since expanded to other grades, but this approach created a continuously rewarding, no-failure classroom. Movement and joy are infused alongside academics and character education. The result is an excellent introduction to the concepts of high academic achievement, growth mentality, and personal responsibility.

Technology is infused in every grade, used as a motivator, instructional tool, and to increase practice. In 2011, iPods were introduced into second grade (and have since moved to iPads handed down from the high school) as a way to increase motivation, reinforce basic skills, and increase reading fluency. The concept was adapted from an Apple research project implemented with third graders in Oregon. The devices were used for students to record themselves reading. Students were taught to listen to themselves in terms of fluency, marking errors, and charting progress. In addition, math games were loaded as reward time which resulted in students completing 100's more repetition of basic skills over those that would have been completed with a worksheet. For example, when using the Jungle Time app, students had to quickly pick a digital time from an analog depiction or on another level, set an analog clock to the digital time shown. Because of the game-based nature, students could complete 20-30 of those math problems in a few minutes where a work sheet of 10 would have been met with groans. Technology made drills fun and left the bulk of math instruction to focus on number sense and problem-solving.

Multiple assessment data is used to guide practices and inform instruction including data from the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA), interim SBA assessments, Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2), running records, STAR, and curriculum-based measures. Report cards are standards-based and teachers track student progress each trimester. Data is analyzed annually from the SBA, but during the year, teachers meet to discuss other data, such as a K-2 meeting regarding reading levels compared to previous years in an effort to make course corrections if needed. These meetings have been especially useful as new educators come onboard to replace retiring teachers.

While considered a high performing school, we still feel there is much work to do. The inherent understanding that lesson planning is never a finished product but constantly evolving based on standards, teaching strategies, science of new data, or the group of students in the class, helps staff accept that this process is a journey, not a destination. While that may seem like a platitude, accepting that the only constant in teaching is going to be change helps staff embrace the uncertainty and unknown, and develop a growth mentality about themselves and students, rather than fight against what at times seems overwhelming. Over the past 30 years the culture has changed, standards have changed, assessment, curriculum, and tools are continuously updated. These are the variables that drive many educators out of the field. However, once the concept of continuous improvement is accepted, there is a paradigm shift. The constant variables no longer seem overwhelming, but are approached instead as a challenge or puzzle. That paradigm shift is crucial in building a high performing school.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Supporting the whole child, especially those in poverty, is key to helping students achieve success. It is unusual for a district our size to hire a full-time school psychologist, but our administration dedicated the resources valuing the added benefits of whole-class instruction in programs like Second Steps and individual counseling for students dealing with stressors in their lives. Investment has also been made in professional development for all staff on the impacts of poverty and trauma on students as well as on brain science and how it applies to learning.

Character education implemented alongside problem-solving based school discipline is likely another key to our success. Behavior is taught as another subject area rather than dealt with strictly as discipline. The customized character education program highlights nine character traits, one per month. Students are encouraged to practice the trait and any adult noticing may write out a positive note. Students earning positive notes (almost 100% each month) sign a poster and then receive a character trait bracelet (charm, necklace, etc.) at the end of the month assembly. While this might seem like a superficial approach to recognizing students, our goal is for every student to practice the character trait at least one time per month. The theory is the more they practice, the more students may internalize. These words are often used in initial disciplinary discussions where the principal may ask how the student's behavior either illustrates or violates a building character word. There is no particular significance to these words other than the concepts exemplify traits we think successful adults need. The words highlighted by Selkirk Elementary, developed with staff and parents, are: respect, imagination, effort, attitude, teamwork, integrity, enthusiasm, leadership, and friendship. While these are perhaps big concepts for 5-11 year-olds to understand, we hope that when they walk out of our building after six years, they have internalized these traits.

The expectation regarding behavior is that students (and adults) take responsibility for their actions and words. That may mean as adults we need to apologize also. While children are learning and sometimes need a nudge or two in the right direction, they don't generally disappoint. When they do, it is our job to help them make better choices. The understanding that there are caring adults, willing to admit mistakes, dedicated to helping them take care of emotional and physical needs gives students a sense of safety that promotes student success.

Selkirk Elementary qualified with only 41% direct certified students, just barely over the threshold of 40% for a Community Eligibility Program, however, the school board adopted the program allowing 100% of the students to eat breakfast and lunch free. Because the qualifying percentage is so low, only 68% of the meals are reimbursed fully, but the advantage to all students has been to reduce the stigma of qualifying for reduced meals or the drama of too many charged meals. The lunch program is moving toward scratch cooking with a full option of cut fresh fruits and vegetables each day in addition to the entree. Again, this is supported through levy funds and authorized by the school board to ensure that all students have quality meals throughout the school day.

Educators, like students, also need support to be successful, not only from administration, but from each other. In our small school there is a feeling of family and caring. Life events are shared and relationships build organically over shared interests. The expectation of mutual respect between adult and child is also an observable culture between adults. There is open communication and an open door policy between all staff (administrators, teachers, paraeducators, volunteers, etc.) with the goal of problem-solving. Everyone is seen as having value and knowledge to share regardless of title. In our culture of continuous improvement, suggestions regarding changes or new ideas are expected and not felt as criticism. While the norm is to continually strive for improvement, pushing students and staff to grow, it is not a sense of competition that builds, but a feeling of safety regarding risks and collaboration that begins to permeate interactions. If adults don't model mutual respect and the belief in the "power of yet", then we can hardly expect students to do so.

The culture in our building may be one of the most notable contributors to our success. Our belief is that creating a safe, nurturing environment with high expectations in behavior and academics, applied to adults and children, fosters growth and success.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parent/Teacher conferences are well attended with 100% of parents making contact in person or by phone each trimester. The school services families from three different towns with the population center in a different town than the physical elementary building. At least one night of parent/teacher conferences is housed in the southernmost town's community center to limit travel for parents. School staff work to meet both student and family needs while enjoying the support of the community in return. Parents are viewed as vital partners in their child's education.

As in many Title 1 Schoolwide programs, Selkirk Elementary incorporates Family Nights. Twice a year, these events encourage parents to interact with students. Parents gain tools and awareness of curriculum and strategies. Attendance ranges from 65 to over 140 and education staff create engaging centers for parents and students. The evenings also incorporate community partners. Donny O's is on site to make fresh bags of little cinnamon-sugared donuts for Pumpkin Math Night each fall and the Nu-Vu movie theater donated bags of popcorn for a "college" snack during College and Career night in the spring. North Pend Oreille County First Book provides a free book for every child while the Parents As Teachers and ECEAP programs host a center for the preschool crowd.

The partnership between the communities and school is probably not unique to small, rural areas, but ours has resulted in students seeing adults from the community in the school in a variety of roles. The community takes ownership of the school by supporting levies and other initiatives. Volunteers include those teaching coding to students in grades K-5, US Border Patrol agents reading with students weekly, the county sheriff participating in Dr. Seuss' birthday celebrations, art programs, veterans interacting with third graders during November, members of the hydro-electric plants volunteering to share their expertise in science, and a retired extension office volunteer who helps students plant and harvest a garden. These efforts are coupled with: a locally created Selkirk Humanities Foundation that pays for students to attend cultural events in Spokane, the Cutter Theatre sponsoring humanities events in our area, the local food bank supplying Weekend Backpacks for students who need food on non-school days, a local businesses who takes employee collections for school supplies, as well as countless individuals who donate resources and time to our school and students.

These wraparound supports give our students a sense that they matter. Self-confidence and self-worth contribute immeasurably to student success.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development opportunities are offered to both certified and classified staff to develop building-wide approaches to learning. Title I funds have been used to send teachers to Elementary AVID training and resources, including competitive grants have been used for training to keep abreast of new learning theories and strategies. All K-5 teachers attended training from Stanford's Jo Boaler on the topic of number talks and building number sense and three teachers have joined the state Fellows programs in science, math, and ELA. As a small rural district, however, finding professional development time that did not reduce time in the classroom for teachers, was challenging. While teachers and paraeducators often gave up weeks in the summer to attend training, the district struggled to pay for additional professional development time that more affluent districts seemed to have access to.

In 2017-18, the district launched a 4-day school week designed to increase student and staff attendance, minimize disruption to educational time, attract a quality workforce, and provide 15 full days of paid professional development time for all staff (classified and certified). While students attend 150 days of school (with slightly longer days), teachers and paraeducators work 165 days. Those other 15 days are used for collaboration and professional development. The state allows creativity with charter schools and online programs, but waivers for brick and mortar K-12 programs are limited to only five school districts.

For nine years, only two districts opted for the modified schedule with the purposes of saving funds. Selkirk adopted the approach, not to save money, but to improve the educational program. Teachers still work the same amount of hours as a five day week program, but in a different configuration. This unique thinking is just one example of how the school district created solutions where others may have seen obstacles.

The professional development and collaboration time in the areas of building safety, reading, math, writing, student collaboration, etc. has provided immense opportunities. No longer do we need to carve out time on one of our three rare collaboration days to fit in five topics, each topic or need can now be allocated sufficient time during one of the 15 training days. Teachers report more job satisfaction on the new schedule. With a three day weekend almost every week, teachers can fit in quality family time while still meeting demands of the job. When paraeducators are included in building meetings and training, they feel better able to contribute to building initiatives and are more prepared for the roles assigned.

In addition to professional development opportunities for staff and meeting the needs of families (who wanted more time with children or needed a day for appointments and shopping in nearest urban center 90 miles away), the 4-day week created a positive work environment and that reputation is spreading. We now find ourselves with prospective candidates contacting the school for employment opportunities. The pool is still not as deep as urban districts find, but we have been able to find a good fit for each opening so far. The enthusiasm and professional preparation of the new employees has added depth to a small district that would have been left with unfilled positions in the past.

4. School Leadership:

Selkirk Elementary School's "principal" is actually the superintendent of the K-12 district. The principal relies heavily on teachers to use a problem-solving approach to discipline and character education as a first tier intervention. The school psychologist assists with interventions on issues that extend outside of the classroom and paraeducators are valuable partners in developing positive interventions with students. As a small school staff, everyone works together creating a unified culture with the attitude that we are ALL responsible for the whole child. If an adult walks past a student in need or someone is spotted misbehaving, the adult stops to intervene. The message students receive is that they are important and there are always helpers around.

The guiding philosophy is that our school (and everyone in it) needs to be in a state of continuous improvement while focusing on high standards for students, both in character and academics. A positive, collaborative environment for students and staff is necessary to promote risk-taking and foster a growth mentality. Obstacles are seen as problems to solve rather than discouraging barriers. The building administrator reinforces this philosophy with the questions asked, behavior modeled, and resources allocated.

While the building administrator functions as a cheerleader reinforcing the philosophy and direction, the entire staff rises to the challenge of the problem-solving work. Veteran teachers become teacher-leaders and all staff work to create a caring environment for students. Adults use each other, regardless of title, to help brainstorm solutions to an issue that is challenging them. Success is celebrated in many ways, but one simple illustration of celebrating student success while keeping an eye on achievement data is a regional school ranking list by grade level, similar to a sports rank.

In 2016-17, out of 13 area school districts Selkirk Elementary grades 3, 4, and 5 ranked number one in six out of seven possible cells. Scores exceed state average in all seven areas (3rd, 4th, 5th grade math and ELA, and 5th science) and were higher than many of the 295 school districts across the state. If this were an athletic contest, we would receive banners and accolades. As an academic ranking, these charts are often seen as "bragging" by other districts. However, this information gives staff and our community confidence that our schools are effective. Success breeds more success and new barriers become mere challenges that staff are confident can be addressed. Teacher and student confidence is an important element in a high performing school.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Our educational philosophy mirrors many schools around our state and across the country: a focus on continuous school improvement while striving to help students meet high standards of learning in a positive climate. Those districts are on the right track and should be commended. There is not a magic tool and, indeed, we cannot point to one curriculum or strategy that could be easily marketed or used to replicate in isolation our successes except, perhaps, that we have an unfailing belief in ourselves and our students, which, in short can be summed up as “growth mentality.” We have a shared belief that under an umbrella of continuous improvement, teaching is an art that requires science to develop.

There are many disadvantages in a small, rural district including high poverty, if not always in income, often in attitudes or culture; lack of resources; a digital and cultural divide; and educational policy makers who build plans for the needs of the many in urban settings, often inadvertently developing programs and requirements that do not function in small settings. However, there is also great potential for small schools to effect change quickly around a shared vision. The advantage of timeliness, the understanding that the power of change can be harnessed and need not sweep away everything in its current, that we are stronger together and more than the sum of our parts, along with an appreciation that teaching is an amazing journey, has likely propelled Selkirk Elementary School’s success.