U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Aurora Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5085 10Th Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

JBER   AK   99506-1199
City   State   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Anchorage Municipality

Telephone (907) 742-0300   Fax (907) 742-0322

Web site/URL https://aurora.asdk12.org   E-mail walker_anna@asdk12.org

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

_____Date_____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr Deena Bishop
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)   E-mail bishop_deena@asdk12.org

District Name Anchorage School District   Tel.   (907) 742-4000
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 Ms. Starr Marsett
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

_____Date_____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.

2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.

3. 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.

4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.

5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.

6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.

7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district
   (per district designation):

   65 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   10 Middle/Junior high schools
   9 High schools
   1 K-12 schools

   85 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
   [X] Suburban
   [ ] Rural or small city/town

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	20	17	37
1	17	13	30
2	18	15	33
3	8	16	24
4	13	9	22
5	11	5	16
6	6	10	16
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	93	85	178

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school (if unknown, estimate):   3 % Asian
                                          8 % Black or African American
                                          25 % Hispanic or Latino
                                          2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                          48 % White
                                          12 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 24%

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

24%   Aurora Elementary is located on a military base and serve military families who move on the average every 3 years.

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 *to* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	18
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	33
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	51
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	209
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.24
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	24

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 5 %
                                                       9 Total number ELL

    Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
     Spanish, Japanese, Filipino and Chinese.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 35 %
            Total number students who qualify: 62

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %

        21 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.

1 Autism	0 Multiple Disabilities
0 Deafness	0 Orthopedic Impairment
0 Deaf-Blindness	5 Other Health Impaired
2 Developmental Delay	4 Specific Learning Disability
0 Emotional Disturbance	8 Speech or Language Impairment
1 Hearing Impairment	0 Traumatic Brain Injury
0 Intellectual Disability	0 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.	9
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	95%	97%	97%	97%	97%
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 2018.

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 X   No

    If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2013

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

Aurora Elementary is a culturally responsive school, fostering a climate for respect for all students, parents and staff. Serving our military families is first and foremost for our staff. We work closely with our families to ease transitions for the children of our military professionals. Professionally sound and appropriate learning experiences are provided to meet each student's abilities. We proudly serve the families of those that serve our country.

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

SUMMARY

Soar to Success - Aurora Elementary School's motto

Aurora Elementary is a K-sixth grade school located on Joint Base Elemendorf Richardson, Alaska. Our motto, Soar to Success, is reflective of our desire to see our students enjoy success in all of their endeavors.

Our military families come first and foremost for our staff. Given the unique nature of our students' home-life, we work closely with families to ease times of transition and deployments, ensuring continued success in the child's academic career, while also providing stability while a parent is absent.

Aurora's comprehensive program of instruction is designed to contribute both to the academic and social success of our students. In addition to regular K-sixth grade classrooms, we offer special education, speech and language support, bilingual services (Spanish, Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese), and Ignite classes designed to provide a higher level of enrichment.

As part of our partnership with parents and our community, Aurora offers a wide-range of engaging after school activities for every grade. Examples of our robust program includes the following: Bricks 4 Kids, a science, technology, engineering and math program (STEM), K-2nd grades; Battle of the Books, 3rd - 6th grades; Robotics, 4th - 6th grades; Service Learning Club, 3rd - 6th grades; ski, ice skating and running clubs, K-6th grades. We endeavor to offer all students an opportunity for social emotional, and academic learning regardless of their social or academic ability.

Our population includes not only high rates of mobility, but also families with lower income profiles. 35% of our students qualify for free / reduced lunch, and our present population of 170 students has a mobility rate of 24%. Aurora has support for our students through the Military & Family Life Counselor. The Military & Family Life Counselor offers classroom social emotional learning lessons, individual counseling, deployment lunch groups (students who have a parent deployed) and family meetings.

It is our intention to create an inclusive learning environment in which our students are acknowledged for not only being fantastic students, but also great citizens in our community. Positive incentives and recognition are provided on a weekly and quarterly basis. Any student observed being respectful, responsible, and / or kind can receive a Good Job award ticket from any staff member. Students put their Good Job Award tickets in their classroom buckets. Every Friday tickets are drawn from each classroom bucket. Recipients of the drawn ticket receive a book.

Our quarterly Soaring Eagles Award Assemblies are held to celebrate and honor students in the following areas: academics, the arts, and social emotional learning. We recognize the importance of being successful both in academics and the arts. By addressing the arts and social emotional learning, we are executing our motto to help our students soar to success.

Impact of the 2013 National Blue Ribbon Award

Winning the 2013 National Blue Ribbon Award was a catalyst for our school and our community to refocus on how schools, parents, and the wider community can partner to create environments in which students flourish.

As a result of the awareness raised by this prestigious award, coupled with our ongoing hard work, it's now a common occurrence for military parents from outside of Alaska to call and request that their child attend Aurora.

Since our last award in 2013, there have been changes in the implementation of CHAMPS, a proactive and

positive approach to management, which is an acronym for Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, and Success. The expectation is we work together to create a system that defines behavioral expectations in the classroom.

Another change since our last award is the implementation of Foundations, which supports the CHAMPS Program with six modules of support. The modules include: managing behavior in common areas with school-wide policies, an inviting school climate, responding to misbehavior, a behavior support program, improving safety, managing conflict and reducing bullying, and establishing and sustaining a continuum of behavior support.

In addition to the implementation of CHAMPS and Foundations, we have also made two changes in the curriculum. The first was the adoption of Go Math, which is a Houghton Mifflin Program. Each lesson is comprised of three sections: whole class instruction, guided instruction and independent practice.

The second was the adoption of Reach for Reading in 2017. Reach for Reading is designed to increase students' proficiency in reading more non-fiction texts. Academic Plans for each grade were developed to support teachers in the implementation of the reading program. Academic Plans outline the most important concepts that should be mastered for each lesson. In some grade levels the science curriculum was adopted to match reading topics. Reach for Reading was implemented in two phases: K - 2nd grades last year and 3rd - 5th grades this year. In addition, an instructional coach, a district wide initiative, was hired for each school. Aurora received a half-time coach based on our high reading scores from state assessments and benchmark assessments.

We embrace our cultural diversity using a lens of inclusivity.

In our continued work to create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space for our students and families, we host an Annual Multicultural Night for staff and families to share their heritage and family traditions. The evening begins with a dance led by the music teacher so that everyone joins in and mingles with each other. We invite community cultural organizations and families to host booths for food and culturally relevant activities and information. The Multicultural Night has become one of the best attended events for our school, and a proud moment for our children and staff.

Aurora Elementary School is a culturally responsive school, fostering a climate of respect and care for all, ensuring all students and their families are welcomed and included in school activities.

At Aurora we proudly serve families of those who serve our country. Our intentional focus and tireless efforts supporting students and their families will hopefully one day allow these young people to soar to success, no matter what path they choose in life.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The curriculum at Aurora Elementary is aligned with the state and district's implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The Anchorage School District establishes the curriculum framework for elementary schools to include: 40 minutes of WIN (What I Need, name for leveled groups), 90 minutes of reading, 40 minutes of grammar / spelling and 60 minutes of math. Each school should have a 45 minute window of time for lunch and recess.

Aurora has adopted a block schedule for reading and math instruction. Kindergarten through fifth grade have their language block in the morning and sixth grade has language arts in the afternoon. The schedule is flipped for the afternoon block of math for kindergarten through fifth grade.

Three days of WIN instruction is created for all students to be assigned to their specific reading instructional groups. Aurora uses flexible reading groups that fit with students' areas of strengths and weaknesses. For example, a first grade student who needs to be challenged, would be placed in a second grade reading group. Conversely, if a fourth grade student's needs are in phonics, the student would be placed in (SIPPS), Systematic Instruction in Phonemic Awareness group or a phonics, and sight word group. Principal, teachers, librarian, nurse, Military Family Life Counselor and trained parents are involved in the small WIN groups.

The Reach for Reading Program is based on the common core standards. It incorporates whole group time, speaking and listening skills, language and vocabulary and a strong writing component. Reading includes fluency practice, text analysis, grammar and spelling. The Reach for Reading Program has built in assessment and reteaching lessons for each grade level.

Instructional techniques utilized for reading would include: guided reading instruction, reciprocal teaching, context clues, dialogue, vocabulary, comprehension, text analysis and Systematic Instruction in Phonemic Awareness. Guided reading instruction fosters students' ability to describe text verbally and connect with the written form. Context clues and vocabulary building are strategies teachers use to develop 'deeper' understanding of the text and to become confident in writing. Dialogue is used to strengthen students' knowledge of the characters in the story. Role playing these characters gives the reader a comprehension of the story's plot.

Differentiated instruction is utilized. Small, targeted groups are formed based on benchmark assessments with ongoing adjustments according to student development. We use Aurora standards to monitor students' progress. Aurora's overall test scores are higher than district and state scores on benchmark and state assessments.

1b. Mathematics:

Go Math has been implemented in the Anchorage School District for four years. Go Math is also a common core program. The instruction for a lesson is divided into whole group instruction, guided instruction and student independent section. Manipulatives are used in all math classrooms for explicit instruction. A year long pacing guide is used to ensure that all concepts are taught throughout the school year and is part of teachers' lesson plans. Go Math has chapter and unit assessments built into the program. Teachers spend a day reviewing the chapter concepts prior to the test. Parents can review math homework with their child because of user friendly components that explain each step of the math concept.

Math problem solving problems can present a challenge for some students. Teachers usually have students read the problem silently then the teacher reads the problem orally with a discussion. The process of breaking the problem into smaller chunks using visualization with a drawing provides a clearer

understanding of how to solve the problem. Mad minute, timed computation problems, are given three times a week; either by paper and pencil or by using computer software programs: Prodigy and XtraMath. The unique features of both the Prodigy and XtraMath programs are that students enjoy the challenge, and the results are visible and printable.

Each grade level's instruction in all the core subjects builds on the knowledge from the previous grade level. A strong educational base in kindergarten and first grade prevents learning gaps in the intermediate grade levels.

Benchmark assessments are given three times a year in reading and math.

1c. Science:

The science curriculum is inquiry based with the following process skills included: observing, measuring, predicting, inferring, summarizing, communicating, collecting data, classifying, analyzing data, interpreting evidence and experimenting. Science kits are assigned to each grade level for each semester. Grade levels have specific science concepts to teach for the school year.

Aurora hosts an annual science fair. It is mandatory for third through sixth grade students to participate in the science fair as part of their science grade for the quarter. Kindergarten through second graders also participate. Primary teachers usually do a whole class science fair project to model the process. On average, two of our students receive first place at the state science fair each year.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

History, geography, civics and government are the core content areas taught in the social studies framework. Social studies standards correlate with literacy and math skills. Social studies is unit based for each grade level.

Aurora teachers at each grade level combine research writing and oral presentations to extend the core social studies curriculum.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Physical education, health, art, music, and library are other curriculum areas taught at Aurora. Teachers in each of the content areas provide a safe and supportive environment for students' individual growth. Physical education fosters team work, SEL skills, hand and eye coordination and develops lifelong skills for a healthy life style. All students receive ninety minutes of physical education weekly. After school skiing, ice skating and running clubs are available for all students.

Health and art classes are hour long sessions, twice a month. Health classes implement healthy life styles using the Great Body Shop Curriculum.
Art classes provide students an opportunity to work in different media to inspire their creativity and imagination.

Library classes are forty-five minute classes for all grade levels. Library instruction encourages exploration of various genres and research projects.

Music class is part of the regular curriculum and choir has been offered to third through sixth grade students. Sixth grade students have the opportunity to participate in forty-five minute band and orchestra class, three times a week.

Teachers in each of the content areas and after school activities provide a safe and supportive environment for students' individual growth.

3. Special Populations:

A student assistance team meeting is held for struggling students. The assistance team is comprised of the principal, school psychologist, speech pathologist, classroom teacher, special education teacher, nurse, and parents. Concerns are discussed then a plan of action is presented and agreed upon. Assessments guide teachers' teaching in each of the core subjects. Adaptations are made for students who have educational challenges. After school math tutoring and vocabulary clubs provide additional support for students who need additional teaching in reading and pre-teaching in math.

English language learners are provided a tutor once a week to assist with classroom work. Monolingual students receive an English Language teacher to provide vocabulary and language skills.

Students who qualify for special education services are provided individual teaching strategies. Staff addresses student needs such as wiggle seats for chairs, spatial and sensory needs and allowing movement within the personal space in the regular classroom. Brain breaks are also part of the movement breaks. Students who qualify for special education can receive services in the classroom with a special education teacher assistant or in the resource room with a special education teacher.

An individual profile for each student is used to place students in leveled reading groups. Kindergarten through second grade students are given the Aims Web assessment tool that measures reading fluency and math competency.

Third through sixth grade students are assessed with the Measurement of Academic Proficiency, MAP. The MAP, based on the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts, Literacy and Math, provides individual scores in five literacy areas and four scores in math. Aurora has data meetings with each grade level, and teachers discuss each student's progress after each assessment. Grade level meetings are held twice a month for regular performing students and more frequently for struggling students.

For the highly motivated, Lexia, a reading computer program, and Math Whizz, a math computer program, are used to further enhance students' competency. Students who complete ten progressions / levels are given a gift certificate from Subway and Red Robin.

Assessments for the core curriculum are given weekly for reading and at the end of each chapter in math. They guide the instruction and provide the teacher with the knowledge of whether the concept is mastered or if there is a need for reteaching.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

School Climate / Culture

Aurora Elementary is located on Fort Richardson / Elemendorf Air Force Base (JBER - joint base Elemendorf Richardson). On average, children attending Aurora will move out of the school in three years, placing our mobility rate near 24%. This rotation of students requires consistent and strategic communication between the school office, the principal and the staff. From our school's Building Plant Officer (BPO) to the cafeteria manager, our team is coached to be mindful of our children's unique lifestyles and offer empathy in every interaction.

Aurora's core staff are dedicated to teaching and motivating students to learn through positive interactions. Every morning our staff members on duty greet students entering the building, engaging with the children while also looking for signs of distress or need. We recognize each child as an individual and understand the importance of being 'known'. Our class sizes are small (15 to 22 students per classroom), which provide a daily opportunity for teachers to engage with students on a one-on-one basis acknowledging each students' strengths and weaknesses, giving appropriate attention to each.

Teachers feel valued and supported in various ways. Teachers are given professional discretion to adjust district curriculum. Teacher appreciation / recognition is facilitated by the principal with the PTA providing specific days of recognition. Examples are personal notes, cards, lunch during conferences, and notes on the board to recognize student progress. The principal supports teachers in parent / teacher conferences and during special education meetings.
The Sunshine committee plans staff celebrations and acknowledgements for professional and personal milestones. Aurora has monthly potlucks to promote comradery.

We also ask our teachers to know their students' siblings, which helps build rapport. One of our favorite examples of encouraging a positive environment is that our school nurse makes herself available for safe talks and school-appropriate hugs throughout the school day.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

Parent Engagement

Parent and community engagement is a key driver to our success and we continuously look for new and value-added opportunities to invite parents and caretakers into our space. We host parent and soldier volunteers weekly for in-classroom reading events and to participate in the WIN (What I Need) groups. WIN groups are formed based upon students' reading benchmark assessments taken three times a year.

For students requiring additional assistance in their learning journey, we offer homework assistance and tutoring after school. Teachers do not penalize students who do not complete an assignment, but find opportunities for students to receive individual assistance.

Our Military Family Life Counselor (MFLAC) creates an environment that embraces children throughout their Aurora journey and hosts military children for lunches on a regular basis. Grade levels have class lessons and individual students have 'special' times to play a game or make an art project with the MFLAC. Deployment group time with the MFLAC has increased over the last two years, so the MFLAC has set up time to work with the spouse of the deployed soldier and provide other base resources for family follow-up.

Engaging Families and Communities

Aurora strives to sustain positive engaging relationships with parents and community. We leverage

monthly newsletters, our website, robocalls, and individual emails from teachers to create continous communication. Furthermore, additional transparency into a child's academic progress is achieved through the Anchorage School District's 'Q' Service, which allows parents to access their child's assignments and learning. We host bi-annual parent-teacher meetings and we're proud of having a 100% participation rate. State and benchmark test results are mailed directly to parents. Teachers are available to explain the results.

Aurora's PTA hosts several family events. The favorites have been Bingo Night, spaghetti dinner, autumn pumpkin carving and movie night.

Our staff hosts an annual Multicultural Night and a Science Family Night. Each year more parents attend these events. These events create an opportunity for families to meet and staff and parents to enjoy events together.

3. **Professional Development:**

Professional Development

District professional development is provided to teachers and principals throughout the school year. Literacy, using Ashlock training, with emphasis on six reading components: vocabulary, decoding, fluency, comprehension, literacy and engagement are the focal point for training in the district. At the school level, Aurora has a half-time instructional coach who is responsible for training in these areas. Principals are responsible for the implementation of the six components and participating with the instructional coaches for the initial school trainings.

Aurora's classroom teachers collaborate during grade level meetings and throughout the week to share teaching strategies. Our main objective is to extend any training to include explicit teaching. For example, academic plans for reading were developed for kindergarten through fifth grade; however, teachers created a user-friendly chart that included all of the lessons' requirements. The ongoing collaboration and knowing that the specific staff members are 'the go to' people provide professional development within itself.

Over the last two years, we've held yearly book studies that create community around our professional development. The most recent books are from authors Kristin Souers and Zaretta Hammond. The book studies are integrated into our regular staff meetings.

4. **School Leadership:**

School Leadership

Aurora's school leadership team consists of the principal, a music, primary, special education and two intermediate teachers, who share the school's vision of having high expectations.

Aurora's leadership team typically meets with the principal at least once a month, although more frequent meetings occur at the beginning of the school year and when planning events or other school-wide activities. Team members create fliers, write e-mails, contact parent volunteers, make posters, purchase materials and encourage staff participation.

When planning an event, each team member takes on a specific responsibility, and discusses the information with other staff members, then relates any other suggestions to the team.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Our practice of intentionality at every interaction point of a student's journey at Aurora has been the single most influential practice for our school's success.

This practice of intentionality takes many forms, but always focuses on approaching the student as a whole person, being present with the student and partnering with them, rather than applying rules and processes to them. This has and continues to require trust from both the staff and the students, and has resulted in a 90% to 95% attendance rate each day.

Intentionality put into practice includes, but is not limited to the following:

Tardiness as an opportunity to connect

Students who arrive late to school or to class are greeted with a "Hi, how are you today?" Teachers and attendants are trained to wait for a response. Because we know tardiness is often symptomatic of deeper issues, this practice places focus on the connection between the student and teacher - mitigating shame and encouraging dialogue. Teachers have commented this positive practice encourages students to come to class ready to learn.

No child learns hungry

We are mindful of studies that show when a child is hungry, his ability to pay attention decreases.

We are also mindful that many of our students come from economically disadvantaged homes, and purchasing or bringing lunch is not always an option. In an expression of our intentionality practice, we proactively have created a principal's school lunch fund to cover lunch costs for any student in need. This means when a student forgets his lunch or for some reason isn't eating his lunch, the cafeteria manager has discretion to offer a free lunch to that child.

Opportunities for extra help

We are intentional in supporting students and their varied learning capacities and home lives. We acknowledge there may be barriers to a student's ability to complete assignments and homework. Students may be reluctant to ask for help during class, or they may not have a parent / caretaker available to help with homework after school. In response to these situations, our teachers volunteer to reteach recent concepts during recess to avoid learning gaps, and if needed, provide students with extra time for assignments. Recess tutoring is openly discussed as a benefit, to remove any shame associated with attending, and average attendance rates for recess tutoring is usually daily for some teachers to once or twice a week. The frequency depends upon the concepts being taught in reading and math.

Intentionality takes many forms, but always focuses on approaching the student as a whole person. We remove shame whenever possible, and encourage each student to bring his best, with the promise that our staff will do the same.