

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 [X] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Kathryn Drake

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

Official School Name Peach Plains Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 15849 Comstock Street

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

Grand Haven MI 49417-9412
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Ottawa County

Telephone (616) 850-5800

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Web site/URL https://peachplains.ghaps.org/

E-mail drakek@ghaps.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Andrew Ingall

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail ingalla@ghaps.org

District Name Grand Haven Area Public Schools Tel. (616) 850-5000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. John Siemion

(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):
- 8 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 13 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	15	22	37
K	27	32	59
1	28	26	54
2	28	27	55
3	21	33	54
4	38	29	67
5	0	0	0
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	157	169	326

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90 % White
 - 4 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: 5%

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

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	16
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	333
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
3 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 22%
Total number students who qualify: 73

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
48 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>4</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>12</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>26</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</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: 10
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.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 19:1

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	97%	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 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.

With our district's mission and vision in mind, Peach Plains developed a "legacy statement" to define our current work. We are efficacious learners who think and care deeply. Through communication and reflection, we are living out our reading lives.

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

Students who reside within our Peach Plains boundary areas attend our school. As space and interest allows, additional families may pursue "school of choice" to attend Peach Plains.

PART III – SUMMARY

Long ago, our roots started as a peach orchard. Fittingly, we continue that legacy today as we “grow learners” every day at Peach Plains Elementary.

Tucked in Grand Haven Township with Lake Michigan about four miles to the west, Peach Plains is considered a suburban school and nestled among many neighborhood developments. We are one of seven elementaries within the Grand Haven Area Public Schools district. Peach Plains strives to educate the youth of our community and we take note of our culturally homogeneous population. The greatest amount of our diversity is at a socio-economic level. Thus, this impacts decisions about how we facilitate discussion and select books so we can provide a healthy diversity for our learners. We want our students to be culturally aware.

The original Peach Plains humbly began 100 years ago, having grown from a one-room schoolhouse on five acres to our present structure. Housing approximately 350 students with 22 classrooms, we serve Young Fives through fourth grade, a special education resource room and before/after Open Door child care. In addition, we also host an early childhood special education program (ages 3-4), along with a state-funded Great Start Readiness Preschool Program.

Throughout Peach Plains history, our school family has continued to have great expectations for student learning and has reaped academic success. Our highly qualified staff offers educational experiences utilizing best practices. Further, our highly involved families have garnered a positive name for themselves as supporters. Outstanding performances on local and state assessments, an "A" on our state's report card, and a Reward School status are only a few examples of our school's achievements.

Among numerous positives, a change began to take shape. In the last three years, a school improvement consultant from our Intermediate School District (ISD) presented a comparison between our performance and other schools like us. By comparing high stakes state assessment data, we felt a sense of urgency. Schools with similar demographics were outperforming us. We were good, but according to the report, we had room to be better. We wanted to give our kids the best, and instill this mindset in our children to give their best, too.

The collaboration with this school improvement consultant brought about significant changes for us. If we were to make real change, we needed to adapt to a new educational landscape. This realization was our call-to-action and it wasn't easy. Our ISD consultant introduced Kotter's Stages of Change to guide our work. Framing our efforts with this structure/language was essential to progress. Via math data, the desire for creating change was fostered and our team defined shared beliefs. A culture shift began when we collaborated. Small consistent adjustments yielded quick math wins and we celebrated. We implemented and sustained those changes that led to growth.

As part of our partnership with the ISD consultant, he challenged us around rigor. He asked about how we support kids so they might struggle in a healthy way. This grew our capacity, as we talked through these questions together. These were early renditions of our grade level professional learning communities (PLCs). It was this work which propelled us into greater collective efficacy.

We hungered for more, for next steps. Thus, we requested Instructional Rounds from regional experts. Their feedback and recommendations around English Language Arts led to a two-year partnership with the Reading Now Network (RNN) through our Ottawa Area Intermediate School District (OAISD) to grow adult and student learners simultaneously. Two literacy coaches collaborated with our building coach to plan and facilitate professional development around our three recommendations:

1. We heard you say you want to be “the best.” Identify a leadership team, collaboratively define and go for it.
2. Embed the General Education Leadership Network (GELN) Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy in every classroom every day with coaching support for all.
3. Revisit how data is being used to inform Flexible Group Instruction and Whatever I Need (WIN) Time.

With change churning and challenging us, we began to see movement and celebrated as often as possible. This mindset helped us note that while our free/reduced numbers and English learner totals were rising, so was our performance.

To complement staff efforts, our family partnerships have remained important. An active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), our adults are interested and supportive. As we learn more about best practices to engage families in our kids' learning, we are making additional efforts to teach, practice and utilize common language with our families.

In conclusion, a hallmark of Peach Plains has become our work with design thinking and project-based learning (PBL). Community partnerships around authentic challenges have helped to develop an innovator's mindset with both students and staff. The energy around design thinking organically grew among staff and fed a contagious excitement throughout our district and local businesses. Children are doing challenging work, and are growing in both confidence and voice.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Our district embraces balanced literacy, delivering instruction in a readers and writers workshop approach. Our kindergarten through fourth grade curriculum resource is Teachers College Units of Study in Reading, Writing, and K-1 Phonics. Each unit begins with an overview, which highlights the work students will be doing. As a school, we decided to spend weekly grade level PLC time reading and discussing the major learning targets and connections with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Additionally, at staff meetings, our grade level teams worked to align teaching points with reading learning progressions. This work shows English Language Arts (ELA) vertical alignment and literacy development, and helps us build common prompting language to use with students.

Our teachers utilize Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System to determine independent and instructional reading levels and analyze the data to find student strengths and areas to grow. This information is one of many data sources that informs core instruction and intervention. Further, teachers help students learn how to choose books they can read with high accuracy and proficient comprehension during workshop time. We have worked to build classroom libraries to provide students with choice: high interest, variety of genre, levels of text complexity.

In addition to weekly grade level PLCs, teachers and our coach meet quarterly to analyze benchmark assessment and progress monitoring data to plan intervention groups based on student needs. Our teachers were recently trained and are supported by our coach in Leveled Literacy Intervention. Now, educators provide intervention to our most striving readers. This powerful shift from assistants providing services to teachers has yielded substantial student growth. The teachers are most knowledgeable about their students, literacy development, and core instruction allowing them to support transfer throughout the day. As the year progresses, the number of students needing reading intervention during our grade level intervention block time decreases.

1b. Mathematics:

Our district utilizes Math Expressions Common Core as our core math curriculum. Our approach to math instruction has grown in recent years, yielding more intentional instruction and learning. We pride ourselves on our collaborative math mindset and work towards a mastery loop of teaching/learning.

At Peach, we take a data-driven approach to math instruction. Our weekly PLC meetings create an environment to collaborate and reflect on data. We take a collective responsibility approach for our learners which supports our instruction in small groups, as well as whole group. Our staff is intentional about creating norms and a PLC culture rooted in data and learner-focused. As mentioned above, we utilized an ISD consultant to grow conversation, utilize instructional best practices, and plan/reflect based upon data. With the ISD relationship, we learned the importance of not stealing our students' struggles. This challenged our beliefs about math practice and encouraged us to create new learning opportunities. Further, we meet quarterly in grade level data meetings with additional support staff to reflect on intervention cycles and use data to create/revise strategies.

All grades administer a consistent, grade specific screener three times during the school year. We use this data, in combination with the work in the classroom, to drive our intervention and strategy groups. In the past, our school had an interventionist dedicated to working with our most striving mathematicians on essential standards missed from previous grade levels and classroom teachers focused on reteaching grade level concepts. Due to a reallocation of funds, the support position was eliminated and thus, teachers collectively took ownership of intervening with our math strivers. Efforts around defining essential standards and analyzing standard-based data focus our strategy and reteach groups. This creates a tiered math structure where we are focusing on all learners and what they need to be successful.

1c. Science:

At Peach Plains, we are growing inquisitive scientists through our Battle Creek Science Curriculum. Our science units are aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards, the Michigan Science Standards, and the Common Core Science Standards. Three-dimensional science instruction is provided in the classroom for students to engage the following strands of science learning: physical science, life science, and earth science. Our science instruction aligns cross curricular opportunities for our first through fourth grade students by teaching reading, writing, and mathematics within the process of learning new information and solving problems. Using illustrated texts, interactive technology, and hands-on experiments, our students are presented a variety of resources throughout our science units to aid in their comprehension of the essentials for science.

Peach Plains science teachers no longer just demonstrate and explain concepts to our students. Rather, students are asked to explore and make determinations through inquiry. Each unit begins with an investigative question. Then, students identify science concepts they need to know to solve problems. Some characteristics of the inquiry model include; science talk moves, which are protocols for discussion; modeling thinking and revising the models; and using a summary table as a formative assessment to chart what students are learning. The teacher facilitates with questioning techniques and assessment probes to identify student progress and understanding.

We value community partnerships including a local Outdoor Discovery Center, Holland Energy Park, Board of Public Works, as well as guest speakers and presenters, such as Science Alive (live animal visits). Our community connections support students with the ability to transfer their scientific understanding through experiences and relationships that extend beyond our classrooms.

Throughout our science curriculum, students participate actively and equitably in activity by communicating/ discussing topics through paraphrasing, clarification and asking questions. Partnerships, teams and small group instruction are the different ways students are supported throughout lessons.

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

Geographic Inquiry and New Temporal Sequencing (GIANTS) is the inquiry-based, student-centered social studies curriculum for third and fourth grades. It examines the connections between spatial thinking skills and increased student achievement in reading. The Michigan standards are taught through the lens of geography with high student engagement and relevance. Students begin learning with a compelling question and continue their inquiry with supporting questions, part of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework. Working with maps, lessons invite students to interpret information in multiple ways. Students build definitions of regions using various criteria such as landscape, industry, or culture and think about the common factors which bring people together, creating identity and linked to history. Michigan history focuses on the development and growth of the land use. Curricular units emphasize unique instructional strategies for teaching spatial thinking skills through inquiry, hands-on activities, and literacy strategies. Best practices in both formative and summative assessment are modeled in each session. An additional component to our curriculum includes opportunities for our students to engage in the Essential Literacy Practices from the GELN K-3 to build vocabulary and background knowledge.

Young Fives curriculum invites students to learn about parts of their community and how it relates to the student. Kindergarten, first, and second grades use the Michigan College Career and Civic Life Framework (MC3) with a strong literacy component. The lessons center around core democratic values, economic concepts, local government, and the consequences of a changing environment. Interactive Read Alouds, an important part of balanced literacy, have been developed with picture books teaching the social studies standards. Classroom libraries are continuously enhanced with fiction and nonfiction texts that support the standards. All students engage in evidence-based writing on a social studies topic.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

Our school houses Great Start Readiness Program, a free preschool for four-year-old children who meet state guidelines. This year, we offer a full-day program, Monday through Thursday. Research-based Creative Curriculum supports the GELN pre-kindergarten literacy essentials. Additionally, we house a district-wide Early Childhood Special Education program that serves three to five year-olds with disabilities in an effort to prepare them for kindergarten. There is an emphasis on speech and language, socialization, and working toward appropriate academic skills. Both programs boast small class sizes with an emphasis on both purposeful play and a language-rich environment.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Peach Plains proudly offers art, music, physical education, Spanish, and STEM, throughout the school year to all students in Young Fives through fourth grade. Each day, children enjoy one special for 45 minutes, and the offerings listed below rotate on a two-week basis. Each special totals five sessions in a two-week period.

In our visual arts program, we build life skills such as fine motor, problem solving, creative thinking, and self-esteem. We are continually making connections to classroom learning of math, literacy, and social studies, all while expanding the fundamental ideas of contemporary and historic art.

Music class supports students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge, individually and within groups. Standards are met using our curriculum, which are guided by the National Standards for Music Education. Students develop and grow skills/knowledge in music through performing, listening, moving, reading, playing instruments, and composing. Culture and history are also studied, in connection with music.

Our Physical Education program's main goal is to teach students skills and knowledge needed to establish and maintain an active lifestyle for a lifetime. Providing instruction in a safe, supportive environment, we also assess student knowledge, and motor/social skills. Our program honors the National Physical Education Curriculum Standards and we provide meaningful opportunities for students to practice and fine tune skills. It is our intent to provide lessons that are differentiated and support all becoming physically literate.

Spanish instruction uses a communicative approach where the language is taught/learned in context, using task-based learning such as partner dialogues, singing and choral responses. Engagement and language application are maintained through movement, conversation, repetition and routine. Grade specific lessons are generated based on content, community, and culture.

Our STEM program empowers students to be curious and creative problem-solvers. Hands-on experiences promote inquiry-based thinking while igniting self-confidence and a growth mindset for students. Implementing the Next Generation Science Standards through design thinking/project based learning is helping to develop students who are creative, critical thinkers. STEM brings relevancy to the classroom by supporting students as they develop 21st century skills through coding, computer programming, Lego Robotics, and building authentic community partnerships.

Technology, rather than a curriculum, is a resource/tool used to support our learners throughout the school day. With a 1:1 device initiative, our Young Fives through second grade students utilize Apple iPads and our third through fourth graders have Dell Chromebooks at school. Professional learning around the EEE framework (extend, enhance, engage) promotes teacher planning/reflection in regards to technology use, including digital citizenship.

A piece of our character education curriculum is the Second Step program for Young Fives through fourth grade. This social-emotional learning empowers students to use tools and language to manage themselves and navigate relationships. Second Step is a tier-one behavioral curriculum meant to work alongside our positive system of support and complements Kristi Mraz's Mindsets for Learning.

In addition to above, Peach Plains educators have grown their professional expertise with design thinking
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and project-based learning. With a proud philosophical belief that students can make a difference and support our community with problem-solving, our teachers have helped create “Homegrown.”

Homegrown pairs classrooms with local manufacturers to solve authentic design challenges. This work is based upon the following pillars; to increase awareness of local businesses, create partnerships with classrooms, build interest within students and families, engage our community and lastly, empower students. Classrooms have partnered with numerous employers, such as an international furniture manufacturer, a global engineering company, and a recycling provider. Examples of driving questions business offer our students are:

How can we redesign a more safe and efficient entrance our business?

How can we contain the dust that is a product of coating?

How might we communicate proper cutting technique to ensure cut injuries are reduced for customers?

How can we eliminate hair contamination from smart pumps?

We are hopeful about exposing our students to 21st century skills such as technology literacy, collaboration, global thinking, communication, critical thinking and problem solving, flexibility/adaptability, ethical citizenship and personal accountability. Homegrown partnerships enable students to practice these skills in authentic environments. Currently, we have over 70 students in first through fourth grade participating in Homegrown.

3. Special Populations:

Our district promise, “Success for all takes us all,” motivates a collective responsibility attitude for our team, for all learners. These beliefs include students in special populations including special education, English Learners, and students at risk of not meeting benchmarks. All means all.

We collaboratively support our students who need extra help, and challenge ourselves to consider those who conversely, need enrichment. All students are assessed using a balanced assessment approach with screeners, diagnostics, and formative and summative assessments. The data are reviewed every six-to-eight weeks in Grade Level Data Meetings (GLDM), and often more frequently in collaborative teams. The data reveal who needs support by name and by need. Small groups for targeted intervention are built into the day, with a designated block for each grade level. “Whatever I Need” or WIN time, is a daily opportunity for all students to receive intervention or extension.

During WIN time, students not at benchmark in reading or math receive small group intervention, including students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP). In this block, classroom teachers have ownership of teaching our most at-risk students with researched-based interventions, such as Leveled Literacy Intervention. Our literacy coach supports teachers to deliver targeted instruction for our special populations with job-embedded professional development and collaboration. Not only does this empower classroom teachers to intervene, it allows them to reciprocally bridge connections to the core curriculum. Students transfer the learning from the intervention to daily work throughout the day. Those at benchmark receive extensions in reading, writing, or math.

With regard to those receiving special education services, we make a thoughtful effort for a least restrictive environment placement so they thrive. It’s desired to have all kids in the core classroom instruction as much as possible. Thus, assistants regularly provide push-in support and occasionally teach small groups in pull-out support. Our resource room teacher creates and follows differentiated IEPs.

Early intervention is part of the systemic plan to serve all students. The district supplies researched-based curriculum and interventions, and provides professional development on how to deliver instruction with fidelity, efficacy, and by using instructional practices which have a significant size effect on learning. Discussions about the best way to maximize instruction within the limited minutes of the school day are ongoing.

As we refine our teaching beliefs around student support, our practices have changed to better understand “interventions” and “reteaching”. Previously, intervention was synonymous with small group instruction.

With more learning, we now believe reteaching is done with students in the core curriculum. Interventions are additional, targeted support for students who are working below grade level. Along with ongoing progress monitoring, interventions can yield growth to grade level performance. This insight came as a result of an instructional rounds recommendation and professional learning together.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At our school, we cultivate a positive, warm and welcoming environment. We make intentional decisions to create student-friendly spaces and personal exchanges. It is hard to miss our inviting classroom libraries and cozy nooks where readers have choice and agency in building their reading lives. Literacy and learning is our brand.

Additionally, “SCORE with Team Peach” has become a mantra, reflecting a positively-rooted culture. Students learn positive behaviors (safe, caring, on-task, responsible, everyday) and are honored with tickets when these behaviors are observed. Students learn expected behaviors from explicit modeling and are reinforced throughout the year. Monthly school-wide celebration assemblies highlight students who have shown desired behaviors with drawings for fun games or lunch with a teacher. Those celebrations are led by grade levels who take turns teaching our school what it means to have perseverance, empathy, flexibility, optimism, and resiliency. Students plan skits, songs, and visuals that teach about our monthly mindset word.

Further leadership and connectivity opportunities for students abound, such as Safety Patrollers, Green Team, and Recycling Team. We are proud of the “Fuel Up Wellness Leaders”, in which a team of kids organizes movement-based games/challenges, along with healthy tastings. In addition, we offer many after-school opportunities like Lego, chess, running, and drama clubs.

Just as efforts for students are thoughtful, we are also intentional about supporting collegial culture. We are a tight-knit staff and relationships are critical for our emotional wellness and professional growth. Celebrations of all kinds are commonplace. We show up for one another.

Additionally, we live out our reading lives. Snow days in Michigan provide gifts of time to devour books and share recommendations via #SnowDayChallenge. We banter back-and-forth in long group email threads about what we are reading, especially when we are all reading the same best-seller! Our principal values growing staff’s literacy lives, as well. At the year’s end, she purchases a book of our choosing to support our own love for reading. We begin the school year sharing what we have read with one another.

In support of our educators, meetings are a team-effort and contribute to our collaborative culture. Shared ownership and teacher voice efficacy. Because we count on and support one another, we are able to truly focus on student learning. Eager and excited to share growth, we run down the halls to share stories. We are hungry for professional learning, best practices, and yearn to outgrow ourselves through collaboration and book studies. We are growing learners.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Family and community engagement are points of pride for us. We value our families and empower them to seize meaningful opportunities to participate in learning. Parents, grandparents, high school helpers, and Kids Hope mentors fill our hallways and classrooms in support of students on a daily basis. New to our culture is our Watch DOGS (Dads of Great Students) program. Male volunteers sign up to spend the day connecting with students in multiple classrooms, and also in the lunchroom and on the playground.

Our strong communication is a key component to include families in our learning strategies. After attending a symposium with teachers and parents, specific ideas emerged around family learning. Our family engagement nights now include strategies to support learning. Including the whole family, the structure for these evenings is consistent, while the topics vary based on perceived or surveyed needs. Staff serves dinner and facilitates intentional activities to build a sense of community. This is followed by shared learning for adults with a specific focus on a learning strategy with time to practice before going home. Meanwhile, children separately engage in activities hosted by classroom teachers that support the evening’s topic. Children rejoin adults in the gym for a final connection and book giveaways.

One family engagement topic focused on the value of reading aloud. As part of our shared learning, we provided a framework from *Disrupting Thinking* by Kyleene Beers and Bob Probst. Using the “Book, Head, Heart” strategy, families practiced conversations around literature. When students rejoined adults in our community space, we began reading aloud a beloved book, *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate. With great enthusiasm, each family was gifted this text from our PTO. The purpose of these evenings is to give parents tools and common language to practice with children.

Parent feedback initiated our next event around social-emotional supports. Further nights taught parents about the importance of summer reading and book choice. Eager to share the value of reading 365 days a year, we presented research about “summer slide” and the importance of book access. Additionally, our local community librarian shared summer programming, forgave outstanding overdue fines, and invited families to visit the community library. Our partnership with RNN allowed us to gift students with up to eight books to choose and keep. Teachers continued to connect with families all summer through email, postcards, See-Saw (online) and book clubs.

3. Professional Development:

Peach Plains Elementary grows learners. This is not only our school’s brand promise, but also our central belief, identity, and action plan. The belief that all students can learn at high levels is the foundation which drives the professional learning of the school. The principal and literacy coach lead learning with a passion. This pair collaborates with the adult scholars on the school improvement team and a literacy leadership team to strategically grow teacher efficacy around best practice. Their goal is social, emotional, and academic growth of their students. Learning is the climate of the school.

Professional development is coordinated at the district level using a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) of our demographic, academic achievement, process, and perception data. The CNA reveals areas of strength and growth. Triangulated academic data plus staff input determine where professional development is needed. While this data helps drive district-provided professional development, Peach Plains has had several additional opportunities for collective learning and practice with coaching support through our RNN partnership, mentioned previously.

One of the recommendations from RNN was to form a literacy leadership team to steer the work. We meet monthly to assess and plan the needs of adult learners. From this committee, our staff developed a legacy statement and a focused plan around small group instruction, intervention, and instructional coaching around the GELN Literacy Essentials. For example, we engaged in shared learning around flexible and responsive small group instruction using formative assessment, followed by a classroom learning lab. Using a gradual release of responsibility, coaches modeled small group instruction for teachers. Then, teachers had an opportunity to immediately try the practice with students in a clinic. The experience of having shared learning, followed by immediate practice, helps ensure teachers transfer their new learning.

Our staff is dedicated to continuous improvement. We help plan and facilitate learning at staff meetings. We seek opportunities to plan and reflect with our coaches, and pursue collegial collaboration around professional and student learning.

In regards to learning, we ask, “What is next for us?” We know that when we struggle through new thinking, we are learning. We regularly do this together and it supports us being vulnerable. We call it our “learning zone”.

4. School Leadership:

Our leadership structure is best described as team-oriented. We commonly refer to our school as “Team Peach”, and our leadership structures follow suit.

Like many, we have a School Improvement Team (SIT), consisting of grade level representatives, resource room teacher, literacy coach, and principal. They serve our school by creating a dashboard articulating our

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goals in ELA, math, behavior, data/collection, and family engagement. The principal facilitates monthly meetings with this team to review and reflect upon our year-long school goals, make decisions and decide professional learning for staff meetings. Each grade level representative has an important voice and communicates meeting notes and SIT decisions to grade level colleagues. Additionally, team members plan and facilitate shared learning at monthly staff meetings. This is how we have grown our efficacy of PLCs.

In addition, an ELA-focused leadership team was created last year per the RNN recommendation. This RNN Team consists of grade level representatives, our principal, our building literacy coach, and two literacy coaches from the ISD. Monthly meetings support work around the recommendations and this team supports the learning culture of our school. The RNN team created our legacy statement
We are efficacious learners who think and care deeply.
Through communication and reflections, we are living out our reading lives.

In developing this Legacy Statement, we utilized protocols to honor voices and priorities. Each word was unpacked and presented to staff, with the RNN Team leading the work. To carry this on, we regularly refer to this posted statement as we discuss and define student reading behavior. We desire any visitor to walk into our school, observe for a moment, and know this is what we believe and live.

Our RNN Leadership Team also prioritizes next steps around recommendations from our instructional rounds visit. For example, we reflected and planned around the GELN Essential Literacy Practices using a “dot voting” protocol. We color-coded celebrations and areas to grow to drive future professional development. This led us to dive further into CCSS reading standards by connecting them to our reading curriculum. This shared learning is being followed up with another half-day for teaching implications and creating tools for small group instruction.

With two leadership teams, nearly all staff have ownership and responsibility to grow and lead learning. Efforts with strong communication keep teams connected while sharing the work among many. Teams open the door for work focused on student learning and exemplify the collaborative leadership around learning at Peach Plains.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

When we asked staff, the practice of collaboration resoundingly rang out the loudest as having the biggest impact on student learning. We are proud this is something our team identifies as a cornerstone to Team Peach. To complete this application, we employed our best collaborative protocols to hear all voices. Collaboration is part of who we are and how we behave.

Collaboration is so prevalent in our school, we feel confident this is the one practice that fuels us and promotes the greatest yield. Collaborating as a professional learning community is the most promising practice to grow student achievement, and we experience this first hand. We strengthen our belief of “why” collaborate and we challenge ourselves to be vulnerable. With no place for egos, we open up to the possibilities collaboration can afford our school. We believe all kids can learn at high levels. Working together is the means to live out our belief. We utilize the best practices of collaboration from experts Rick and Becky DuFour of Solution Tree. With an appreciation around using data as a “third point,” our conversations focus on student learning and our efficacy grows. Early on, our second grade team bravely fishbowed a collaborative data meeting in front of our staff. This is an example of our raw authentic learning and growth mindset. As we look at standards, we identify the essentials all students will master and we make promises to funnel our efforts collectively. We call them “promise standards” and we use the four questions to fulfill our promise. As we gain clarity around the behaviors of true collaborative teams, evidence of student achievement climbs.

Given the commitment to RNN and our three recommendations, our team is poised to commit, practice and make meaningful work of weekly collaborative meetings. We would never achieve our goals working in isolation. These practices are now intuitive, and we recognize the value of our collective efficacy.

Not complacent and dissatisfied with just being “good”, we strive to hold ourselves to a higher standard. Sometimes in a landscape steeped in historical achievement and tradition, prompting a fresh look is more complicated than originally thought. In order to do so, our culture demands transparency, honesty, a courageous heart and thoughtful vulnerability. Our educators embrace the idea of becoming learners in the same manner we expect our students to be learners. Humbly and passionately, we are all growing learners together.