

**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 Mrs. Natalie Becker

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

Official School Name New Rockford-Sheyenne Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 437 1st Avenue North

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

New Rockford ND 58356-1433  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Eddy County

Telephone (701) 947-5036

Fax (701) 947-2195

Web site/URL http://www.newrockford-sheyenne.k12.nd.us/

E-mail natalie.becker@k12.nd.us

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\*Ms. Jill Louters

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail jill.louters@k12.nd.us

District Name New Rockford-Sheyenne School District #2 Tel. (701) 947-5036

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 Mrs. Alyson Myhre

(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):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 High schools
  - 1 K-12 schools
- 1 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
<b>PreK</b>	15	12	27
<b>K</b>	11	7	18
<b>1</b>	14	9	23
<b>2</b>	13	6	19
<b>3</b>	15	12	27
<b>4</b>	20	12	32
<b>5</b>	10	6	16
<b>6</b>	16	8	24
<b>7</b>	11	9	20
<b>8</b>	11	12	23
<b>9</b>	15	11	26
<b>10</b>	8	14	22
<b>11</b>	10	12	22
<b>12 or higher</b>	12	11	23
<b>Total Students</b>	181	141	322

\*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):
- 7 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 87 % White
  - 0 % 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: 6%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 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	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	319
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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: 18%  
 Total number students who qualify: 57

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %  
40 Total number of students served

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

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</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: 5
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	28
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 14:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	96%	96%	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.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

The New Rockford-Sheyenne School District will provide a challenging learning environment that enables all students to reach their maximum potential.

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**

---

The New Rockford-Sheyenne School District is a Class B school, easily accessible, with Highway 281 being the major route through the communities of both New Rockford and Sheyenne. Sheyenne is located 10 miles north of New Rockford. We also have access to a local airport in New Rockford and train travel via Amtrak, 39 miles to the north in Devils Lake. BNSF railroad transports product through our community. New Rockford is the county seat of Eddy County, housing governmental authorities at both city and county levels. We take pride in our small town regarding our extracurricular activities in school as well as students' academic achievements.

The New Rockford-Sheyenne School District serves 322 students in grades PK-12 from the communities of Sheyenne and New Rockford. We are a consolidated district, serving children from the former New Rockford and Sheyenne Districts. This consolidation took place in 2006. The district's boundary lines encompass 353 sections of land in four counties: Benson, Eddy, Wells, and Foster. We have one school site in the City of New Rockford, conducting programming for students Pre-K through grade 12. We are currently configured as an elementary and secondary school site.

Our elementary houses 197 students grade PreK - 6. We provide instruction in the content areas of math, reading, writing, social studies, science, music, and physical education. We also integrated a block of time for art instruction the past two years, along with an exploration time of day, one day a week for fifty minutes, offering voice and choice for our students to be engaged in areas they are most interested in. Students are able to choose from a variety of STEM options that include everything from cooking and baking to engineering and science to health/fitness.

Our language arts and math curricula consist of small group instruction, allowing the teacher the opportunity to interact with every student every day of the week in a small group setting. This truly gives teachers the ability to understand the learning needs of all students. Groups are organized according to data from assessments used each quarter to identify the learning needs of all students. The instruction is aligned to rigorous academic standards and social-emotional skills students need to be successful in school and in life.

Most grade level sections in our elementary are single classroom sections. However, with increasing enrollment, a priority has been placed in grades K-3 to create small class sizes, using class size reduction dollars. This practice ensures that our students and teachers have strong early intervention opportunities. We use our student performance strategist to support our students and staff in our elementary program, being able to offer further one-on-one intervention in a small group setting. This position provides instructional recommendations to our teachers as a result of our response to intervention process. This position models and recommends alternative instructional strategies and observes student responses to these changes. In addition, we have provided instruction for the past six years to preschool students. This is a half-day program, convening in either the morning or afternoon, meeting four days per week.

Our school values its commitment to support teachers in their exploration of research based, instructional strategy development. Teachers feel empowered to find and utilize tools to meet the needs of their students in the classroom. We meet regularly through our RTI process and staff meetings to develop ideas and shares successes regarding student growth. Our leadership team is focused on success for all students and invested in creating systems that allow for the success of all children and staff professional development opportunities.

We administer multiple student assessments during the year as a progress monitoring tool. The staff has a process in place in which all teachers regularly analyze data, using the results to have collaborative conversations, planning instructional strategies around best ways to help our students learn, and goal setting each quarter with students so they fully understand what they are learning and why it is important. We continue to improve upon more effective goal setting planning conversations with our students, continued innovative practices, students working at their individual ability level at their own pace, and professional development training for staff to learn more about these practices. School personnel develop and administer needs assessments among the staff, using the resulting data to develop and implement goals and strategies to

enhance student academic achievement and teacher effectiveness.

Commitment to shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning is evident and is reflected in communication among leaders and staff. Challenging educational programs and equitable learning experiences are in place so that all students achieve learning and life skills necessary for success. We take pride in the opportunities we provide for our students regarding instructional practices that include active student engagement, a focus on depth of understanding, and the application of knowledge and skills.



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

---

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

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

Through the district's continuous improvement process that took place a few years ago, it was identified that our Reading/English Language Arts instruction needed attention in order to be better aligned to the standards and support the individual learning needs of the students. As a team of staff and administration, we convened multiple times to plan curriculum and instructional practices/strategies. From these meetings evolved a plan of implementing small group instruction in each classroom, as well as being able to engage our students in goal setting, helping them understand the areas in which they were performing really well and those areas in which they needed to improve upon.

We purchased a guided reading program, including both fiction and non-fiction books, to support the small group instruction, as well as two online programs to increase skills in literacy and comprehension. The daily school schedule was also designed to incorporate a one-hour common planning time in which teachers review student data in order to more effectively and efficiently plan lessons/instruction around standards that students need to work on further to increase their knowledge.

Through regular progress monitoring using Renaissance STAR each quarter, and Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA-MAP) in the Fall and Spring, teachers group the students into sections of 5-6 students and instruct to a small, intimate table group versus the large whole group, while the remainder of the students work in online programs. Lexia, helps students improve literacy skills, and MyOn allows students to listen to and/or independently read selected books according to their individual reading level and work on assignments/quizzes to increase comprehension and reading fluency. Our district is fortunate to have 1:1 devices at all grade levels, K-6, which allows us to fully incorporate the use of the computer as an essential learning tool in each classroom, every day.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

The New Rockford-Sheyenne elementary school plans lessons using the Saxon Math curriculum. The overall instructional approach begins with a math meeting, reviewing multiple math skills and functions, mental math completion, including practice of the new skill. Even though our data has shown an average/above average level of understanding, we knew it was important to try a different strategy in order for each student to get the time and attention needed in order to be proficient with the skills they were learning. Rather than continuing whole group instruction, small group instruction was implemented, in which grade level teacher teams meet every day to plan instruction and reflect on current practices by analyzing the Renaissance STAR, NWEA MAP, and informative assessment data. Lessons and instructional strategies are flexible and change regularly to meet the needs of the students; all while being aligned to state standards.

Our guided instruction allows students to be placed in small groups as each student meets with the teacher, every day, for 20-30 minutes. They then move into rounds using online applications, as we are fortunate that each of our students has their own device, to further their practice and understanding of math skills, and/or continue to complete their assigned math work. The online programs include Edmentum, Moby Max, Math Facts in a Flash (through Renaissance) and DreamBox.

We are currently reviewing math curriculum options, particularly for grades 4 - 6, that are more unit based versus the Saxon curriculum, which is cyclical, in order to more easily align with our state standards; therefore, being more teacher and student user-friendly, when planning quarterly units. If necessary, students who continue to need further math practice or intervention are able to receive extra help from our student performance strategist in grades K-3 and Title I services, grades K-6, if needed.

#### **1c. Science:**

Our science curriculum is taught using both direct instruction and problem-based learning according to the state standards. Teachers develop units and plans quarterly to ensure the necessary material to be learned at each grade level is understood by students, is applicable and attainable. In the primary grades, as well as some of the intermediate grades, science is integrated with the math, writing, and reading curriculum. We have a non-fiction portion as part of our guided reading curriculum that has a variety of science books, easily integrated into the reading block during the school day. Instruction is delivered through the use of big books in the primary grades, and mostly in lecture format in the intermediate grades. Many times, you will see and hear peers teaching peers, and students involved in inquiry when problem-solving or working in groups. Students are often given the opportunity to showcase their knowledge through collaborative projects. It is becoming apparent to us, through the review of assessment data, that we engage the students in more hands-on, lab-type activities and further science vocabulary enrichment. Currently, staff and administration are researching a more hands-on science opportunity which we hope we can implement a more explorative and innovative experience for our students. Our goal is to access our community resources; the local soil conservation service, extension office, park board, tree service, farming community; just to name a few, to get students out of the classroom walls, exploring nature and the environment we have around us right here in New Rockford, ND. This will not only enhance the curriculum but give the students a broader sense of science all around them. We currently offer an end-of-day exploratory time in which students choose activities of interest to participate in every week for one hour, of which a variety of science options are included.

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

Our current elementary core curriculum for social studies starts with the North Dakota state standards. Each grade level has standards that are put forth and met in each classroom using a variety of materials and instructional methods. Instructional content is structured around the following areas: history, North Dakota specific history, economic systems, political institutions and the role of citizens in government and society, geography, culture and individual and group identity.

Currently, instruction and unit plans are created using the Harcourt Social Studies series. It is used to build foundational knowledge of the content and is then personalized to meet the ND state standards. In the primary grades, teachers use big books to understand skills in identifying community and location, and move into deeper learning with map work and United States history in the intermediate grades. Instructional approaches include whole group lessons with small group instruction included at times, project-based learning opportunities, student led presentations, and a variety of hands-on projects to enhance engagement and understanding.

As a staff, we are researching new approaches and reflecting on current practices in order to increase knowledge in the area of social studies. Our guided reading program includes two leveled reading sets, a non-fiction and fiction selection. This allows teachers to integrate stories from various reading levels when applicable to the lesson or standard being taught. Teachers plan both traditional and non-traditional assessment opportunities with classes in order for them to show understanding.

Many different methods are used to assess mastery of the ND Social Studies standards. These include traditional assessments, projects such as Google Slideshows, speeches and writing projects, and passion projects. Specifically in grade 3, students research a famous person in history, and prepare a presentation at a Living Wax museum for parents and community and our grade 4 students participate in a field trip each school year visiting our states capitol as part of the North Dakota Studies Standards.

#### **1e. For secondary schools:**

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

New Rockford-Sheyenne Elementary preschool includes a morning session and an afternoon session, each lasting three hours in length, four days a week. The state standards include multiple domains; broad areas of

learning and development that are essential for school readiness and long-term success. The central domains are: Approaches to Play and Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language, Communication, and Literacy, Cognition, Social Studies, Creative Arts, and Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development. Each domain is related to and influences the others. Our preschool is an important part of student's social and emotional development as they enter kindergarten and beyond, as they are involved in exploration and discovery and forming positive relationships with adults and peers.

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

The elementary students in grades K-6 participate in physical education, music, and art each day of the week. Grade level combinations are divided into three groups and rotate between these three areas for thirty minutes at a time. The grade level combinations that attend each section are as follows: K, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6. During the time the students are attending these activities, grade level teacher teams meet. This time is used to collaborate, problem-solve, create lessons, and plan instruction around the review of data from the Renaissance STAR assessment and NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessment.

One year ago, we implemented a specific art time for our students in which classes have a scheduled time every day to learn about different forms of art and artists; rather than just getting to 'do' art once a month in the classroom setting. The art time has been an enjoyable part of the student's day to discover their creativity, create unique projects, and simply have time to draw, paint, or color. Art is something that we have not always had access to in our day, so this is something that we certainly want to be able to continue. We also have an opportunity to access the Artist in Residence Grant program through the North Dakota Council on the Arts. This allows us to bring in professional artists to our school, giving our students the opportunity to participate in performing and visual arts.

Our physical education teacher plans quarterly units around the standards and prioritizes skills needed at each level. Health is an important component integrated into the lessons as well, as the teacher is a certified personal trainer. Students are learning life-long skills and are engaged in activities that can be part of their daily life beyond their school years. Assessments are completed for each student regarding physical activity and fitness each quarter to determine the level of learning achieved and if more practice and participation is needed in any skill area.

The music curriculum is planned in quarterly units, prioritized around the state standards, as students are learning skills through the integration of music, movement, speech, and drama. Lessons are planned from the use of the Orff curriculum, as she is a certified Orff instructor. Assessments are completed for each student regarding the skills covered in each unit, along with determining the need for further practice and readiness to move on to the next lesson/skill. Technology, differentiated instruction, and a variety of teaching strategies are utilized to ensure learning of concepts and skills in both physical education and music.

New Rockford-Sheyenne School is fortunate in that we are a 1:1 device school across all grades, K-12. Lessons are planned in each content area utilizing the computer in conjunction with classroom activities. Each student has an opportunity throughout the day to complete work on their device, participate in blended learning opportunities and small group instruction, and learn further through online supplemental programs. Our school library is an inviting, welcoming environment where students can drop by to check out a book, sit and read, or complete classwork in a quiet setting. Students can access the library throughout the day during a planned time with their class, or as needed on their own to check out books and complete research projects, accessing other materials as necessary. Our library media specialist works with the teaching staff as a resource partner when planning lessons or projects, and creates activities centered around reading and the library setting to engage and motivate students to continue to have an enjoyment for reading and books.

We were fortunate this school year to implement a social and emotional learning curriculum in our primary elementary grades. One day a week, students in grades K-3 attend a thirty-minute session focused on social and emotional skills. Through a mindfulness-based approach, we strive to foster a sense of empowerment in students that helps them to seek healthy, positive, relationships with their friends, family, and in their community, ultimately resulting in positive contributions to society as well. By focusing on the primary

grades, the goal is for the students to carry the skills they learn into later years of school and life, making good choices throughout.

### **3. Special Populations:**

The faculty and staff of New Rockford-Sheyenne Public School emphasize personalized learning in many forms. Each elementary classroom teacher utilizes differentiated instruction, small group instructional rounds, individualized academic programs, and progress monitoring systems on a daily basis, in order to tailor each student's educational experience to his or her specific needs. These techniques balanced with direct instruction, problem-based learning, and collaboration support students' eagerness to grow academically and socially.

Our students are fortunate in that each student benefits from having their own device to perform at their personal ability level. This allows them the opportunity to further practice required skills using online academic programs that pinpoint current skill levels in multiple areas. Teachers continually keep track of the program data, identify areas of struggle, and then plan and provide specific instruction while continually monitoring progress. For example, MyOn and Lexia, two research evidence-based programs that were implemented into our reading instruction, enhances the reading curricula on each student's individual level. The learning activities on these programs begin at each student's individual learning level and gradually increase in difficulty to challenge the students and help them improve their skills. In addition, our math curriculum includes the opportunity for students to learn math through an online program, Dreambox. It greatly enhances classroom instruction with an adaptive game-like platform that engages and motivates students .

Teachers participate in goal setting with each one of their students on a quarterly basis, ensuring that students fully understand areas of strength and areas that need more work. Through quarterly progress monitoring using multiple assessments; Renaissance STAR specifically, along with NWEA MAP, and the NDSA (North Dakota State Assessment), students know and understand how often and why we assess their learning. We have much more work to do in this area to help them develop further motivation, grit, and a growth mindset, but are involved initiatives that will help us meet that endeavor.

When our learners are struggling and teachers see significant concerns in any area, they are expected to refer that learner to the RTI (Response to Intervention) team. The classroom teacher, the schoolwide title teacher, school counselor, special education teacher, student performance strategist, and principal meet to identify the following: current areas of concern, both social/emotional and academic, review of assessment data, current interventions already in place for the student, and current communication had with parents. From that information, a plan is developed for what might need to be done further in order to determine whether continued intervention will be sufficient or if cognitive testing should be pursued. The team meets each week if necessary to review new referrals or revisit previous referrals after interventions have been implemented to assess progress.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

The New Rockford-Sheyenne Elementary School has strived to engage and motivate students over the past couple of years with the implementation of a more personalized learning approach and offering voice and choice throughout the day. Students have flexible seating in many classes. They choose what helps them learn and work best, from sitting on the floor, on cushions, a couch, a desk, a wobble chair, in a group setting, or by themselves, just to name a few. They can choose from various assignment options in a variety of subject areas how they would like to show understanding of particular skills through choice boards and projects. With our 1:1 technology in all grades, student learning is enhanced through the use of supplemental online applications as students are able to further practice skills to master understanding in order to move on the next level of learning.

At the beginning of each school day, each teacher begins class after the bell with a morning meeting; a research-based activity from Responsive Classroom. This has been such an engaging, positive strategy, building a strong sense of community, and setting children up for success socially and academically. Four purposeful components are the foundation for the twenty to thirty-minute meeting; a greeting, sharing information about important events in their lives while listeners offer empathetic comments or ask clarifying questions, a group activity that fosters a sense of family and helps students practice social and academic skills, and lastly, a morning message is crafted to help students focus on the work they'll do in school that day.

We were fortunate this school year to implement a social and emotional learning curriculum in our primary elementary grades. One day a week, students in grades K-3 attend a thirty-minute session focused on social and emotional skills. Through a mindfulness-based approach, we strive to foster a sense of empowerment in students that drives them to seek healthy, positive, relationships with their friends, family, and in their community, ultimately resulting in positive contributions to society as well. By focusing on the primary grades, the goal is for the students to carry the skills they learn into later years of school and life, making good choices throughout.

Not only do we want our students engaged and motivated, we desire and expect the same for the teaching staff. Teachers are allowed and encouraged to be innovative with their learning and instruction. Teaching staff are supported through regularly scheduled staff meetings twice a month, along with one monthly early release time. This allows the opportunity to collaborate with each other, draw out feedback, assess needs, giving teachers time to share in a presentation format, what is working well for them in their classroom and/or an instructional strategy that has been effective with their students that all are welcome to learn about and implement.

One of the biggest successes for teaching staff has been the common planning time that is part of the daily schedule. Teachers have one hour of uninterrupted time every day to meet as a grade level team, reviewing data, planning lessons, preparing activities, and simply sharing their wonderings, questions, and knowledge with each other.

Administration seeks out leaders on the staff to be the change-makers and take the lead in order to move everyone forward. Teachers are encouraged to observe their colleagues within the school and beyond to always continue their learning in order for more effective instruction to occur. When professional development opportunities are available that teachers have an interest in, they willingly participate in the learning and become facilitators in bringing what they learned back to the whole group. Teachers are expected to take risks, make mistakes, and fail forward. The teachers take a proactive approach to exploring new ideas and ways of thinking. They are open to exploring new methods and approaches to teaching and learning.

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

New Rockford-Sheyenne School consists of many stakeholders, including students, staff, parents, the board of education and community. The community consists not only of our New Rockford and Sheyenne school district communities, but the greater community of North Dakota schools and educators. We work very hard to provide a variety of mediums through which we communicate to our stakeholders. We utilize our Facebook page, our district website, and app to ensure that everyone who utilizes digital tools has daily information, handbooks, policy, meeting minutes, etc., available as needed. We also designate our local newspaper as the official newspaper of record. School board agendas, data and minutes, and special features showcase our school. We utilize a phone announcement system, Instant Alert, to notify our families of important upcoming events and announcements. With surveys, we assess needs and attain information from our families that we need in order to make informed decisions about the processes that take place in the school setting.

Our school's online reporting system, PowerSchool, is available for families to access student grades and attendance information at any time. Elementary classroom teachers keep families apprised of the latest information regarding their children through the use of newsletters, particularly in the primary grades and also in the intermediate grades when necessary. We seek out families to assist in the classroom with special projects, assemblies, or activities, and request chaperone help when we venture out on field trips.

We access our local nursing home facility for an experience in which our fourth-grade students engage in a reading or art activity with the residents, learning the importance of relationships, lifelong learning, and building a strong partnership with our business community. Our elementary school media specialist hosts two school bookfairs during the school year that coincide with parent-teacher conferences. A new event this Spring will be a 'Breakfast and Books' event in which students will invite their parents to eat breakfast while staying over into the morning reading books together, in which each student will get to keep for their own, donated by a book club, along with literature that we will disseminate on the importance of literacy. Through our Schoolwide Title I program we have hosted successful math and reading nights for our students in which families partake in a variety of engaging, hands-on activities with their children, being involved in our school in a relaxed, inviting atmosphere centered around learning.

## **3. Professional Development:**

New Rockford-Sheyenne School has always prioritized professional development. Administration guides this by surveying staff, identifying what the needs are, and then developing plans aligned to meet the needs expressed. Our school effectively analyzes data to further refine areas of strength and weakness to best plan for our students. Two years ago, the administration created a data team, which included all levels and areas of teachers and the administration, analyzing the importance of assessment and implementing goal setting with the students at all grades. We also had to determine a more effective strategy to increase our reading scores as we were finding that whole group instruction did not differentiate for the needs of the students that each classroom experiences. After identifying trends in our data that indicated a lack of growth in some grade levels, administration and staff reflected on strategies that were being used and evaluated their effectiveness. An instructional shift was made to better personalize the reading instruction by incorporating guided reading and small group instruction. This shift was found to be so effective for students and for teachers to better understand their classroom of learners, that it was also implemented in our math instruction. By grouping students of similar skills and abilities, instruction is now more intense and focused and has resulted in the improvement of students' skills and abilities as indicated by recent data. We also scheduled time in each day for collaboration among grade level teams (K-1, 2-3, 4-6) in order to better plan instruction based on state standards for language arts and math specifically. This, in turn, refocused our teachers' ability to ensure incorporation of the standards when planning lessons and units of study.

Teachers have open communication with administration in regard to personal professional development. When a staff member communicates a need to pursue some area of interest, administration guides them and supports them in order to develop their professional skills. This, in turn, builds up a team philosophy and more confidence among the staff as a whole. Teachers become leaders sharing with each

other what they have found to be effective and spreading it to their colleagues to ensure success for all. The administration takes a proactive approach to exploring new ideas and ways of thinking. We are not fearful of exploring new methods or approaches to teaching and learning. We now realize that when we frequently reflect on what works well and what does not, it provides for a much better experience for our students and our staff.

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

Leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly defined through district policy. With that being said, the leadership philosophy and structure in the elementary school is that of shared ownership and supported through a culture of trust and collaboration. We have a shared system of beliefs where student learning comes first. The administration supports the staff in this by continually striving to find ways for our staff and students in our school system to improve their learning by considering all options regarding instructional programs, schedules, learning styles, and quality programs.

Along with that, non-negotiables regarding instruction and responsibilities are set at the beginning of each school year centered around instructional practices. School leadership and staff share high expectations for professional practice. Teaching expectations are clearly communicated and demonstrated. Decisions regarding needs and/or changes are grounded in the strategic long-range plan and review of student data. Regular staff meetings are scheduled to enhance opportunities to collaborate with each other, draw out feedback, assess needs, and allow time for teachers to share in a presentation format, what is working well for them in their classroom and/or an instructional strategy that has been effective with their students that all are welcome to learn and use.

Not only are our students allowed and encouraged to be innovative with their learning, the administration expects teachers to model the message of being motivated in their own professional learning, to have grit, and a growth mindset. Teachers are expected to learn from each other, as they are the feet on the ground every day with students, being flexible, and changing instruction as needed according to what the students need at any given moment. We allow autonomy for the staff to always think forward, that mistakes are part of learning, and if something is not working today, we reflect, make changes, and fail forward together. Administration seeks out the leaders on the staff to be the change-makers and take the lead in order to move everyone in a positive direction.

Teachers are encouraged to observe their colleagues within the school and beyond to always continue their learning in order for more effective instruction to occur. As administration, we are also given the opportunity to attend leadership conferences and events, be a part of our regional principal's groups, and are encouraged to continue our learning through ongoing professional development in order to be a more effective leader. School leadership and staff share high expectations for professional practice.

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

---

At New Rockford-Sheyenne School we believe the one practice that has been the most instrumental to the school's success is our teamwork and fail forward attitude, along with confidence in each other as a staff to recognize, reflect, and know when changes in our academic programming are needed in order to increase academic success for all students. The administration allows staff autonomy when making decisions that best support classroom needs and professional learning. Just two years ago, it was presented to the teaching staff that a significant change was necessary regarding instructional programming, particularly with the reading curriculum. Assessment data that was gathered from ongoing progress monitoring indicated the need to try a different instructional approach in order to reach all ability levels of all students. There was obvious hesitancy in such a drastic change but supports were put in place to make the necessary changes, allowing the teachers to work together collectively and collaboratively. Time was incorporated into the daily schedule to allow for grade level teaching teams to meet every day for one hour, reviewing data, planning lessons and instruction, creating unit plans, and time to just visit about students, teaching, and to simply support each other in their everyday work. The shift in instructional programming using small group instruction, integrating technology, and more one-on-one learning with the teacher, proved to be so effective, teachers began this same teaching and learning structure in math and other content areas, allowing them to understand their community of learners at a whole different level.

The administration believes in the ability of the teachers to create spaces and opportunities in their classrooms for effective and efficient learning to take place. Teachers structure their classrooms, seating plans, and learning spaces to provide an inviting, welcoming, safe haven for their students, allowing them the opportunity to perform at their very best each day. The teaching staff is allowed to design instruction, aligned with the state standards, to reflect the learning styles of all students at all levels. Because of the many learning styles and abilities, teachers recognize the importance of allowing access to multiple options for students to show mastery of learned skills through projects, formative assessments, presentations, and videos, just to name a few. Our achievement scores and attitudes of the students have shown much growth. The confidence, engagement, and overall joy of teaching and learning has a renewed positivity with staff and students alike and we are excited about what the future holds.