

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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 2 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	0	0	0
K	3	11	14
1	9	10	19
2	18	6	24
3	12	12	24
4	8	10	18
5	13	13	26
6	9	5	14
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	72	67	139

*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
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 98 % White
 - 1 % 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: 2%

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	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	3
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	132
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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: 29%
Total number students who qualify: 41

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %
20 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay | <u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>3</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 15
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.	7
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.	7
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 12:1

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	98%	89%	95%	93%	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.

The students at Corsica-Stickney are provided a safe and caring environment, where faculty, staff, and administration try to ensure that each student gains the skills, knowledge, discipline, and character to succeed in our modern technological society.

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

Corsica-Stickney School District believes that all children deserve an education that will provide each student the skills, knowledge, discipline, and character to succeed.

Corsica-Stickney Elementary is part of the Corsica-Stickney School District which is made of the two communities of Corsica and Stickney, and covers 382 square miles. The elementary is located in Stickney and the junior high and high school is located in Corsica. We serve pre-school students in each community. Both Corsica and Stickney are small rural communities located in the South Eastern part of South Dakota. Stickney lies eight miles south of Interstate 90 on Highway 281, and Corsica is another eleven miles south of Stickney on Highway 281. Both communities are agriculturally based, with the majority of our students having ties to farming. The school district lies in the counties of Douglas and Aurora. The total PK-12 enrollment for the district is 281 students, with an enrollment of 170 PK-6. Approximately one-third of the students in the district live in low socio-economic households and receive lunches that are free or at a reduced rate.

Although we are a consolidated district formerly made of two separate schools our communities have embraced our new situation with full support on many different levels. We have an active School/Community Improvement Council, which is a non-decision making group, that meets bi-annually to discuss academic achievement as well as strategic plans to help sustain the district well into the future. This group is made up of Administrators, school board members business people in the community, parents and retired community members. We also have athletic and music booster clubs who work diligently to help enhance our programs.

Academic achievement is something Corsica-Stickney prides themselves on. Despite our small size and limited resources, providing our students with an up to date, rigorous curriculum has always been a top priority. Our staff is made up of highly qualified, caring teachers as well as several qualified paraprofessionals to insure all of our students are getting the individualized help they need. Our elementary has updated the curriculum in all subject areas, has invested in new technology by adding one-to-one computers for all students grades 3-6 in order to best meet the new content and technology standards. Our staff and administration is committed to teaching the standards set forth for our students in South Dakota. As a collaborative team, we meet, and analyze student data to guide us in setting goals and guiding our instructional practices. We have an excellent Title I program which also uses the data to help guide the types of enrichment students get. We have a great student/teacher ratio. All of these factors have helped us make sure that students in Corsica-Stickney are not “falling between the cracks.”

Corsica-Stickney Elementary has shown growth in student progress over the past three years. For the 2017-18 testing, Corsica-Stickney students scored an average of 24% higher than the state average in English language arts, 32% higher in math, and 23% higher in science. Our attendance district wide has averaged over 95% for the past five years, which is also higher than the state average. Prior to consolidation, the Corsica Elementary School received the National Blue Ribbon Award in 2005. In 2010, the Stickney High School was recognized with the National Blue Ribbon Award.

Our current school district is comprised of two former districts who both put academic excellence on the top of the priority list, and as a consolidated district we continue to do the same. We are very proud of the fact that our students consistently achieve high scores on their assessments. We work diligently to analyze the data we have about our students to help us make curriculum decisions and set yearly goals. However, we also work very hard to provide a learning environment that fosters productivity for our students. We recognize that content is only a part of the whole education, and we emphasize the importance of establishing a positive school community and culture that supports each student.

Corsica-Stickney Elementary also strives to provide opportunities that go beyond the classroom. We have an Elementary Student Council that acts as a voice for the students in our Elementary. Through our music department, students have the opportunities to perform at honors choirs or festivals outside of our school. We offer many contest opportunities for our students who show strength in the arts, writing, etc.

In the end, Corsica-Stickney is very proud of the fact that we have earned the reputation of being a very friendly, caring, and welcoming district. Together, we have created a culture where everyone works together and is committed to the education of every child.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Corsica-Stickney Elementary School’s core curriculum is directly aligned to South Dakota State Standards as well as National and Common Core Standards. The focal point of all curricula at the elementary level is to use an interdisciplinary approach in which literacy is stressed in the instruction of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, which helps promote student proficiency in reading complex informational text in a variety of content areas. Our instructional practices are student centered and student driven. We recognize the need for professional development in these areas, and make it a priority to tailor our instructional practices to best meet the student needs when covering content. All of this is done in order to correspond with the College and Career Readiness goals set forth by the State of South Dakota.

The English Language Arts curriculum at Corsica-Stickney Elementary challenges students to gain mastery in reading, writing, literary analysis, and listening and speaking skills. Starting in pre-school, we lay a solid foundation in phonetic awareness which is carried forward progressively throughout the elementary grade levels. Intense phonics instruction is done in the primary grades to help establish early literacy skills. Handwriting is also a point we emphasize as we recognize the benefits it has on a child’s development as well as the role it plays in a child becoming a successful reader and writer. Our students are exposed to many different genres of text and along with the comprehension of reading, we emphasize speaking and listening as important skills needed to communicate effectively in and out of the school setting. Writing has also been a focus, not only in ELA, but across all subject areas. Through the writing portion of ELA, we are able to incorporate research skills. We assess our student progress by using the DIBELS test to help us understand their fluency levels, doing quarterly writing samples to measure progress in writing, as well as assessment through our reading and phonics curriculum to help us understand the levels of each student.

1b. Mathematics:

Mathematics at Corsica-Stickney Elementary is also aligned to the South Dakota State Standards and Common Core Standards. We strive for our students to become mathematically proficient and literate by demonstrating many mathematical problem solving strategies. Students are taught to explain their math reasoning as early on as Kindergarten. The math curriculum we use today has evolved from focusing mainly on computation to now emphasizes integrating technology into a broader range of math skills such as problem solving and reasoning that better prepare students to develop 21st century skills and application to real-world applications. In order to best monitor our students progress, we use the DIBELS Math Assessment as well as the assessments in our curriculum. If necessary, we can place proper interventions to students who may need extra assistance or instruction.

We are fortunate to be a Title I school. By utilizing our Title I teachers in math, teachers are able to differentiate learning by being able to break classes into groups by learning style or level. With this, students can be given extra practice where needed, or enrichment to build on their skills.

1c. Science:

The goal of Corsica-Stickney Elementary School’s science curriculum is to foster curiosity and apply scientific thinking to real world problems. All grade levels emphasize student collaboration by using inquiry-based activities, hands on activities in the science lab, and group discussions about scientific topics being covered. Throughout the course of the year, science content is being covered while teachers also implement speaking, listening, and research into the science curriculum. “Science Fusion” is the curriculum we use in order to meet our South Dakota Science Standards. We teach science in all grades K-6. K-5 study general science that covers many areas of science, while the 6th grade focuses on physical science. In each unity of study, STEM activities are embedded into the curriculum, and hands-on activities are done. We also require our 5th and 6th graders to complete a science fair project and present it at our local science fair.

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

Social studies is an area that Corsica- Stickney Elementary seeks to challenge students as well. In social studies our ultimate goal is to inspire our students to become committed, participating citizens. We want our students to have an understanding of the complex world they inhabit as well as the important role they play in it. Corsica-Stickney uses the “My World” curriculum in order to meet the South Dakota Social Studies Standards. Each grade level covers content in the areas of History, Civics/Government, Geography, and Economics. In the primary grades, it starts with very simple concepts involving things around them. By third grade, they are starting concepts in each area that focus on the United States. In fourth grade the curriculum is specific to South Dakota History. In fifth grade, the focus in each area deals with the United States, and in sixth grade the students are taught concepts relating to World History. In addition to this, each grade level keeps up on current events and issues with a monthly subscription to “Scholastic News.” Other things implemented within the social studies curriculum are class field trips, research projects, and classroom discussions that debate two sides of a current event topic.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

Corsica-Stickney offers pre-school to four year old children in the district. We have a certified pre-school teacher, and offer four half-day sessions each week. We have a morning group and an afternoon group. Our pre-school curriculum is aligned to the South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines, and we are currently in the process of working toward meeting the pre-School Levels of Excellence set forth by the School Administrators of South Dakota. We acknowledge the importance of pre-school as being part of a strong foundation to a student’s academic career. When Corsica-Stickney meets to set academic goals for the elementary, the pre-school teacher is an integral part of that process.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Although Corsica-Stickney is a small rural school, we try to offer opportunities in as many other curricular areas as possible. On staff, we have both a band and vocal instructor who teach music. All students grades kindergarten through sixth grade have general music classes each week, and band is offered to students once they enter fifth grade. All fifth and sixth graders in band receive private lessons and group practice. The music department holds concert performances each semester which includes all students grades K-6. Fifth and sixth graders also participate in vocal and instrumental contests each year. We don’t have an art instructor, but art is done in each classroom weekly. We do provide opportunities to compete in different contests that come up throughout the school year.

Physical Education is also taught to all grades K-6. Our physical education program is based on the standards set forth by the State of South Dakota, and also includes participating in challenges outside of our school that promote health and wellness for elementary age children. Each grade attends P.E. classes during the week. Each class meets twice a week and every other Friday.

Technology has been a priority for Corsica-Stickney Elementary over the past few years. Each class K-4 meets or computer class once a week. In these grades they work on basic keyboarding and computer application skills. In 5th and 6th grade, they get two class periods a week, and the curriculum continues to build on the computer skills, while integrating writing and researching skills. Students in grades 3-6 have one to one computer access.

Guidance is another weekly class all students get weekly. Our guidance program is facilitated by our school counselor who focuses on character, bullying, and career exploration.

3. Special Populations:

Teachers at Corsica-Stickney Elementary are committed to meeting the needs of every student. Our staff carefully analyzes all data we have on our students, and uses that information to drive decisions about curriculum, instructional strategies, and other services a child may need in order to be most successful. In the elementary, we administer several assessments to help track student progress and growth throughout the year. DIBELS is one we use three times a year to assess reading fluency and comprehension. We also use the DIBELS Math three times a year to assess math progress. Writing is also assessed throughout the school year. Each grade PK-6 does a writing sample each nine weeks. At the end of the school year, our students take the Smarter Balanced Assessment in grades 3-6.

The data gathered from these assessments is used to guide decisions made on curriculum, overall student achievement goals, individual teacher goals, and what types of professional development to pursue. From studying the data, and trends in the data from year to year, we are also better able to identify areas where we need to improve on, as well as individual students who need extra attention.

Teachers at Corsica-Stickney Elementary are very involved in writing the school goals, and work collaboratively to make sure we are not leaving gaps in the curriculum. Teachers do a great job basing their instruction on the SD State Standards and Common Core Standards as well as the data we have on our student's achievement. This helps them to maintain flexibility, responsiveness, and creativity in the classroom, which in turn helps to better meet the needs of all learners. Corsica-Stickney is also a Title I School. We have two highly qualified Title I teachers who provide support in Reading and Math in each elementary classroom. Teachers also develop Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for the year targeting areas of student growth and achievement.

Our elementary, although a small rural school, has relatively larger class sizes which range from 15 students to 26 students. Because of this, we have three full time para-professionals who help in our larger classrooms. Having these highly qualified staff in place allows for more individualized instruction. Teachers work very closely with the paraprofessionals on monitoring student achievement, and proper instructional strategies to ensure we are best meeting the needs of our students. This also allows for more small group instruction. One other benefit this has is being able to work closely with students who are performing below grade level as well as being able to push students who are above grade level.

In our elementary, 12 percent of our student population receive services through our Special Education Department. Through all of the regular classroom assessments as well as each student's individualized education plan, we work very hard at closing any achievement gaps. Students who are on IEP's receive extra support through our special education program. We accommodate our special education students according to their needs, and we have several ways of doing that. We have a Special Education Director as well as four paraprofessionals that work for the department who we utilize to deliver the instruction. Depending on the needs of the student, we can provide integration, pull-out, independent curriculum, and one on one assistance.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Corsica-Stickney Elementary has achieved much success in academics, and we contribute much of that success to our warm, relaxed and enjoyable environment. Although we recognize the importance of test scores, our emphasis is creating a culture of learning where everyone feels valued and important. We believe that social and emotional development is just as important as academic growth and development. Teachers feel supported through the school's collaborative environment. We refer to us collectively as a family and our actions are proof that we truly are. We believe everyone who enters our building should feel safe and welcome.

Our small size is an advantage when it comes to developing personalized relationships between administration, teachers, and students. Our teachers get to know all of the students and their families, which contributes to our high level of parent involvement. This also allows teachers to have a good understanding of each student which also helps build relationships.

Teachers are supported in a number of ways. Because our average class size hovers around 20 students, we have general education aides to help in our classrooms. Our school has made it a priority to keep our curriculum current and aligned to the state standards, which supports our teachers in their instruction. We also work very hard to make sure we are providing teachers current technology in their classrooms and professional development to ensure they can use it to its full potential. Teachers are also supported by the school professionally. The district provides training for teachers that coincide with the school goals set forth by our teachers and makes sure teachers are informed of professional development opportunities throughout the school year and summers. Lastly, our staff is completely supported by our administration. From professional development, the implementation of new teaching strategies and curriculum, to support with students or classroom issues, teacher in Corsica-Stickney have full our support.

We have implemented a couple of things in our elementary to help create a better environment. We try to base our behavior on what we call "The Jaguar Way." This is an outline of the expectations we have for our students in all areas of our school. We have also implemented "The Jaguar Code." This is adapted from the "Cowboy Code of Ethics" and encourages good moral behavior and ethics in all situations of life. Another morale builder that we do for our students is our monthly "Smile O Gram" assembly. We gather all of our elementary students and teachers together. This time is used to talk to the students about things that are going on, both positive and negative, but more importantly it is used to recognize students who have been caught doing good throughout the month.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Within the Corsica-Stickney belief statement, we acknowledge the cooperation between school, families, and communities as a necessary component in the development of our students. We have embraced this statement and strive to keep open communication and working relationships with our parents and community members. We have an active non-decision making "School and Community Improvement Council" who meet twice a year. This committee is made up of board members, administration, teachers, business people, and community members. They are kept updated on all school issues and are encouraged to share information.

In order to keep our parents and community members informed, we have a monthly newsletter and a school website set up that is available to all patrons. The newsletter highlights the students and all of the things they have participated during the month as well as a calendar of the upcoming month to help people plan for school activities. The website contains all daily and weekly announcements as well as a plethora of other information. The parent portal allows parents to see their child's grades, missing assignments, attendance records, and other school information. In grades Prek-3rd, a weekly parent letter is sent home as well.

The Elementary school also does a few things to encourage family involvement. In the beginning of the year, we host an open house for students and their parents. In the spring, we house a pre-school and kindergarten round-up for students and their parents. Also, we do a family “Kick-Off to Summer” where parents are invited to come in for some fun activities before summer break.

We also like our students to get out into the community during the school year. Each grade visits either the Senior Citizens Center, The Assisted Living or the Good Samaritan once throughout the year. We have grades that go around on Earth Day to clean ditches, and our students partner with the local food banks and other organizations to do donation drives at school to help collect items to distribute to people in need.

3. Professional Development:

The goal of our professional development is directly enhance each teacher’s ability to improve student achievement. The majority of our professional development is teacher and data driven. Other professional development addresses state-driven changes. After our data digs at the end of each school year, we look at student achievement to see if there are areas where we need to enhance our teaching. As an elementary staff, we go together to many of the trainings to help with the continuity of the new concepts learned. We have worked specifically on enhancing our use of technology in our curriculum, as well as training to use new technology that we have implemented into our classrooms such as our promethean boards.

Many of our elementary staff participate in book talks throughout the school year which has been beneficial in several ways, including great discussions amongst our staff, opening new points of view, identifying new issues we are facing and learning to better deal with them. All of these have led to a greater sense of comradery amongst staff members and has uplifted the moral amongst them. This positive energy that the staff gains is then passed on to our students. We have found these to really stay more consistent as a whole.

Teacher also select their own professional development based on personal goals and needs for their grade level. For example, our kindergarten and pre-school teacher attend an academy specifically tailored to their grade level.

Collaboratively, we as a staff identify areas where we feel we need the most help getting our students to achieve higher academically, or look at areas of behavior that we are looking to better understand and pursue professional development opportunities in those areas. The school district takes these needs and works to get meaningful professional development put into place for the Professional Development days we have put into the school calendar throughout the year. Should the opportunity for the entire staff to attend a professional development opportunity that pertains to our school, we strive to make arrangements in order to allow them to attend.

4. School Leadership:

Corsica- Stickney is a small rural district. The administration consists of a superintendent, high school principal, and an elementary principal. The superintendent ensures that we have the resources of time and money to make sure our staff can work in a highly effective manner. The School Board has set policies that support our mission and the superintendent sees to it that these are enforced fully and fairly. While serving in this role, he is very present throughout both buildings and has developed relationships with the students and staff.

The elementary principal serves as the instructional leader, maintains order and safety, promote district and school goals, and supports students and teachers in the elementary building. In addition, she may teach classes, substitute teach when needed, and help with any custodial emergencies that may arise. The principal is very involved with leading students and teachers to reach high goals. This includes guidance in curricular decisions, professional development, classroom management, and constructive evaluation using the Danielson Model.

been a big factor in our academic success. Providing a safe environment is at the forefront of our mission, and the principal places a high emphasis on creating a warm friendly environment where everyone is valued. The culture that has been established has resulted in a trust and openness between administration, teachers, students, parents and community. The elementary principal not only knows the students by name, she know their personalities, likes and dislikes, hobbies and interests, and she probably knows their families as well. It is these personal relationships that are the foundation of our learning community, and one of the most important factors in our academic achievement.

The elementary principal embraces a shared leadership role where teachers are able to give their input on policy and decision making. Teachers feel safe and trusted, and are allowed autonomy in their classrooms. The principal also works with the teachers throughout the school year on professional and student goals they have for their classrooms, and helps each teacher in working to best attain these goals.

The principal also works hard to include the students' opinions when possible, and make sure to keep them informed on things going on in their school. By doing this, students truly get a sense of pride in their school, and it gives more value to their role in our school community.

All decision making at Corsica-Stickney, is done with the well-being of the student as the main focus. It also remains a top priority to make decisions with integrity, fairness and ethical practices which includes considering social justice as well as the district's culture. While the administration believes in shared decision making, she is not afraid to make the hard or unpopular decision when necessary. This is done only after ensuring that everyone's input was taken into consideration.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Corsica-Stickney elementary is no stranger to academic excellence. Although a newly consolidated district, our past two independent school districts were both frequently recognized for the same academic achievements. For Corsica-Stickney Elementary, the one practice that has been the most instrumental to our school's success is the collaboration of our K-6 teachers who work together to make sure we are delivering a standards-based education with current curriculum and proper teaching strategies from start to finish. By working as a cohesive staff, we have been able to accomplish a number of different things that have contributed to our academic successes.

First of all, when we look at our data, we are able to find areas where we do well, and areas where we need to work on. Once we have identified these areas, we are able to discuss what we do that contribute to the success in strong areas, and what we need to be doing at each grade level in order to improve in our weaker ones. During this process, we are able to unveil the roles and responsibilities each teacher has as far as the curriculum is concerned, we clarify the expectations for the students at each grade level, and talk about teaching strategies that are best practice and try to make sure we are using common practices throughout our elementary.

Secondly, it has also brought forth more unification amongst our staff. Teachers get an understanding of what goes on in every classroom, and see the importance that each grade level has on building a solid education. It has also spurred grade levels to work closer together for activities that can be done between older and younger students.

Third, as a staff, we have been able to pin-point professional development needs that our staff recognizes need to be addressed in order to better serve our students. This not only supports the comradery of our staff members, but helps with the consistency of high standards of teaching throughout our elementary when many of the teachers are attending the same types of trainings. This is not only beneficial for our students as they move forward from grade to grade, but is much easier to implement when you are not doing it alone.

Last, but certainly not least, it contributes to the good morale we have in our elementary building. Having only one section of each grade level can leave teachers feeling a little "alone", but because we view each teacher and grade level as an important part of our overall success, each teacher feels valued and important in what our school is trying to accomplish. It is also motivational knowing that no matter what level you teach, what you are doing in your classroom truly matters. The most beautiful thing about having a staff that sets themselves to high expectations and values what they do, is watching them pass those ideas and mind-sets on to the students in our building.