



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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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

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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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	49	24	73
K	20	24	44
1	27	22	49
2	36	22	58
3	28	30	58
4	33	19	52
5	31	31	62
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
<b>Total Students</b>	224	172	396

\*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
  - 22 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 76 % 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: 11%

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	28
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	42
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	396
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.11
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 54%  
Total number students who qualify: 213

8. Students receiving special education services: 26 %  
102 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>9</u> Autism                  | <u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>1</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>17</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>30</u> Developmental Delay    | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</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: 7
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	25
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

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 16:1

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%	91%	95%	95%	96%
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.

At Star Center we work together to inspire students to become inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring leaders who positively impact our local and global community.

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**

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Star Center has found its success in valuing collaboration and relationships with all its stakeholders. Star Center Elementary School was established in 1840 and continues to serve as the center of the community. Star Center is one of three elementary schools in the Lake Geneva Joint 1 School District. Our school is located in a rural area near the Wisconsin and Illinois border and serves approximately 396 students in early childhood through fifth grade. Star Center is one of three Title I elementary schools in the Lake Geneva School District. Our district works hard to make sure that the same curriculum is used district-wide and that our students have the small class sizes and resources they need to be successful. Many of our students are economically disadvantaged and 54 percent of our students receive free and reduced lunch. In addition, 26 percent of our students receive special education services. Based on the diverse needs of our students, educators at Star Center work diligently to utilize research-based strategies to ensure success for all students academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally.

The past two school years, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, we were proud to be recognized by the state of Wisconsin as a Five Star School for significantly exceeding expectations as reported on our Wisconsin School Report Card. Star Center's overall accountability score of 93.1 ranks us as one of the top elementary schools in the state of Wisconsin. We are proud of the recognition that our students have received it is because of their perseverance and positive attitudes toward learning that we are able to close the gaps and find success for all.

As a growth mindset school, the staff continually works with students to develop an understanding of how powerful a positive mindset is and how it impacts their learning. We believe in building strong relationships with our school community. Our goal is for all students to believe that they can achieve anything and to view their mistakes as learning opportunities. At Star Center, we teach the power of the word yet. It empowers students to become confident, capable, and conscientious learners who are committed to achieving their personal learning goals. Despite the emotional and economic hardships many of our students face, the Star Center Elementary staff believes that all students can achieve. This belief is communicated on a daily basis by staff to students, parents, and community members.

Building strong, positive relationships is at the core of everything we do at Star Center Elementary. We believe that every student is an amazing and capable individual. Identifying and using students strengths to build their academic and social skills is a critical part in what we do at Star Center to develop all students into confident learners. We stand behind our belief that every student deserves a safe learning environment which promotes academic success. Our school family believes that by working together we are better.

We are the pillar of this small community and offer essential services to our families. Our school community takes pride in building relationships with our community partners: Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Bloomfield Township Police Department, Trinity Lutheran Church, and Immanuel Lutheran Church. The support, resources, and services we offer to our families ensure the development of our young learners and build relationships that will last a lifetime.

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

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

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

Star Center Elementary strives to instill a love for reading in all of our students. This is done by using quality mentor texts to model and teach the foundational skills necessary for student achievement. Our balanced literacy framework utilizes the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts. These elements include phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, oral reading fluency, and comprehension. These essential skills are taught through a workshop model.

Our goal is for all students to develop into proficient readers who are able to comprehend a variety of texts. We believe using the Wisconsin State Standards for English Language Arts allows us to create a sense of conceptual clarity, through communication and collaboration with Reading Specialists. This collaborative effort ensures growth and success of all learners.

Star Center teachers use the Next Step Guided Reading Assessments which helps determine strengths and needs of students. Based on the information gained from these assessments, teachers utilize the guided reading model to group students who have similar needs. This enables teachers to continually evaluate students' learning, differentiate instruction, and explicitly teach comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and writing. Students' comprehension is deepened through small group discussions of texts. These small groups allow teachers to build and maintain a strong, trusting learning relationship with students and in turn students have an overall better understanding of their personal strengths and how to continue to build their individual skills.

Teachers have a strong support system from our reading specialists which includes frequent consultations about students who are working with them during intervention time. Intervention lessons are delivered daily for 30 minutes, five days a week using a variety of interventions that best meet the needs of the children. Our administration and specialists value the teachers' professional judgment and understands that a teacher's daily anecdotal notes about students are also a very important part of understanding our students and what they need to be successful.

Writing is incorporated in all academic areas at Star Center. Writing is also explicitly taught using the Center for the Collaborative Classroom curriculum. Students use mentor texts to discuss and evaluate writing. Star Center teachers use a workshop model which allows for individual conferencing and goal-setting as well as peer-editing. The writing process is taught through student exposure and practice in narrative, informational, and opinion/argumentative writing genres.

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

Star Center uses Math Expressions-Common Core published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt which aligns with the Wisconsin State Standards. We use the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) multi-level systems of support model which includes collaboration, balanced assessments, and high quality instruction. The focus of this math program is to guide students to a true conceptual understanding. We encourage students to think critically and to explore multiple ways to solve problems. A sense-making Math Talk community is created where students feel comfortable working through problems independently, in small guided groups, and as a class. Trusting relationships are developed between students as they work through problems. During Math Talks, students are developing their communication and reasoning skills. The eight mathematical practices from the common core are incorporated into daily lessons through whole class, small group, and independent activities covering the content of algebra, geometry, probability, number sense, data and statistics, and measurement.

All students are assessed three times a year using AIMSweb Benchmark Assessments in the areas of computation and mathematical concepts and applications (CAP). In addition, teachers consistently utilize

anecdotal notes and classroom common assessments to drive our instruction and determine student needs. This also allows us to differentiate instruction for all students including those ready for enrichment. All of the math assessments used in our school are recorded, discussed, and used to improve student learning.

Teachers collaborate vertically between grade levels and with the math intervention teacher. During vertical team meetings teachers work together to meet the needs of all learners. This collaboration allows consistency and a common language between grade levels. The intervention teacher works with students daily for thirty minutes, during math intervention time, five days a week. All students working in intervention are progress monitored weekly for consistent growth.

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

The district has adopted the Wisconsin State Standards which provide real-world opportunities for students to use the inquiry approach to science. Teachers collaborate within grade levels to align our instruction with the Wisconsin State Standards including: physical, life, earth, and engineering and design. We utilize science centered project-based learning to formatively assess the students' growth and learning. In addition, concepts are infused within literacy instruction and guided reading texts. Our teachers engage students by posing a problem or question. Students then explore the concepts and skills through hands-on activities and classroom discussions where they are asked to show evidence of their understanding. Students are encouraged to elaborate through independent and peer interaction to discuss and compare their understandings of knowledge learned. The final phase allows students the opportunity to review and reflect on their own learning and understandings of skills. In addition, we integrate science in other areas of the day so students can think critically and understand the connection to their daily lives.

Star Center received a grant for a STEAM lab (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics). Our STEAM lab inspires our students through the power of innovation. This lab creates a student-centered and student driven space. Ideas come to life with coding, robotics, a 3D printer, Rokenboks, Cubelets, and Lego Robotics. Our lab exposes students to the design process in an authentic way for them to learn problem solving skills and continue to build a positive growth mindset through trial and error. To add, students strengthen their personal relationships with peers in this engaging environment. Our STEAM lab encourages our students to create, build and become curious twenty-first century learners.

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

In social studies, teachers use a project based learning approach to allow students to connect to their world, understand the connections between the past and present, and foster problem solving skills. Our social studies instruction aligns with the Wisconsin State Standards utilizing Houghton Mifflin series, current events, National Geographic Readers, and trade books. The instruction at Star Center includes geography, history, political science, and economics. Our instruction examines historical and current events and how they impact or have impacted the environment, geography and people of the state of Wisconsin, the United States, and the world. In addition, we connect to our community by diving deeper into the history of Lake Geneva. We infuse literacy skills, including but not limited to; compare and contrast, cause and effect, making connections, and problem solving into daily instruction.

In addition, our staff enhances our student learning experiences through simulations, field trips, and embed social studies content in science, reading, and writing. Daily opportunities are given to students to think and act like historians, develop analytical skills, draw conclusions, and provide evidence of their understanding. Our instruction, in conjunction with strong community connections, promotes positivity in our community and beyond. Students develop a deeper understanding of the content standards through project based learning that is assessed daily through observations and teacher developed rubrics. Fifth grade students participate in Junior Achievement BizTown where they take part in an interactive simulation on how a town's economy works. This allows for students to make a connection between in school learning and our local economy.

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

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

The core curriculum areas in our four year old kindergarten are social/emotional development, which include sharing, independency, friendships, following rules, procedures, and routines. In literacy, the students are introduced to letter names and sounds. The students strengthen their fine motor development through basic strokes in writing and scissors skills. In math, students are learning numbers 0-10, counting numbers to 20, and recognizing basic 2-D shapes. This provides students a solid foundation for success in the primary grades. The four-year-old kindergarten program is involved in library, physical education, and guidance weekly. Students also receive developmentally appropriate technology instruction.

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

All students at Star Center, four-year-old kindergarten through fifth grade, are involved in other essential curriculum areas to help improve student achievement through enhanced curriculum offerings, individualized learning, and balanced growth of the whole learner.

The visual arts education curriculum at Star Center Elementary inspires our students to problem solve creatively through art media and the art-making process. Kindergarten through second grade students meet for forty-five minutes of art instruction once a week. Fourth and fifth grade students have art instruction weekly for one hour. Students are engaged and learning about art through cross-curricular lessons that integrate math, reading, writing, science, social studies, music, character education, technology, and kinesthetic learning.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade attend general music class twice a week for thirty minutes. We strongly believe in the Orff Method for music instruction. The Orff Method teaches musical concepts through singing, chanting, dance, movement, drama, and playing a percussion instrument. Reading comprehension and phonetics are reinforced by the rhythmic dissection of songs studied in class. Students are frequently clapping syllables and creating rhythmic patterns. Movement is also an important aspect of our music classroom. Students use movement to help learn songs as well as study music history. Students also have the option to participate in fourth and fifth grade orchestra and band.

Our physical education program offers students a wide variety of age-appropriate experiences including instruction. Since being awarded a national Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) Grant, we expanded instruction in a variety of motor skills, fitness education, traditional team sports, individual sports, roller skating, snowshoeing, daily use of heart rate monitors, nutrition education, stress management, and character development. Students in five-year-old kindergarten through third grade receive thirty minutes of physical education twice a week, while fourth through fifth graders receive forty-five minutes twice a week.

We have an extensive library of over 15,000 titles that students can access. The library is also open during the summer months for families to come and check out books and do an activity since there is not a public library in the community. In addition to checking out books, students are given hands-on opportunities to become effective users of information and technologies. Technology instruction incorporates coding, computer assisted drawing and 3D printing, Lego Robotics, electronic circuitry, keyboarding instruction, and basic computer skills.

Guidance class incorporates the Second Step curriculum and focuses on character building and life skills. Students learn how to manage stress and feelings to help make healthy choices during difficult situations. Star Center has a very strong character education program that is reinforced in guidance with all students. All students participate in a school wide character education activity once a month through buddy classes. In buddy classes, older classrooms are partnered with younger classrooms in order to provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills, mentoring, and peer relationships amongst students. The buddy classes are guided by their teachers to participate in a character education activity together. Through these activities, not only are students learning the character education activity objective, but they are challenged to practice skills such as of problem solving, communication, and perseverance as they collaborate on the activity. The

older students embrace being role models for the younger students and the younger students love the connections they make with the older students. This partnership helps build a sense of community among all students.

We offer many extracurricular classes after school including intramural sports, coding club, book clubs, choir, movement, exploration, and crafting activities. These programs are taught by Star Center's certified staff and are offered to all age levels. Transportation is provided to enable all students to attend.

To promote leadership among our student body, we celebrate student leaders with a program called Peer Helpers. Peer Helpers organize fundraisers for our local food pantry and blood cancer organizations, help around the school with various jobs such as recycling and helping younger students with making it to the bus, winter gear, and lunchroom help. These students are held to a high level of student behavior and expected to be role models for the student body. Our younger students often express their goal to be a Peer Helper when they are older and able to apply for this honor.

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

At Star Center we believe in universal achievement. This belief is that every student has the potential to reach their academic goals. This drives our collaborative efforts to align with state standards, assessment data and interventions. We recognize the importance for early interventions. As a result, Star Center is staffed with two reading specialists, a math specialist, and an English language learner (ELL) teacher. Our student services staff consists of a social worker, guidance counselor, and school psychologist. Our small class sizes allows our staff to build impactful relationships and truly reach every student and family.

To close the achievement gap, Star Center utilizes the Response to Intervention framework. Through our core assessments, which include Jan Richardson running records, Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), and observation of students, teachers are able to identify students who need intervention in the areas of literacy and mathematics. PALS is a research based screening, diagnostic and progress monitoring tool that is used to identify students at risk of developing reading difficulties.

Social and emotional skills are also closely monitored throughout the school day including recess, in the lunchroom, hallways and in the classroom. All of our teachers and support staff meet weekly, using a professional learning community (PLC) format to constantly discuss, collaborate and plan interventions when needed.

In addition to constant collaboration and PLC meetings, our school uses a folder system to communicate about certain students from year to year known as the Action Plan. It is designed to help classroom teachers and specialists document what they are noticing with students and what they are doing to help these whole learners be successful. The folders are passed on to the upcoming teachers to communicate all of the areas that affect the whole learners.

Our math, reading, and English language learning specialists meet with at risk students thirty minutes daily in a small group setting to help students close their achievement gap. Grade level teachers and specialists collaborate monthly to identify and review students through anecdotal notes, grade level assessments, and Aimsweb data. Aimsweb is an assessment system for universal screening, progress monitoring, and data management. Teachers collaborate to look at this data and identify the lowest 10 percent. These students struggle with foundational reading skills, spelling, and writing. These students then receive intense small group instruction to close the gap. Another focus is to build the students' strategies and skill set to help them reach grade level benchmarks. Our specialists and classroom teachers work closely to align their instruction for individual students so they are able to reach their learning goals. To better support students in the least restrictive environment, specialists and special education teachers often co-teach with the classroom teacher in the classroom. This allows students to work within their classroom and interact with peers on grade level material. This has proven to be a successful model for our school. In addition, instructional support is provided through many resources such as: Leveled Literacy Intervention, Foundations, Wilson Language, Rewards, Rime Magic, and Heggarty. Star Center has been recognized by the state for closing the achievement gap but we also pride ourselves in providing enrichment for those ready for more. Some

enrichment opportunities include but are not limited to participating in district wide spelling bees, math bowls, Math 24, an anthology project, and Destination Imagination. We constantly strive to go above and beyond to do what's best for all students.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

Star Center is dedicated and devoted to providing all learners with an engaging, positive, and motivating school experience. This positive and powerful school community is achieved by fostering relationships with the students and staff to ensure everyone feels valued and safe. Positive, personal relationships matter and everything else is built from there. It is the foundation for any success regardless of the curriculum, programming, and interventions. Additionally, the students and staff are treated with respect and as valuable, contributing members of the school community. In this safe, comfortable environment, students, and teachers take risks to ensure that all students are meeting their academic potential and being the best version of themselves.

Our school has implemented a character education program that is led by teachers and staff. All students from four-year-old-kindergarten through fifth grade participate in positive and meaningful activities that incorporate the focus of the program, embracing a growth mindset. This program is supported weekly in guidance class, monthly during buddy class time and annually through an overall theme. Students who exhibit positive character traits have the opportunity to be recognized by any staff member and receive a Leadership Award. Awards are chosen weekly and students are then featured on our morning announcements.

The staff follows the high expectations of the character education program and consistently models expectations. Our staff shares the same beliefs, values, and has high expectations for each other. A sense of collaboration is infused throughout the culture of Star Center. This core belief is seen in collaboration between staff in the classroom, specials, student services, main office, custodial, and kitchen staff. This collaboration is evident when character education or other themes are infused in physical education and art, not just in the classroom. Star Center has endless examples of teachers and staff working together to provide a safe, supportive culture for students. This collaboration may also occur behind the scenes when the kitchen notifies student services that they are concerned that a student's lunch account is significantly depleted, but they are unable to reach the family to see how we can assist, through maintaining connections between students with previous teachers to foster healthy experiences with relationships, through an older student assisting in a younger classroom to develop stronger leadership skills, or utilizing specials' teachers to host breaks for students who struggle with hyperactivity or anxiety.

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

Star Center is located in a very small community outside of the city of Lake Geneva. There are few resources and supports within this small community, so the school serves as a resource, recreational outlet and daycare. Star Center has strong working relationships with local churches and organizations who provide volunteers to support our before school reading program, Reading Education through Adults (READS). The READS program uses these volunteers daily to provide additional reading opportunities through structured lesson plans. The school houses a before and after school daycare in collaboration with the Geneva Lakes YMCA. The school organizes numerous collaborative efforts each year for families. These efforts support coordinated donations for: household products, winter apparel, books, holiday gifts, food, and school supplies. Star Center has collaborated with a local family to provide weekend meals for families in need. Our local police department can be seen on a daily basis within and around our school. They interact with staff and students every morning and afternoon to reinforce Star Center's commitment to a safe, strong school community.

However, the most important efforts in engaging families lie within relationships between the staff and families. Nothing can replace a phone call or note home to connect with parents and caregivers on how their student is doing at school, meeting face to face when there are concerns or struggles and complimenting students efforts. Once families step into the building, there is a large, welcoming lobby. The lobby is purposefully arranged to welcome families to use as a gathering space. Furthermore, it is filled with helpful information for our school families. There is a table with informational flyers about

community resources and events. Additionally, there is a table where all of the upcoming school events are displayed. We know that parents want to be a part of their child's learning. As a result, the walls are filled with pictures of the children participating in various learning activities from their time at school.

We believe that by making our families feel welcome and a part of our school community, we have been fortunate enough to have a strong Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The result of our successful PTO is that they are able to support a variety of learning initiatives for the students. These initiatives include: family nights, school-wide literacy programs, funds for off-campus learning opportunities and expanding classroom libraries. Our end of the year community picnic, hosted by our PTO, is truly a community event with the highest attendance of any event held each year.

### **3. Professional Development:**

Advanced growth and leadership opportunities are offered to administration, teachers, and paraprofessionals through ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities. Opportunities are focused at the district, building, and personal level. All professional development supports our strategic plan in educating the whole child. The belief in lifelong learning is at the core of the professional development provided for the staff at Star Center. Teachers are constantly encouraged and challenged to grow and learn to be the best versions of themselves, while constantly ensuring best practices in all aspects of educating the whole child as a learner.

The Star Center staff have a variety of district provided opportunities to grow professionally through shared responsibilities provided by district administration, school administration, staff and outside agencies. In an effort to support both the strategic plan and the curricula, staff at Star Center participate in ongoing learning opportunities in the areas of literacy, math, and school safety. These opportunities are provided through monthly early releases, staff meetings, and teacher inservice days. Reading and math specialists provide professional development in order to support fidelity and best practices in core instruction. In addition, the staff receives professional development through Houghton Mifflin, Jan Richardson and Lexia.

The district has developed a system where teachers participate in book studies, technology workshops and other district professional development opportunities for Lake Geneva Units (LGUs). LGUs provide an opportunity for teachers to take control of their own professional development, while obtaining salary advancement. The main focus of professional development opportunities is to promote self-reflection and individualized growth that benefits the growth and learning of our students. Currently there are 15 professional development opportunities being offered to the staff as LGUs supporting the district's strategic plan in developing the whole learner, promoting community engagement and improving school safety plans and procedures.

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

The school leadership at Star Center Elementary School consists of shared leadership amongst the members in our professional learning community. Unlike the old model that supports a one person leadership, our building principal highly values and supports leadership in others. Our principal greatly trusts and believes in our staff, giving her the ability to promote shared responsibilities, a shared purpose, as well as shared leadership. She constantly goes above and beyond to do what is best for our staff and our students.

Shared leadership continually develops a staff that feels valued and empowered to do what is best for the students and their learning. This leadership style results in a staff that is driven to work hard to ensure all students grow and the needs are met. This collaborative approach to leadership positively impacts instructional practices. The shared leadership that exists in our school allows us to have a vision to commit to professional development, as well as shared instructional leadership.

The question that is at the forefront of all decisions made by the principal and consequently by her staff is what is best for kids. There is a constant balancing act between the normative demands and guidelines from the state, the school board, the district, the community and parents. Our principal has the unique ability to respect these demands while maintaining the focus of doing what is best for the kids. Our principal helps to

ground us and remind us that as long as we are doing what is best to benefit students, then we are doing the right thing.

Our school is a part of a true professional learning community with grade level team leaders, specialists and a supportive mentoring program for new teachers. Various leadership and curriculum teams are in place to plan, support and implement goals for our school. The principal is part of all curriculum teams and serves as a contributing member. The ultimate goal for all committees is to increase student learning through a shared collaborative vision of growth and success for all students based on their needs.

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

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Star Center has found its success in valuing collaboration and relationships with all its stakeholders. Star Center has dedicated staff that are committed to the students' academic success and social emotional needs as well as supporting each other as professionals. Our school puts students first and their needs are at the foundation of all decisions made. We understand that our students' mental health can either drive or impede their academic success. Collaboration and professional development in the areas of mental health and trauma has become an ongoing focus. All of Star Center educators have participated in multiple professional development activities to increase their understanding of challenging behaviors and strategies that can help prevent, reduce, or de-escalate these behaviors.

The staff at Star Center also has a strong collaborative system to ensure that students demonstrate academic gains which in turn allows us to close achievement gaps. Grade level teachers meet once a week in professional learning community (PLC) meetings with reading and math interventionists, the special education teacher, and the ELL teacher to discuss individual student needs, core curriculum planning and instructional ideas, unit assessments, and progress monitoring results. These grade level meetings drive classroom instruction, help determine student groupings for focused and intentional instruction and help us identify students in need of specific intervention.

Star Center staff collaborates and supports each other as professionals to provide the best environment and instruction for students. A group of team leaders is selected by the principal to be representatives for each grade level, including building specialists and student services. These leaders serve as spokespeople for ideas, information, and communication within the staff. Other committees are formed and meet frequently throughout the year to collaborate, plan activities and support systems. For example, when new curriculum is introduced committees are formed to support staff through the implementation and assist teaching with fidelity. Our character education committee collaborates several times a year to plan, create, and implement activities for students that create a sense of community and support their mental health as well as reinforce our guidance curriculum. Our sunshine committee is dedicated to supporting staff through luncheons, support in family illnesses or death, as well as providing showers for staff that are getting married or having a baby. Our staff is considered a family and providing a fun, positive environment allows the staff to have a positive working environment where staff feel valued as professionals.

Through continuous collaboration, Star Center builds strong, positive relationships between staff, students, and the community. These relationships inspire our students to become leaders that are inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring individuals who positively impact our local and global community.