

U.S. Department of Education
2020 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. Tiffany Cox
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 7027 N SR 75 PO Box 69
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City North Salem State IN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 46165-0069

County Hendricks

Telephone (317) 994-3000 Fax (317) 994-3030

Web site/URL https://www.hendricks.k12.in.us/nse E-mail coxt@hendricks.k12.in.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* Dr. Scott Syverson E-mail syversonsc@hendricks.k12.in.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name North West Hendricks Schools Tel. (317) 994-4100

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. James Diagostino
(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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	5	7	12
K	11	17	28
1	13	20	33
2	20	13	33
3	23	22	45
4	20	9	29
5	27	14	41
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	119	102	221

*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):
- 0.4 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 0.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 97.6 % White
 - 1.5 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 4%

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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	8
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	217
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 24 %

Total number students who qualify: 53

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %

38 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>10</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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 the 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.	15
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	1
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.	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 15:1

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

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	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 2019.

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.

Preparing today's learners to become tomorrow's leaders.

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

North Salem is a small, rural school that receives targeted Title I assistance based on socio-economic status of the community. We are comprised of two towns, North Salem and Lizton, and we are the smallest school in our district. The towns of North Salem and Lizton are primarily farming communities with no major industry. In recent years we have seen pockets of growth in small, family owned businesses and shops such as restaurants, flower and gift shops, even a small doctor's office.

In many cases, generations of families have attended North Salem Elementary and we still have a very active Alumni Association from graduates, prior to our district's consolidation, that attended North Salem High School up until 1975. Families are very supportive of the school system and the school is seen as the central focus of the community. We have a small, yet very active, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that supports students and staff through many avenues. Each year the PTO raises well over ten thousand dollars that is used to fund all of our school field trips. They raise this money through a Walk-A-Thon event that accepts donations or pledges instead of requesting families to buy products from a traditional fundraising company. Local businesses also donate to help support the purchase of prizes for our students who raise money. Due to this massive effort, our PTO manages to provide an average of four field trips per year per student at no cost to our families. This provides wonderful learning opportunities that our families would not otherwise be able to provide for their children. Some of our favorite experiences include the Eiteljorg Museum, the Children's Museum, the Indianapolis Speedway, Conner Prairie, and our annual Fifth Grade Kings Island trip. We are fortunate to be able to purchase a yearly school membership to the Children's Museum of Indianapolis which allows our classes to attend multiple times in a school year. While this may sound like it could become "old hat" for our students, teachers must always tie their trip to an event at the museum that relates to their standards. We have attended memorable learning experiences like plays, robotics lab, working with Ely Lilly scientists, and even speaking to astronauts on the space station. Our PTO continues their support by providing thousands in teacher grants and even scholarships to our exiting fifth grade students in the form of deposits into a 529 account in the child's name. Our PTO truly dedicates itself to the betterment of our students and staff.

North Salem Elementary School curriculum is reviewed each year to evaluate sequencing, formative assessment practices, intervention and remediation practices, and the level of rigor being provided to students. We ensure that our curriculum is aligned with the Indiana College and Career Readiness Standards for each subject area. Throughout the course of the school year, classroom teachers meet monthly to review data, student success and need, and develop goals and strategies to support those students not performing to goals. By reviewing student data monthly through PLC times we are able to stay very in tune to the needs of each child. This allows us to see the larger patterns across grade levels and create connections among successful strategies and among areas of need. The areas of need are addressed through multiple avenues, including but not limited to peer observations, team problem-solving, master teachers within the district providing training, outside avenues of professional development, book studies, etc.

North Salem has utilized the concepts of the Josten's National Renaissance Program to improve the culture of the school over the last seven years. As a staff, we believe that a key to success is creating an environment where students feel they belong. We want students to want to be here. We support them as they work toward goals and we celebrate their achievements. We believe that even small successes are important. The students know this and thrive on it. Some of the recognition we provide throughout the course of the year are: students of the month, daily birthday recognition, daily positive character display recognition, monthly top attendance classrooms, the Hawaii 5-0 party for all students with fifty days of perfect attendance, Honor Roll, Kiwanis BUG program, and even spirit day participation. We host a large amount of spirit days throughout the year as a fun way to celebrate or recognize events such as Read Across America, celebrate milestones like completing state testing, as well as showing support to our larger community for events like homecoming. We believe that there is nothing wrong with having some fun after all of the hard work.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

North Salem has occasionally been called traditional or even old fashioned. We do not see this as an insult but rather an affirmation that good old fashioned hard work can still get the job done. We don't jump on every new program that comes along, but instead we focus on our core and what the data tells us. At our focus is data driven instruction that is aligned to the standards and a commitment from teachers to adjust instruction based on student needs. All grade levels align curriculum to state standards. While we have purchased programs in all academic areas, we do not follow a textbook in any grade or subject as a rigid plan. Instead, the purchased programs are tools to help us meet the goals of mastering skills outlined in state standards. Assessments are chosen for their reflection of the mastery of state standards and key skills. We regularly review the assessments themselves to determine the level of rigor and the usefulness of the feedback from the data. If it can't impact our instruction then it is not useful data. In the primary grades we put a great deal of weight in data from Fountas and Pinnell benchmarking system and math benchmark tests. These give us actionable data that can transfer into instructional and remedial approaches. In the upper grades we use PIVOT Inspect benchmarking that provides a reflection of student standard mastery. We also use math benchmark tests and regular writing prompts that are locally created. Again, these are pieces of data that are actionable and can directly impact what the teacher does with the student, group, or entire class to ensure that a skill is mastered. In order to identify high ability needs among our students we use NWEA testing, CogAt testing, and SIGS rating scales in grades kindergarten, second, and fifth. We have very stringent identifying expectations to ensure that high ability students receive proper placement and enrichment. For students falling below expected levels of performance we provide remediation through various programs such as LLI, Waterford, Razkids, Freckle, small group instruction, and special education services.

1b. Reading/English language arts

In all grades students receive a ninety minute reading block daily. During this time they receive large group instruction as well as leveled instruction based on their current ability and needs. It is not uncommon for a classroom to have four or more levels of groups that are all working on different novels, leveled readers or reading passages. This requires a great deal of differentiation in the types of activities that students are doing. Supplemental programs used to support reading at various levels includes but is not limited to Leveled Literacy Intervention, Razkids, Freckle, Readworks, Newsela, and various tablet apps like ABCya.

In the past four years our teachers have placed a strong focus on four literacy shifts with close reading, academic vocabulary, citing textual evidence, and increasing the use of informational texts. Our staff has worked through a great deal of professional development and countless hours of reviewing their efforts to regularly improve. These intensive efforts in our literacy shifts led to a marked improvement in our ISTEP scores for the first two years of our implementation. While we do not focus on these four elements at the forefront of our professional development at this time, we feel they are embedded and we provide in-house training to those new teachers who join our staff each year.

1c. Mathematics

In all grades, students have the Go Math program as the basis of their math instruction. However, we do not follow the textbook as it is sequenced. Each year the teachers review the locally created math benchmark tests to determine the level of rigor and alignment to state standards and state testing expectations. This effort happens across the district to ensure alignment among all of our elementary classrooms. From here, teachers sequence math instruction based on power standards and what they consider to be the most logical prerequisite order of material. The benchmark tests are broken down into four weeks of instruction and the sequencing is based on the standards being assessed. Performance on these benchmarks provides data on student needs for additional instruction and remediation in math. Our goal is to have each student reaching

eighty percent mastery on each standard assessed in the benchmark tests in order to consider them proficient. Those students who demonstrate less than eighty percent proficiency, on a given standard receive additional instruction and practice in order to successfully master the grade level standards. In previous years we have also used Reflex Math to support fact fluency and this year we have transitioned to using Freckle to support math needs at differentiated levels.

1d. Science

In the primary grades science and social studies are taught on a weekly rotating basis. In the upper grades science is taught daily. The science program is Pearson and involves a great deal of hands-on activities. Beyond the use of the purchased Pearson science and accompanying science kits, teachers supplement science learning with STEM projects through purchased kits, Teachers Pay Teachers lessons, and other means. We also love to bring in local experts to help supplement our science time. We have lessons presented by McCloud Nature park naturalists, Department of Natural Resources employees, and Hendricks County Solid Waste management. Additional support over the last few years has come from Duke Energy with programs they have brought to our school regarding energy conservation and even the Birds of Prey presentation. Coding is supported in addition to other science lessons by our computer lab assistant who provides weekly coding lessons both during computer specials time and during additional blocks of time that teachers can schedule. We utilize Code.org and Ozobots to supplement student instruction.

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

In the primary grades science and social studies are taught on a weekly rotating basis. In the upper grades social studies is taught daily. We use Pearson Social Studies and classroom work often extends from and connects to reading and writing lessons. Social Studies provides a wonderful opportunity to engage in non-fiction reading that students can then write about. Teachers also engage students in more hands-on projects with social studies that enrich through plays, performances, creative displays and more. While social studies has a value all its own, it is a subject that very directly supports the literacy need as well, so we combine a great deal of our social studies learning with cross-curricular activities of reading and writing.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

The Cubs Community Preschool has been at North Salem Elementary for two years. The purpose of the North West Hendricks Cubs Preschool is to provide a foundation of skills that will prepare students for his or her school career. This program uses the Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards. The foundations include print concepts, reading readiness skills with a focus on phonemic awareness and basic math concepts. Students also work on developing fine and gross motor skills, teamwork and confidence in a school setting. By focusing on these foundations, we provide an alignment that allows our PK students to enter Kindergarten with confidence in their surroundings, an understanding of how learning takes place in a classroom, and the basic skills in early literacy and numeracy so that they can take off in their learning.

While our four year old students enter the building with vastly different skills and exposure, we are able to meet them where they are and continue to build. Some students come in with no literacy skill and leave knowing many of their letters and sounds. Some come into our classroom with knowledge and letters and leave as early readers. All of them leave with a confidence of being able to navigate a school day successfully.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our school provides special area classes for every child each day of the week on a rotating basis. Each child has forty minutes per week in each of the following classes: Physical education, art, music, library, and computer lab. Physical education, art, and music have licensed teachers that are employed part time in our school. Library and computer lab are led by instructional assistants. Physical education places a strong focus on providing healthy ways to stay active. Students learn the fundamentals of different sports

activities, active games, how to use equipment, and other ways to keep their bodies healthy. They learn about being a teammate and how to work cooperatively on a task and they build vocabulary skills through different academic activities. The art class balances exposure to and understanding of visual artwork from all times throughout history with the application process and how to use different media to create different impacts. While the art room has good structure and solid objectives for learning, the activities always incorporate student creativity and expression. Music class provides students with a combination of hands-on experience and performance based experiences. Lessons incorporate music history, exposure to various types of musical performances, singing, instruments, and even learning to read and write music. Each year students perform at the annual Fine Arts Night where all grades perform and have their artwork displayed throughout the building. Even though our enrollment is small, such events are so widely attended by the community that we must divide them up and have different grade levels perform on different evenings. Library class provides for students to make their own reading choices, participate in research for classroom lessons, have stories read to them, and even participate in book battles. The computer lab supports computer science skills by instructing students in how to navigate a keyboard, different programs, and even coding lessons. All five areas work closely with classroom teachers to provide subject area lessons that enhance and support classroom instruction. Special area teachers incorporate strong vocabulary instruction and incorporate writing within their discipline. Special area teachers are also provided professional development to support their integration into the general ed curriculum.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

As a Title I targeted school, we are able to identify those students falling below expected standards of performance and provide them additional support. Our school employs a three-tiered approach to Response to Instruction (RtI). We use data from NWEA, Fountas and Pinnell, ILEARN, PIVOT, district math benchmark assessments, district writing prompts, and classroom assessments to identify students who are at-risk and in need of additional support. North Salem receives a small amount of funding through Title I which is used primarily for assistants in the classroom. The additional assistants support the students by providing extra one on one remediation, practice, and intervention. Our goal for student success is eighty percent proficiency. Students in all grade levels who are falling below this standard are provided support to build skill to hopefully reach this goal within their standards. We provide support through various programs such as Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), the Waterford program, and Freckle. Assistants are trained and supervised by classroom teachers to supplement student daily lessons with additional supports as well as pushing into the classroom for general instructional support.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Each year the district assesses and identifies students for high ability placement. The identifying grade levels are kindergarten, second grade, and fifth grade. The district has recently developed a multi-age high ability program that is housed at two different elementary buildings on the other side of the district. Those students who are identified as high ability are invited to attend the program at the other schools. Each year we have some children who choose to attend and others who prefer to stay in our building. For those performing at high levels and in need of enrichment that choose to stay at North Salem Elementary School, we cluster them based on data trends and we provide them with an advanced curriculum. While the needs of each group may be a little different, teachers are encouraged to enrich and supplement their instruction to a full grade level beyond their current placement. By leveling cluster groups within a classroom and grade level, teachers are able to differentiate to the point of reaching each group at their level of need and pushing to their maximum potential. While there is no specific curricular program used to enrich our high ability students, we pull from many different programs, including the William and Mary curriculum, and material from higher grade levels. In math, we push students to master standards beyond their current grade level. In Language Arts, we dive deeper to develop an understanding of more rigorous text and advanced vocabulary.

3c. Special education

Students who qualify for our Special Education Program receive instruction in the general education classroom or in the resource room based on their Individual Education Plan (IEP) and the recommended Least Restrictive Environment placement. We use a multidisciplinary team process to identify students in need of additional support and assessment through the special education process. Once identified, students receive an individual plan to further guide their instructional and accommodation needs. The resource program serves K-5 students and we have one certified special education teacher. Our district is part of a special education cooperative that helps to support other related services such as Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy. While we do not house these specialists within our building on a daily basis, they rotate throughout our district to meet the needs of students according to stipulations within their IEP. We are fortunate to have special education instructional assistants that also support students in the classroom environment by pushing in to work in small groups and help reinforce daily instruction.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

North Salem believes in supporting the whole child. Two key impacts for our students include our Renaissance program and our recent increase in counseling support.

Josten's National Renaissance program is at the heart of how we work to build the positive climate in our building. This program has changed how we look at setting up recognition and rewards within our daily school lives. We believe in recognizing small milestones to keep students moving forward. An excellent example is attendance. Everyone wants great attendance but it is difficult to motivate a child for perfect attendance for the entire year. Instead, we have a celebration every fifty days for any child who had fifty days of perfect attendance. The overall goal is still to increase attendance but it becomes more attainable by breaking into milestones. With this approach we see that students don't give up as easily. We look at many different aspects of daily life in this fashion, including behavior, academic achievement, and more.

The second major impact to supporting the whole child is our increase in counseling support. In the last seven years we have gone from no counseling services to one day a week, then two days a week, and now we have a full time counselor to be a part of our daily lives. While this decision has been driven by financial ability at the district level, it has been at the forefront of need. Our counselor provides valuable lessons in social emotional areas, team building exercises, and one on one or small group counseling services. She has become a safety net to students with emotional needs or those who have experienced trauma. The counselor also provides valuable support to teachers for problem solving sessions on how to best support students academic needs by first supporting their emotional needs.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

North Salem Elementary School staff believe that good communication with parents is a necessity. Teachers regularly communicate with parents through a variety of ways including email, phone calls, newsletters, online apps, and more. Parents are regularly welcomed into the school to visit for lunch and recess, attend field trips as chaperones, attend school parties, and volunteer at many of our events. The PTO regularly organizes different events and many parents come to the school to participate and donate time. This interaction within the school day keeps parents involved and informed of things happening at school. The majority of our substitute teachers are also parents. We have families who have businesses that support our school system in many ways. For example, one family business has recently sponsored our Robotics club to nearly triple the size of our team by purchasing additional supplies and competition kits so that we can have more students involved. Another family helped to organize and bring the Junior Achievement program to our school and they regularly work with our local bank employees and our teachers to bring meaningful lessons to the classrooms. This endeavor has grown to include field trips to Junior Achievement's BizTown where students run a mini economy for the day. We have parents who write grants to help teachers or a grade level acquire needed items like classroom sets of Ozobots. We also have grandparents who donate their time to come in and practice reading with small groups of children. Even in our small community we have found that there is a wealth of support that can come from working as a team to accomplish our goals.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

In the last seven years we have shifted our professional climate to one where we maximize on each other's strengths. We have worked hard to eliminate a feeling of competition and instead establish a team mentality. Our team mentality has allowed us to identify each other's strengths and use those abilities to provide in house instructional support and professional development through peer led instructional sessions, peer observations, and peer mentoring. As a small school with only two sections per grade level, it is hard to compartmentalize things into grade level initiatives. However, with this difficulty we are more likely to be innovative in our approach to learning because we are looking across grade levels. This cross-grade teamwork ensures that upper grades have a good understanding of what is happening at the younger levels

and vice versa. It also means that we are drilling down in our learning to determine what constitutes good instruction and how we can go about ensuring that everyone has the tools they need. We have begun to use the Pineapple Chart method of professional development which is all about opening a classroom up to other professionals to come and watch. It isn't evaluative, it is informative. At the heart of this idea is that we have a wealth of expertise and we just have to share it with each other. This has been a wonderful shift in our approach because it doesn't cost money and it capitalizes on the quality aspects that are already in place.

4. School Leadership:

Teamwork is at the heart of everything we do. All of us believe that none of us can do it alone. We believe that leading is about guidance and facilitating the improvement of the environment by cultivating the sense of team. This puts all of us in a place of leadership at one point or another. Communication and selflessness between all stakeholders is the key to teamwork. No one is placed in a position of importance or hierarchy that could undermine the work of others. Each member of our team, from the principal, to the secretary, to the teacher, to the instructional assistant, has an important role to play and expertise that they bring to their part of the team. As a well-practiced team, we depend on each other and we trust in each other to give our best effort. A great example of teamwork within our building is creating our yearly school improvement plan. A group of teachers, along with the principal, review the previous year's document. Then we divide up with some of the group in leadership roles among the teachers. We have one teacher who oversees the Math Team and one teacher who oversees the English Language Arts Team. Trust is placed in these leaders to meet with their respective groups, analyze data, set school-wide goals, put strategies in place to meet these goals, and then report back to the entire school with their findings and preparations to move forward. The principal does not have to dictate every step these team leaders take to make this happen. These leaders understand the importance of their task and they work hard to ensure that every component is completed with input from their respective teammates. In the end, this means that our school improvement plan is truly created by our school, not just one or two people creating a document that no one will ever read. This mindset is how we approach most everything we do.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The teamwork mentality is the key to our success. We do not have any one program or instructional method that we can name as the key to our success. It is about the people and their commitment to students and each other. People who have worked here, or parents of children who go to school here, always say this is a special place. There is something about the way people care for each other and commit to each other that allows us to overcome obstacles that other places do not overcome. We don't have a high tech, shiny new school with all of the latest gadgets, we don't have children coming from high income families, and we don't have any magic solutions. We are committed to data driven instruction and believe in using the state standards as our guide. We believe in focusing on the basics of good instruction and we are not afraid to evaluate ourselves to look for areas we need to improve. We just work hard as a team of educators, parents, and students to care for each other and learn from each other.