

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

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

School Mailing Address 227 West Nevada Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Kalispell State MT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 59901-3634

County Flathead

Telephone (406) 751-3900 Fax (406) 751-3905

Web site/URL https://www.sd5.k12.mt.us/8/home E-mail sullivanb@sd5.k12.mt.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* Mr. Micah Hill E-mail hillm@sd5.k12.mt.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Kalispell Elementary School District Tel. (406) 751-3400

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. Lance Isaak
(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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 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	17	18	35
K	23	17	40
1	25	11	36
2	18	18	36
3	17	22	39
4	8	19	27
5	17	13	30
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	125	118	243

*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):
- 3.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1.2 % Asian
 - 0.8 % Black or African American
 - 4.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.8 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 82.7 % White
 - 6.7 % 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: 13%

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	14
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	17
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	31
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	244
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Korean

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

1 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 81 %

Total number students who qualify: 197

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %

16 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>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>13</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: 13

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.	0
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 20:1

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	94%	93%	93%	94%	94%
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.

To provide a nurturing environment in which we teach children to become life-long learners and responsible, caring citizens.

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

Russell Elementary School is located in Northwest Montana in the city of Kalispell. Kalispell is one of four towns that make up the Flathead Valley. It is surrounded by two ski resorts, Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake. Hence, we are the hub for the outdoor recreationalist. Kalispell has a population of about 22,000 people. Among those 98% are English speaking citizens, 1% speak Spanish and 1% speak a variety of other languages (areavibes.com). In 2017 Kalipsell residents with income below the poverty level were 18.5% of its population which is above the state rate of 12.5% (city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Kalispell-Montana). The ethnic population of Kalispell is 92.3% white, 3.4% Hispanic or Latino, 1.73% have a combination of two or more races, and 1.07% are American Indian and Alaska Native residents. The remaining 1.5% includes Asian, African American and others of various nationalities (datausa.io).

Russell Elementary has consistently housed 17 classrooms. To date we have two classrooms each from preschool through third grade, one fourth grade classroom and one fifth grade classroom. In addition, we have a special education classroom, library classroom, physical education area, music classroom and one technology classroom. We currently employ 41 people to successfully run the day to day operations at Russell School. Of the 41, 21 are certified staff members and 13 classified staff members. The remaining seven are support personnel who serve in a variety of categorical areas including food service, custodial and mental health.

Russell Elementary is one of six K-5 elementary schools that make up the elementary district for School District #5. It is the smallest in size and population of all six schools. For the past 13 years Russell School serves mostly median to low income families with an average free and reduced population during this span of greater than 70%. Consequently, opportunities for families to expand students' knowledge is limited and in turn creates a void in their background knowledge for life experiences. Regardless of this, our families have always had a strong passion for education among our families. At Russell School, we are purposeful in creating opportunities for them to expand their knowledge and give them opportunities to explore resources in their backyard. Planned field trips for all grade levels utilizing areas close to us help give experiences for our students to build this background knowledge they may otherwise not be experienced by them. Big Mountain Ski Resort and the Flathead National Forest Service team together to create a winter classroom that we visit. This trip provides educational opportunities to learn about animals in nature and how they live during the four seasons in Montana. Local Museums share their facilities and allow us to learn about the history of the valley we live in. Trips are taken to the Conrad Mansion to learn about the first settlers that inhabited Kalispell. The Hockaday Museum of Art, named after a local artist, has informational tours that are shared with our students. The museum has a permanent collection of art focusing on Glacier National Park. This collection gives our students meaning to the parks history and development. In addition they have rotating art exhibits that are viewed by our students and give them an understanding that there are many types of art. Glacier National Park also has educational programs that give our students opportunities to see the parks natural beauty and learn about the history of glaciers and the impact humans have on our outdoor resources. Trips to Flathead Lake, the largest freshwater lake in the western US, give opportunities for our students to learn about ecosystems and the types of life found in this majestic body of water.

As for Russell School itself, it is our belief that all students can learn. For this to happen there must be a stable foundation that all students can build upon. This foundation is known as tier I instruction. All students receive tier I support to grow both academically and behaviorally. The focus of tier I instruction from our staff creates a stable foundation for all to succeed. The driving force of tier I consistency is led by our Montana Behavioral Institute (MBI) team. This team consists of a variety of Russell School personnel that reviews data twice a month and makes decisions based on the data to improve student and staff outcomes at the tier I level. Through this process and with many years of implementation Russell Elementary has risen to be an MBI Platinum Award winning school. With the philosophy that tier I instruction is important it becomes the rebar that holds our foundation together. Hence, academic and behavioral expectations are known.

Additionally, School District #5 has adopted research based curricular materials in reading, writing and math. Russell Elementary has aligned their professional development (PD) to match the needs of our

teachers with these programs. Focused on instruction to our students, staff expectations have been developed that define researched based instructional strategies that must be seen in all settings. To ensure that strategies are in place, the principal does walkthroughs of every classroom multiple times per week. In addition and with the help of the instructional coach, fidelity checks are made multiple times per month as it relates to the instruction of our intervention programs.

In cooperation with the state of Montana, we were recipients of the Striving Readers Grant (SRG). The SRG allowed regional professionals in the area of reading and writing to help develop instructional plans for our teachers that would improve the output of student work which translated to higher achievement scores in reading and writing in the past three years. Seeing this improvement in reading and writing we felt it important to do the same in mathematics. This past year we hired a mathematics consultant to help develop a plan for increased success of student performance in this academic area. We are in the first year of this process and hope to have similar results as we continue to grow as teachers and learners in math.

A unique change for us has been our focus of understanding the importance of the mental health of our students and how that relates to academic achievement. Hence, a focus to educate our staff has come to the forefront of our professional development. Our school district recognized the importance of this and, once again, partnered with the state of Montana and received the SOARS grant. The SOARS grant allowed the appropriate professional development to understand the impact mental health has on all our students. Through this PD, Youth Mental Health First Aide training was given to all staff members. This course gives instruction on how to recognize the symptoms of mental health issues, how to approach students in crisis and how to listen and provide support. The Russell staff has been able to implement a variety of strategies that allows challenging students to become mentally able to participate all day in school. Among the additional resources produced for our students, none seem more important than the regulation areas in our school. All classrooms contain a regulation area where students are able to take breaks if needed. In addition, Russell School now has a regulation room for those students needing a break in an area outside their classroom.

Finally, through the PD focused on mental health, we made a monthly meeting schedule in which all classroom teachers meet with our behavior team to discuss the challenges in their classrooms which relate to difficult behaviors. Strategies, resources for solutions, and support is given to our staff that helps the teacher create a classroom environment in which all students can learn.

As we continue to understand the importance of the mental health of our students and how that relates to academic achievement, we have created an all school regulation room known as the W.I.N.N. (What I Need Now) room for those students needing a break in an area outside their classroom. In this room social skills groups are taught for targeted students needing long term support to understand the needs and expectations for them in the school setting. Data is taken on the purpose of every visit to the room. Three times a year this data is analyzed by our behavior team and appropriate adjustments are made based on the data. Along with this, we have implemented The Zones of Regulation curriculum for all students. This curriculum is delivered by our principal, teachers, school counselor, school psychologist and our local mental health provider. With this curriculum, students have tools that allow them to understand what zone they are currently in and have strategies to be able to get themselves into an appropriate zone in which they are able to concentrate and learn in the classroom.

Lastly, through our MBI team, we have developed school wide universals which all students know and understand by meaning. At the beginning of the year the principal holds an all school assembly in which the universals, Be Responsible, Be Respectful and Be Safe ALL THE TIME, are introduced and taught. In addition we have implemented high five Fridays. Every Friday students and staff give high fives throughout the day and say "You are awesome." Finally, the school's universals are recited each morning by staff members and students during the announcements given by our Fifth graders: "At Russell School we will be responsible, respectful and safe ALL THE TIME. It's up to you to make it a great day for everyone."

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

In July of 2013, Montana schools officially started teaching to the adopted Montana Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics. As a school district, led by our superintendent and assistant superintendent, we felt that it would be important to put the appropriate materials into the hands of both the teachers and students that supported the standards that the district would be held accountable to. Thus, the process began of adopting curricular materials for both reading and math that would be appropriate for our school district and the students we serve.

First, knowing that the state of Montana has adopted new college and career-ready standards, it would be important for our school to put into place a plan for the implementation of these standards. Led by the assistant superintendent and the principal, Russell School began what was called unpacking the curricular standards. During this process teachers from Russell School collaborated and dug into the meaning and purpose of every standard in each domain. It was apparent that this collaboration among staff members was very important and this process was going to take far more time than just a couple of sittings. Consequently, a collaboration period was built into every grade level teachers schedule once a week in which they would be able to continue to deconstruct the standards and discuss and make plans for the implementation in their classrooms.

Once the foundational work towards understanding the standards was complete, two district committees made up of a variety of district employees were established. One for high school curriculum and one for elementary curriculum. During this process staff members chose four vendors that would give presentations on their products. From these four, two were chosen as best options by each committee and the curricular materials were shared with all schools so all teachers had a chance to see and view the materials. Teachers were polled about different aspects of the materials and a selection was made for both math and English language arts. At the elementary level, Go Math was the curriculum of choice and adopted and Wonders was selected to be the English language arts curriculum. A majority of the staff of School District #5 felt that both curriculums tied to the newly adopted common core standards and would be the best fit for academic growth and development of both teachers and students. With the collaboration in place and curricular materials selected teachers now were able to address the standards and align the curriculum to see what fit and what needed adjustments.

1b. Reading/English language arts

With the Wonders curriculum in place and some familiarity with the standards, it seemed logical to begin the development of procedures and instructional practices for our students. With the assistance of the superintendent, the principal of Russell School applied for a literacy grant known as the Montana Striving Readers Grant (MSRG) through the state of Montana. The purpose of this grant was to advance literacy skills, including pre-literacy skills, such as reading and writing in students with an emphasis on disadvantaged students. With Russell School being more than 70% free and reduced, it was felt that this grant would give the teachers and students opportunities that would benefit them in the classroom.

This grant would bring specific professional development opportunities to our staff focusing on instructional practices and researched based strategies that would ultimately produce growth in student achievement, reduce student achievement gaps, and increase digital skills in reading and writing. These became the focus of the long term goals at Russell School with the ultimate outcome being the improvement of literacy skills for Russell students.

During this grant's term, many high impact instructional leaders were brought in by state consultants to help the achievement of adequate growth in reading/language arts, none having a greater impact than Anita Archer. Through her professional development, it became evident that explicit instructional strategies that

teachers used in the classroom had a major impact on what students learned. Through this process all the stakeholders that impacted students at Russell Elementary created instructional strategy must haves. In other words, these must haves would be the strategies that are consistently evident in every classroom at Russell School. Strategies such as choral responses, partner responses, giving appropriate think time, appropriate pacing, attentional cues, monitoring and reviewing of desired behaviors and providing practice for these behaviors are among the many strategies that have intentional meaning for the staff. The impact of implementing these practices consistently have greatly impacted student performance and, in turn, created a slogan that is used and has purpose for all the staff of Russell School - Excellent Instruction Everyday in Every Classroom!!!

The next step for Russell School was to create a path for students who needed additional support beyond classroom instruction with the Wonders curriculum. With the help of the instructional coach, the principal created a systems of support, or SOS process. This process allows teachers to collaborate with grade level colleagues and other Russell staff members to have discussions about the students needing additional support beyond the tier I instruction in the classroom. If a teacher finds a student struggling the first step would be to talk to their grade level team and come up with an academic plan that may lead to the improvement of academic performance. If, after this is done, the student is still struggling, the teacher then requests a meeting with the SOS team. The SOS team consists of the classroom teacher, building principal, instructional coach, special education teacher, school psychologists, school based mental health professional, and any other staff member necessary. The SOS team leader leads the team through a defined problem solving process. During this process strategies are developed and a goal for the student is set. The goal is reviewed by all members of the team every four to six weeks and the plan adjusted accordingly. We have seen a tremendous amount of success with this process and many students have overcome deficiencies based on supports and interventions given with this model.

1c. Mathematics

During the 2017-2018 school year and seeing the achievement gains made in the area of English language arts at Russell School, it was obvious that similar changes needed to be made in the area of mathematics. Knowing the GoMath curriculum was in place we began the same process of unpacking the curricular standards for mathematics. Teachers collaborated and dug into the meaning and purpose of every standard in each domain. It was no less apparent that this collaboration among staff members was very important in the area of math and would continue to need to be in place to see growth for teacher instruction and student performance. Consequently, a collaboration period was built into every grade in which they would be able to continue to deconstruct the standards and discuss and make plans for the implementation of the math standards in their classrooms.

To our benefit, being a participant with the MSRG helped us enhance instruction in areas beyond ELA. Seeing the direct impact explicit teaching strategies had on student achievement in ELA, we found out quickly that these same strategies would impact student achievement in math as well. Hence a two year professional development strategic plan was created to assist in the professional growth of our teachers in mathematics specifically focusing on instructional practices. This plan allowed the principal to purposefully create learning opportunities for teachers to enhance their instructional strategies already existing in their classrooms.

Just like the process for ELA, the next step for Russell School was to create a path for students who needed additional support beyond classroom instruction with the GoMath curriculum. The SOS process for math works in the same way as ELA. This process allows teachers to collaborate with grade level colleagues and other Russell staff members to talk about the students needing additional support beyond the tier I instruction in the classroom. If a teacher finds a student struggling the first step would be to talk to their grade level team and come up with an academic plan that may lead to the improvement of academic performance. If, after this is done, the student is still struggling, the teacher then requests a meeting with the SOS team. As with ELA, the SOS team consists of the classroom teacher, building principal, instructional coach, special education teacher, school psychologists, school based mental health professional, and any other staff member necessary. The SOS team leader leads the team through a defined problem solving process. During this process strategies are developed and a goal for the student is set. The goal is reviewed

by all members of the team every 4 to 6 weeks and the plan adjusted accordingly. Like ELA, we have seen a tremendous amount of success with this process and many students have overcome deficiencies based on supports and interventions given with this model.

Unfortunately, there were no grant opportunities that were relevant in the area of mathematics like there was for ELA to help support interventions. Hence, the district brought in a regional mathematics specialist to help guide efforts to try and develop an intervention model for struggling students. After collaborating with teachers and using both formative and summative assessment data, Russell Elementary developed a plan that would help build the foundational strategies of mathematics for Russell students. The plan included a series of developmentally appropriate math games that would be played in every classroom at least three times per week. It was fun for students but yet accomplished a common goal, increased academic performance of students in math. In groups of two or three students, games would be played that had an emphasis on specific grade level skills that the teaching staff deemed essential for student success at their current grade level and beyond.

1d. Science

In addition to being embedded into both the math and reading curriculum's, Russell School also has an adopted Houghton Mifflin Science curriculum. In 2007 a team of teachers under the direction of the assistant superintendent adopted this curriculum because of its scope and sequence and its connection to the national and state standards. The curriculum covers the three major aspects of science; Life Science, Earth Science and Physical Science.

Explicit instruction is an important aspect no matter the subject area at Russell School. For science this is no different. Strategies that give students the best opportunities for success in the classroom are also used during science instruction. In addition and once the science curriculum was purchased, teachers worked together to determine what felt to be the best format to learn for our students. As stressed by Houghton Mifflin, all felt it necessary to be sure we emphasize the 5 E's to science inquiry. That is Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend and Evaluate. To engage the student, teachers come up with interesting and exciting concepts that introduce the tasks, connect to prior experiences and pose a question that engages students for the duration of the lesson. Next an exploration is developed. Russell School students receive lots of hands-on experience when learning about science. This is typically done in a cooperative model where students explore with each other about the concepts being taught. The exploration setting during science activities lends perfectly to teachers being able to differentiate for students with varying needs. In addition, students have to explain their understanding and connect their exploration to the topic. Extensions are created when necessary to expand on student learning. Finally, formative and summative assessments are given to evaluate the understanding of concepts and tasks being taught to the students.

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

For several years Russell Elementary has used a variety of resources when teaching social studies and history. Although Russell School does not have a curriculum containing a specific text from a publisher it is embedded within the ELA curriculum. We do value the importance of giving leadership and instruction to students so they have a basic understanding of its five components; culture, history, geography, politics, and economics. Although elementary in nature, we believe through this process students begin to understand how our nation and others were built and teach to inform them on the importance of their participation in civic and democratic life. Events such as wax museums, virtual global travel and history seminars are all seen at different times of the year at Russell School. These events enhance the learning experience and give real world application to our students.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

Russell Elementary is fortunate to have two preschool classrooms. We are strong believers that early intervention for children needing targeted assistance have to have an organized and structured classroom

setting prior to turning five.

The core curriculum areas provide a great foundation for the preschool students. The focus and instruction is critical to the future success of our students. These curricular areas include language and literacy, math, science, social/emotional, art, technology, health enhancement and music. The curriculum, Open the World of Learning, is implemented in both classrooms. This researched based curriculum is aligned to the Montana Early Learning Standards and Common Core Standards. Weekly collaboration, facilitated by the instructional coach and principal, takes place between preschool and kindergarten teachers to assure alignment between grade levels.

All preschool students are assessed throughout the year with a variety of resources. One, the Developmental Indicator for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL-4), is used annually to score fine motor, concepts, language, self-help, and social development. Kindergarten teachers report that students who experience the preschool setting are more able to follow school routines and procedures. In addition they find these students are more prepared for kindergarten demonstrating greater proficiency socially, behaviorally and academically.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In the past two years, Russell Elementary has focused more attention to the importance of visual arts in the classroom. As we still begin to understand how important mental health is for our children, we realized that art can play a significant role in creating opportunities for students to maintain and/or achieve good mental health. To help our teachers understand this process, Russell School was approved for an art grant given by the Montana Arts Council. The goal of the grant was to help students exhibit an ability to engage with artistic media. To do this, students learn ways of connecting with self and the world through a creative expression process. Our teachers, however, needed guidance on what this could and should look like for their students. With the grant Russell School hired an artist in residency that allowed on-site professional development for the staff. In two six week intervals, students in grades pre-k through second grade received direct instruction through art that allowed them to identify and express feelings and positive qualities to develop self-esteem, self-regulation and emotional intelligence. In addition, students would learn new ways of thinking and problem-solving, link thought patterns, bridge differing curriculums through art-making and listening, respect other students' work, and collaborate in small groups in order to develop interpersonal skills. Through this process, teachers now have a deeper understanding of creating art to help students express themselves in a variety of ways. In return, students become mentally prepared for the rigors of other academic areas.

Russell Elementary School also has one music teacher who teaches all grade levels, pre-k through fifth. Each grade level has music twice a week for 40 minutes. In this setting students are exposed to music that meets both the school district and National Music Standards; Creating, Performing, Responding, and Connecting. School District #5 has adopted a curriculum created by our own district educational leaders in music. Through this curriculum, the music teacher exposes students to music through song, dance and instrumental applications. Each year the music teacher choreographs three musical performances which are shown to our Russell community. Performances are broken up into grade levels, K and 1, 2 and 3, and 4 and 5. These events take a tremendous amount of effort to organize. They are big events that are enjoyed and respected by our community.

Russell School also has one physical education teacher. Each grade level has PE twice a week for 40 minutes. PE, health and nutrition are all taught in this setting. As in music, School District #5 has adopted a curriculum created by our own district educational leaders in the field of physical education. This curriculum is aligned to both the district expectations and the National PE and Health Standards. The PE teacher is very passionate about the importance of physical activity, health and nutrition. Lesson plans are strategically planned that incorporate all areas throughout the year. In addition, Russell School hosts a health and fitness day in which community members and students come together to showcase the body of work done all year long through activities that promote health and fitness. It is another big event for Russell School that families enjoy.

In the past four years, Russell School also has also had the opportunity to create a position for a teacher to solely teach technology skills. This has been a tremendous addition to our school. The curriculum used has been created by our technology team at School District #5 and incorporates the National Technology Standards. The technology teacher has students of every grade level, pre-k through fifth, in her setting once a week for 40 minutes. Some of the more enjoyable activities learned by students include Microsoft applications, robotics, and coding. In addition, the technology teacher uses time to assist the classroom teacher in the academic area of keyboarding. Although the least exciting for our students, it has allowed students more time to develop the keyboarding skills necessary to perform at high levels on the state test. Lastly, our technology teacher also teams with grade level teachers to incorporate technology into the classroom. Instant technology professional development was created in our building for teachers with the addition of this support.

Russell School also has a librarian which serves all grade levels pre-k through fifth. Just like our technology specialist, library classes are taught to our students once a week for 40 minutes. A district library curriculum is in place which was built around the National Library Standards. Learning activities are made fun for students and include the areas of book care, identifying parts of the book, authors and illustrations, fiction vs. nonfiction, biographies, research, genre studies and reference books. There are many school wide activities that are led by our librarian which include, Scholastic Book Fair, Library Olympics, March Madness and an emphasis on the love of reading during I love to read week. In addition to this, the librarian creates an atmosphere in which students develop a love for reading. This, by far, has the greatest impact for our students. You will not find many who do not love to read at Russell School. In return, achievement scores in reading for Russell School continue to be strong.

Lastly, Russell School emphasizes the importance of positive social interaction among all members of its community. In grades pre-k and kindergarten the We Thinkers curriculum is taught. This is intended to help children build foundational social competencies and essential life skills. Through this process students begin to understand themselves and others and can start to create positive relationships with their peers and adults. In addition, the Zones of Regulation are taught school wide. The purpose of this curriculum is to help students gain skills that allow them to regulate their actions for increased control and problem solving abilities. Since the addition of these two curricular areas, Russell School is now able to be explicit to both staff and students on expectations for processes so all members of the school feel welcomed and safe.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

After completing initial school-wide benchmark screening assessments (aimeswebPlus), Russell Elementary uses diagnostics assessments to measure specific academic lagging skills (CORE Phonics screener, and curriculum-based assessments). With this data, Russell structures instruction and interventions for students who are below grade level and places students in fluid academic interventions (Reading Mastery, Corrective Reading, Phonics for Reading, REWARDS, classroom standards-aligned math interventions) based on individual student needs using intervention specific placement assessments. Students participate in classroom-based teacher-led intervention workshops and/or small group pullouts with instructional paras. Students are given multiple opportunities to respond with specific learning goals as instructors provide explicit direction and specific positive feedback. Fidelity checks are completed monthly for every academic reading intervention to ensure the interventions are being implemented as intended with direct instruction to ensure student growth. Students in an intervention are progressed monitored biweekly or monthly to measure progress and mastery of skills being taught. This data is reviewed by the classroom teacher, instructional paras, instructional coach, and principal to ensure academic growth and ongoing proper placement of students in small groups. Classroom teachers use benchmark data and standards-based curriculum assessment data to guide differentiated instruction and tailor small group instruction within the classroom through flexible groupings. Several teachers team-teach to allow greater flexibility for grouping students to target teach specific standards across the same grade-level. Some upper elementary classrooms partner with lower elementary classrooms for the duration of a school year to establish peer mentoring through Reading and Math Buddies. These partnerships create an influential learning community providing students with skill-based practice, peer modeling, and reciprocal teaching to promote and improve reading

and mathematics fluency. Teachers are provided with ongoing instructional professional development for core academic areas to enhance instructional strategies provided by district writing and math consultants, colleagues, and our site-based instructional coach.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Teachers differentiate instruction and utilize tiered learning groups with vertical activities. In doing so, teachers tailor assignments to promote choice with increased task difficulty. For students performing above grade level, as indicated by ongoing benchmark and classroom-based assessments, teachers have a variety of options to choose from. Some students join groups at higher grade levels to challenge their academic knowledge and others are led by their grade level teacher through activities with materials from the core curriculum for advanced students. In addition, several online digital education programs and educational content based games (ABCmouse.com, Lalilo, Teach your Monster to Read, Khan Academy, NoRedInk, XtraMath, Prodigy, Epic, Vooks, Arcademics, Mr.Nussbaun, Turtle Diary, Sheppardsoftware, Thumble book Library, and MathGames) are available to meet the diverse needs of students at varying grade levels. Russell also utilizes Ed Ready Montana in the upper elementary grades to provide ongoing enrichment and engagement with specific student learning goals to customize student learning.

3c. Special education

Russell Elementary has educational needs in place for students who qualify for special education services. Prior to qualification all students went through the Systems of Support (SOS) process. This process makes sure that all appropriate resources of support that Russell School can offer have been utilized and attempted prior to special education identification. During these meetings, a set of criteria must be met which includes defining the problem behavior or academic concern, analyzing the students current data, the determination of the students needs, intervention assignments, and evaluation of progress with identified interventions. All meetings to this point included the presence of the special education teacher. After these research based interventions have been attempted with little to no success, students will be referred to special education. A Classroom Based Assessment and Observation Form which includes our benchmark assessment, Aimesweb. The SOS team reviews the data and makes a final decision to continue with testing to see if the student will qualify for special education services. Achievement tests are used and could include WIAT-III, TERA, TEMA, CTOPP-2 and Woodcock Johnson-IV. The BASC is used for social emotional behavioral concerns. Lastly, the WISC IV is used to determine IQ and the K-ABC is used as a cognitive assessment for students with limited language. After testing, if students qualify, an Individualized Education Program is created in partnership with both the parents and the school. Once the IEP is established the student either spends time in the classroom or time with the special education teacher for specialized instruction targeting the students skill deficit. During this time, data is kept on progress and reviewed to make decisions for appropriate next steps.

In addition, for students struggling with language skills, Russell School has an in house speech pathologist that works with staff to help identify students that may need language support. The speech pathologist has the ability to screen students to determine if further testing is necessary. Depending on the concern the following tests may be administered to determine eligibility, CELF-5 (clinical evaluation of language fundamentals), OWLS (oral portion for receptive and expressive language), EVT-3 and ROWPVT (expressive vocabulary and receptive one word vocabulary), and Goldman Fristoe Test of Articulation. After testing, if students qualify an Individualized Education Program is created in partnership with both the parents and the school. Once the IEP is established the student will see the speech pathologist on a continual basis using specific instructional strategies and programs that target the students skill deficit. During this time, data is kept on progress and reviewed to make decisions for appropriate next steps.

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

Because this population is so small at Russell Elementary School, differentiation in the classroom is the main structure for intervention. When necessary, a more specialized program will be offered through individual instruction from a trained paraprofessional. Instruction starts with the core curriculum materials tailored to this population. If, over time, we find that more is needed then additional resources are brought

in. In general, our ELL population has a good grasp on the English content and is effective in the classroom with little to no support.

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

Because these populations at Russell Elementary School are so small, differentiation in the classroom is the main structure for support. When necessary, a more specialized program will be offered through individual instruction from a trained paraprofessional. Instruction starts with the core curriculum materials tailored to the population. If, over time, we find that more is needed then additional resources are brought in. In general, these populations have a good grasp on the English content and are effective in the classroom with little to no support.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

We are very fortunate at Russell Elementary School that the majority of our population understands the importance of school. However, we know and understand that by itself it is not enough to build a culture for students to learn and grow in. We take great pride in the positive atmosphere that has been created so both students and staff enjoy coming to school each and every day. To be sure that all members of our school community contribute to this environment the principal created the following guidelines that all have bought into and abide by to make Russell School a special place for all.

WHAT IT MEANS TO WORK HERE

RUSSELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Professionally

We will keep our children safe - A school/classroom culture of caring and encouragement.

We will make our children feel special - Frequent recognition and celebration of improvement.

We will ensure that our children will learn - A guaranteed and viable curriculum, effective, researched based teaching strategies, frequent formative monitoring of student learning, and collaboration with colleagues to build success in all.

We will, in agreement or disagreement, contribute to a positive atmosphere.

Personally

We will take care of ourselves - Health, mind and body.

We will Be Bright, Be Happy, Be you.

From this foundation we are able to build opportunities within this structure that allows for positive results for all. Academically all work is guided by four fundamental questions: 1. What do we want students to learn? 2. How do we know if they have already learned it? 3. How do we respond when they do not learn? 4. How do we respond when they already know it? These questions give guidance for our teachers that allows a structure that prevents academic chaos and contributes to the positive environment of our community. These four questions also lead the collaboration efforts of our grade level teams.

In addition, we have assemblies that help guide student expectations for the common areas throughout the school. These assemblies are structured to be fun but, most importantly, give students an understanding of behavioral expectations of our school. We also have assemblies that provide entertainment that promote special events that occur at Russell School which includes our annual fundraiser and character trait awards.

Spirit weeks happen throughout the year where staff and students are encouraged to dress up and participate to promote fun and enjoyment while emphasizing curricular importance. For example, during I love to read week we have dress up days for each day of the week that promoted the love of reading. Additional spirit weeks are also organized by our music and PE teachers.

Once a month we also recognize classrooms that have gone above and beyond to demonstrate good behavior in two common areas, the lunchroom and playground. These awards are called the Golden Ram Awards. Classrooms receive Golden Ram status and receive a statue that is displayed in their classroom for the month if they represent the best behavior in these common areas.

In addition a stuffed animal of a ram is given to the class that receives the most Ram Awards. The Ram Award is given to any student who demonstrates being responsible, respectful and safe at Russell School. Teachers simply fill out a google form with the students name and a description of what they were seen doing to help make the school a better place. A certificate of accomplishment is generated and sent to the students family via email and the ram is displayed in the classroom for the month.

Finally, every classroom has a morning meeting each day that is structured to build a classroom atmosphere in which every student feels safe in an environment in which they can learn. The primary purpose is to set a tone for respectful and engaged learning, build and enhance connections, merge social differences, academic and emotional learning, motivate students through a sense of significance and belonging and finally, to build a setting that enables extraordinary moments. With this in place students at Russell School understand the importance of contributing to the creation of a positive atmosphere.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Russell Elementary is a very proud place and believes that it is very important to have strong ties with both its families and the community of Kalispell. It all begins with great communication. In today's day and age, it is important that we have multiple ways that we can connect with those that have a stake in the things we do. We have a Facebook page that highlights the educational activities that happen in the school setting. This has also been found to be a great way to reach out and inform our families of important information they may need to know. Teachers also send home weekly newsletters that inform parents of what is going on in their classrooms. The newsletters include academic information that students have participated in and activities that are being done in the classroom. As a school, the principal and office manager inform their families about school related activities monthly through the Russell Ram Report. This report relays information that pertains to the whole school to keep families informed on events and expectations. The school district has a student information platform that is easily accessible by the principal to send information to all families via email and phone messages. This is a great way to let people know of school closures, emergencies and other important information that needs to be delivered in a timely and efficient manner.

Russell School has a very active parent group that helps in many different ways. Its main purpose is to provide support to the teachers, staff, students and parents of Russell Elementary School. This group is built around a foundation of parents that leads to ensure that Russell School has additional dollars for classroom items, enhancement of our current curriculum, and helps to provide necessary support for building community events. The latest events organized by this group have been Science on Wheels and Science Olympiad. The leaders of this group were also the organizers of the application process that produced the art grant for Russell School. They are currently in the process of recruiting Park Side Credit Union to partner up with the school to help support further art activities.

At the beginning of each academic year, we open the doors to all family members during our annual open house. During this evening, families are encouraged to come meet their son or daughter's teacher. The teacher presents expectations of the students, reviews curricular materials that parents will be seeing throughout the year, and presents any other information that is deemed important for them to know. In addition, community organizations are invited and have information for parents. These organizations include Boys and Girls Scouts of America, The Reading If Library, and a variety of different after school child care providers. The Russell School Parent Group provides information about the support they give and encourages participation from new families. They also provide snacks throughout the evening for families to enjoy.

Each year, Russell School also provides a minimum of one family night social that focuses on academic support for home. Our most recent family math night was a success. Nearly 400 students and their families attended. During this family engagement activity, teachers taught many ways to play games at home that focused on mathematics. Each game provided support for basic math concepts that could easily be played in the home environment without having the stress of a parent making their son or daughter do homework. The parent group supplied all materials to families that supported the game if they did not have the appropriate materials at home.

Russell School also conducts parent teacher conferences on a trimester basis. It is the expectation that all parents visit with the classroom teacher so they can be provided with information about the progress of their child both academically and behaviorally. These conferences are held mid trimester so students have the chance to fulfill any requirements necessary to produce the highest level of achievement possible on their report card.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The current professional culture that has been created in the last 13 years at Russell Elementary School has been the foundation of this school's success. As a staff it is understood that it is important for all members of our school community to feel valued no matter their job. Every employee has a contribution to make and it is important that their efforts are recognized. At the beginning of the year, sign up sheets are available for all members of the school to participate in the organization of special celebrations throughout the year to focus on the impact our employees have in our school. These special celebrations span the entire school day and can include but are not limited to assemblies, lunches, special presentations and gifts for the recipients. In addition, staff meetings end with special "shout outs" from staff to staff for those that have been impacted in positive ways from a colleague. This simple approach of recognition and celebration creates an atmosphere of positive contributions and hard work.

Moreover, and in partnership with the school district, a professional development plan has been established for all faculty members. This has allowed Russell School to compliment the district with the unique needs of our building through PD. This development is available in a variety of ways. First, all staff members fulfill 12 hours of professional development hosted by our school district. In addition they must fulfill 12 hours of professional development of their choice. One way this is provided is through the Montana Education Association. All public school teachers in the state of Montana have the opportunity to attend a three day workshop in an identified Montana town with colleagues from across the state. This opportunity allows teachers to coordinate with those of like job descriptions and be provided with professional guidance that will help improve their craft as a classroom teacher. In addition to this opportunity, School District #5 also develops strands of need that teachers have expressed interest in to provide needed professional development without traveling to another town in Montana. Lastly, Russell School has one early out per month in which professional development is provided that focuses on building needs. These needs are determined based on a variety of criteria which is determined by the collection of data through classroom assessments and staff questionnaires. Most early outs have a focus on the instructional improvement of teachers based on curricular needs and purchases.

4. School Leadership:

Russell Elementary is led through the vision and mission of its school district. This vision; Kalispell Public Schools is the best place to Live, Learn and Work and this mission; Kalispell Public Schools provides diverse educational opportunities for all by engaging and challenging students, meeting their unique needs and preparing them to be career and/or college ready resulting in responsible citizens of our communities, state, nation and world gives foundational stability to be the launch pad for the vision of Russell Elementary. Russell Elementary's vision; To Lead, Foster and prepare students for the future is the building block in which all things are accomplished at Russell Elementary. Without a doubt, the principal of Russell School believes and provides ongoing leadership based on these principals.

The leadership style of the principal is to lead in a positive manner that builds confidence in both staff and students. The development of positive relationships is important and the belief that it takes a village to raise a child is a theme known by all staff members. Through this leadership style, the principal has a focus on the development of the staff and students of the school. Through the principal's philosophy the document What it Means to Work Here (shared in Part V, School Climate and Culture) was created. This document is a great indication of what the principal stands for and how important it is that Russell School is a safe place for all who enter and is filled with positive intentions.

There is no doubt at Russell School that the principal is the captain of the ship. However he does not lead

through dictatorship but instead through the collaboration and input of colleagues. Most decisions are made with input of all those affected. In some cases members of this community have differences of opinions and an ultimate decision needs to be made. In this case the principal is the decision maker and decides based on what is best for the students at Russell School. Because there has been trust built within this organization between the principal and its teachers, tough decisions can be made with little to no conflicts. The principal also gives teachers the flexibility to take chances. Staff members all know that we learn from mistakes and new opportunities in the classroom cannot be created without the willingness to try. It is also expected that the staff give the same trust to their students. The principal is also the leader of instructional practices and classroom management. Implementing walkthroughs a minimum of twice a day in every classroom and being visible to staff and students all day long lets all know that he is here and cares about the work that is being done in this setting.

In addition, Russell School has a variety of personnel that work hand in hand with the principal to support the vision through his leadership. The office manager is the culture setter of caring and encouragement. Having a positive friendly person that is seen first by most visitors gives people an intentional feeling of Russell School's positive culture. The office manager greets all that arrive and helps families and staff members with whatever needs they may have. No matter the situation, it is all done with a smile.

In addition, Russell Elementary School has a certified instructional coach in its building full time. This coach is instrumental in the development of the Russell School teachers. Yearly instructional rounds are scheduled for all classroom teachers. Through this process, an instructional goal is developed. In the time frame of six weeks, the coach observes several lessons and gives feedback and recommendations to the teacher that is intended to increase student achievement. In addition, the instructional coach is in charge of setting up intervention schedules for students who have gone through the SOS process and need additional support. Fidelity checks are made monthly by both the instructional coach and principal to make sure intervention programs are being taught in the manner in which the author intended.

School board members make biannual visits to the school to see the work being done. During their visit, students and teachers interact to answer any questions they may have. In addition, Russell School presents once a year to the school board on a topic of choice. This past year the Artist in Residency was introduced. A presentation was given that explained the purpose of the work and samples of students' art was shown.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

It is very difficult to say that there is only one thing that makes Russell School successful. In general the success comes from the willingness of this staff to create positive interactions in a collaborative environment where hard work is appreciated. At Russell School we lead by example. All members of this school community are willing to go above and beyond to make this school enjoyable for all. Positive attitudes, collaborating with colleagues, and doing what it takes for students to be successful is seen throughout the building.

This doesn't happen without structures in place. First, the staff has to understand that our students need us and, no matter the outcome, our work and leadership is important for them. Everyone on this team knows the importance of collaboration and how working together can build the capacity of instruction and fosters the academic and social growth of our students. As stated in many sections above, there are many strategies and activities that lend to our success. Each member of this team knows that they have a role to play for our school to be successful. No one is exempt to contribute in ways that help the group. We are all willing to put in the necessary work to make our school the best in the Flathead Valley, the best in Flathead County and the best in the state of Montana. That is our belief and that is the attitude that we all have when we approach each day.

Excellent Instruction Every Day in Every Classroom is not just a saying but an intentional expectation developed by the very people who have to deliver educational opportunities for our students, the staff of Russell School. In turn, they receive exceptional buy-in from our students who believe learning is important in a positive setting where taking chances is encouraged and helping one another a must. Through the willingness of this staff to create positive interactions in a collaborative environment where hard work is appreciated, Russell Elementary School succeeds.