

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

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

School Mailing Address 449 Ahnaip Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Menasha State WI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 54952-3374

County Winnebago County

Telephone (920) 967-1710 Fax (920) 751-4830

Web site/URL https://www.mjsd.k12.wi.us/jefferson-nicolet-elementary/home E-mail behnkee@mjsd.k12.wi.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. Chris VanderHeyden E-mail vanderheydenc@mjsd.k12.wi.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Menasha Joint School District Tel. (920) 967-1401

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. Mark Mayer  
(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**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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

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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
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	21	20	41
4	16	29	45
5	21	26	47
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	58	75	133

\*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):
- 0.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 7.9 % Black or African American
  - 20 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 62 % White
  - 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: 11%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 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	9
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	135
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.11
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

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

Spanish, Korean, Hmong, Mandigo

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 14 %  
18 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 53 %

Total number students who qualify: 71

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %

18 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>3</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>4</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: 1

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:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	6
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 21:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	95%	96%	95%
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.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

In the Menasha Joint School District, our mission is to focus on "every student, every classroom, everyday." We want children to become lifelong learners and responsible citizens in their communities.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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The city of Menasha is located in Northeast Wisconsin, in the heart of the Fox Valley surrounded by the beauty of Lake Winnebago and Little Lake Butte des Morts. The winding Fox River flows right through the heart of the city. With a population of 17,748, this small community is almost entirely set in Winnebago County. Menasha stems from the Native American word, “the island” and was named in 1874 by the wife of judge and politician James Doty. His name would later be used to name this section of northern Winnebago County in Menasha, known as Doty Island. Nicolet Elementary School is the only Menasha school located on the island.

The Menasha Joint School District has a total enrollment of 3,350 students, ages PK-12. There are six elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Four of the elementary schools include grades PK-5 namely Clovis Grove, Butte des Morts, Nicolet, Gegan, and Banta. Jefferson (PK-2) and Nicolet (3-5) are housed on different campuses, but together they create one PK-5 school family. Banta Elementary School is the district’s bilingual school with instruction provided in Spanish and English.

Nicolet’s student population includes 62% Caucasian, 20% Hispanic, 7.9% African American, 3% Asian, 7% with two or more races and .1% are American Indian or Alaskan Native. Within these groups, 14.8% are English Language Learners, 59.3% are Economically Disadvantaged, and 10.4% are Students with Disabilities. As a result of the high number of families in the low socioeconomic status, Nicolet Elementary is a Title I School.

There has been overwhelming support for the school district from the community demonstrated through the approval of two referendums within four years. In 2013, a referendum was passed to make major renovations to Menasha High School, and in 2017, the community rallied to make renovations to Nathan Calder Stadium by adding synthetic turf inside the track, refurbishing stadium seating and making improvements to the entryway. This has energized our students, staff, families and community. These renovations have allowed the district to host many community-wide events, such as a yearly districtwide multicultural event, along with both district and regional staff development opportunities throughout each school year. The stadium has provided our school community with a venue that hosts multiple sporting events. In all of these cases, these renovations have helped carry out one of our district goals, which is to create the conditions to connect our schools to our families and the greater community. We believe that having this support for our schools is a critical aspect of our students' ability to learn and achieve success.

It is the belief of the Menasha Joint School District that every classroom should be structured according to evidence-based practices, including being trauma sensitive and culturally responsive, and developing a sense of community. At Nicolet Elementary, we are dedicated to meeting the academic, social and emotional needs of our economically disadvantaged students. We have implemented and integrated the district approved Multi-Leveled Systems of Support. This support system includes the implementation of Universal Classroom Practices. This framework outlines the critical elements of the physical design, expectations, routines and community building needed to provide students with effective instruction and a well managed classroom. As additional support, our school uses Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) as a platform to improve our interactions with students by having staff re-teach behavior, helping students relearn procedures, and rewarding them for meeting our high expectations. Students and staff fondly know these expectations as the “Bluejay Way.” Furthermore, our counselors and teachers have implemented Second Step, a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum, teaching our students the importance of resiliency, self-management and responsible decision making.

The staff at Nicolet is committed to providing our students with quality, data-driven instruction. Grade-level teams work collaboratively with instructional coaches to monitor student progress and use data to make instructional decisions. Results from classroom assessments are compared to the results from district/statewide testing to help make informed decisions about teaching and learning. The data helps with differentiating instruction at the Tier 1, universal level, and also to identify which students need support at the Tier 2 and Tier 3 level. Teachers work with our building academic coaches to complete coaching cycles, which are used to refine teaching practices and ensure the curriculum is implemented with fidelity.

We have a whole-building, daily intervention time built into our schedule to meet the needs of our students below grade level. This twenty minute block of time is what we call What I Need (WIN) time. Coaches, teachers, and literacy resource teachers work to support any student who falls significantly below grade level. The staff at Nicolet continuously demonstrates their dedication to improving their practice and to providing high-quality instruction. This effort was recognized in March of 2020 by the Department of Public Instruction when Nicolet earned the Title 1 Schools of Recognition award in the "Beating the Odds" category. This award signifies the hard collaborative work between parents, students, staff and administration, dedicated to breaking down the link between low achievement and poverty.

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

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

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

The Menasha Joint School District uses a systems approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The state standards are the focus for our curriculum, resources are purchased that meet the standards, and students are assessed both formatively and summatively on the standards. We provided every teacher with extensive professional development around standards-based instruction and assessment practices, understanding our instructional resources, student development, analyzing student assessments and providing necessary interventions to move students toward proficiency.

#### **1b.** Reading/English language arts

In 2014, Nicolet Elementary and the Menasha Joint School District adopted Units of Study in Writing by Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), which is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. We provided ongoing professional development and job-embedded coaching in order to support and build our teacher capacity. Additionally, we continued to implement best practices by adopting Units of Study Reading by TCRWP in 2016. The reading units of study help teachers provide their students with instruction, opportunities for practice, and concrete doable goals to help them meet and exceed grade level standards. Nicolet students participate daily in 60 minutes of a reader’s workshop, 45 minutes of a writing workshop, 20 minutes of a planned, interactive read aloud, and 20 minutes of word study. These instructional minutes support the philosophy of the gradual release of responsibility framework as well as the rigor of grade level standards.

As we continued to analyze and grow our literacy practices, we held week-long institutes for our teachers delivered by highly qualified staff developers. As we focused on implementing a strong literacy framework, building teacher capacity was at the heart of our work. Ongoing professional development and embedded coaching helped support our students and teachers. Moreover, we remained data driven in our quest to implement best practices by making data based decisions and continuously analyzing data through grade level data meetings and a continuous improvement process. The data include both formative and summative data to plan for the instructional needs of all learners. Data collected include conferring and small group anecdotal notes, informal running records, unit pre-assessments and post-assessments, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, Words Their Way Spelling Inventories, and i-Ready Assessments. All of this data is held in a data warehouse system that allows the team to monitor and make decisions based upon multiple data points. Furthermore, using a continuous improvement process, we developed school improvement plans with specific goals around literacy improvement each year. These data continuously drive our instruction and decision making for all our students, including the students who are striving at grade level and above grade level. Furthermore, our Multi-Leveled System of Supports process helps us provide equitable services, practices, and resources to every literacy learner based upon responsiveness to effective instruction and intervention.

#### **1c.** Mathematics

Nicolet Elementary School and the Menasha Joint School District adopted Bridges in Mathematics four years ago. Bridges is a comprehensive PK-5 curriculum that enables teachers to fully implement the Common Core State Standards. This curriculum is rigorous, engaging, and is accessible to every student. The program pushes students to develop a deep understanding of mathematical concepts. Using the Bridges program, our students participate in 80 minutes of math each day. This work includes an interactive 60 minute lesson and a 20 minute Number Corner daily workout which provides practice with a wide variety of skills. The 60 minute Bridges lesson blends direct instruction, small group work, partner work, independent study, structured investigation, and open exploration. During the math block we employ many teaching strategies including large group, small group, workplaces, one-to-one conferring with students and engaging students in rich mathematical discourse. In addition to our Bridges curriculum, we also train all staff in

Menasha in Add+Vantage Math Recovery, (AVMR). This training prepares our teachers to deliver small group lessons to support specific student needs. AVMR training is delivered in the district during years two and three as a Menasha Joint School District teacher. Trained AVMR staff is able to pinpoint a student's struggle and work with them in a one-to-one or in a small group setting on specific mathematical concepts. This work compliments our curriculum and supports each student in developing a strong number sense. All of this work is partnered with on-going grade level data monitoring. This data includes both formative and summative data to determine the pacing and instructional needs of all learners. Data collected for Math includes Bridges assessment, AVMR assessment, and i-Ready Assessment. Like in Literacy, this data continuously drives our instruction and decision making for students below level, on level, and above level. Our RtI systems and small group supports are set up to support this work. We continue to provide on-going professional development and job-embedded coaching in order to support and build our teacher capacity in the area of mathematics.

#### **1d. Science**

Menasha Joint School District adopted the Next Generation Science Standards in 2015. The NGSS provide a three-dimensional approach to science instruction with the three dimensions all helping students build a cohesive understanding of science over time. Cross-cutting concepts, science and engineering practices and disciplinary core ideas (the three dimensions of NGSS) are used to ensure students develop in-depth understanding of content and key skills. To help facilitate inquiry, problem solving and investigations that support instruction of the NGSS, K-5 teachers use National Geographic's science resource, "Next Generation Science." Next Generation Science combines broad science background with deep coverage of the NGSS. Explorers (students) are challenged to think like a scientist or an engineer as they investigate big ideas and major concepts through research and inquiry-based explorations.

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

Menasha Joint School District adopted the Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies in 2018. These standards provide the content for high quality instruction that promotes proficiency in academic content and the ability to apply knowledge through skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Each grade level has clearly defined units of study that focus on the domains of geography, history, behavioral science, economics, and political science. These domains are rooted in inquiry-based learning. This aims at providing an important foundation in order to prepare students to be engaged in acquiring knowledge and conceptual understanding, able to apply the skills of inquiry, collaboration, decision making, and problem solving. Students in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade learn through a common theme of Place. Our youngest students participate in explorations that investigate, "What is my place in the world?" "What is my understanding of the world?" and "What is our place in the world?" Students in third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade share a common theme of Wisconsin and United States Studies. Big ideas in our history such as "First People and First Nations" and World War I are taught chronologically throughout a student's third, fourth and fifth grade years. Students are encouraged to think like historians, economists, geographers, behavioral and political scientists during each unit as they analyze primary and secondary sources, explain how events have possible implications on the present and describe patterns of continuity and change over time in the community, state and the United States.

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

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

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

Physical education: Physical education is a standards-based program designed to help develop motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors for mental and emotional health, as well as giving students the tools to live a healthy active lifestyle for years to come. All students in grades K-5 receive thirty minutes of physical education two times a week. Students participate in both individual and group/team activities to achieve this goal. Physical education is a unique environment that supports students' learning in other academic areas as well. Participating in physical education improves concentration and memory, increases problem-solving

abilities, enhances social and emotional learning, and fosters positive relationships.

**Art:** All Nicolet elementary art students meet once a week for one hour with a certified art teacher. Students learn grade level art concepts while completing art projects that focus on originality, creativity, and craftsmanship. A variety of art materials are explored while creating 2-D and 3-D art. Artists, cultures, and literacy are incorporated into projects to showcase real life art and careers. Classroom and school themes are integrated when possible, such as Veteran's Day and author visits. Emphasis is also placed on following directions, and being respectful, responsible, and safe. Art education at Nicolet provides students with opportunities to learn how to creatively express themselves while also helping them think critically and problem solve.

**Music:** Students in grades K-5 have music education two times a week for thirty minutes. In music students sing, move, listen, play, write and notate! They play instruments by adding ostinatos or accompaniment on non-pitched percussion, barred instruments, and soprano recorders. Students sing by rote, echoing melodic patterns, and in 2-part harmony. They move to show phrasing, beat patterns, and sections of the music/form. Students also learn about improvising, composing, music history and theory. They are regularly exposed to different cultures and languages through music, that they may never have the opportunity to experience. Students are creating music each and every day in different ways. Participating in music practices reading and memorizing, exposes students to new vocabulary, promotes team work, allows students to problem-solve and express themselves creatively.

**SEL/Guidance Classes:** All students at Nicolet Elementary participate in daily Social Emotional Learning instruction and practice. The school uses the Second Step school wide curriculum for weekly lessons, daily follow-up activities and home communication. This curriculum is implemented by the classroom teacher and school counselor. This curriculum teaches empathy, self-regulation and conflict regulation skills. The school counselors also teach lessons outside the benchmarks of that curriculum to comply with the American School Counselor Association standards such as career exploration and readiness, alcohol and other drug use, and protective behaviors.

**Library:** The atmosphere for building student connections is ever-present in the library. Every student from the school visits every week for three years. Students learn and connect through shared reading experiences and time spent together with literacy as the focus. Weekly student time in the library begins with a chapter book read aloud. Exposure to different genres is an intentional choice to try to spark an interest in something new. Additionally, the District Library Coordinator presents twelve Digital Citizenship programs to library students each year. Students learn about a variety of topics from how to stay safe on the internet while sharing and gathering information, how to balance their use of various forms of media, how to recognize false information and how to keep personal information secure. The District Library Coordinator also collaborates with community library personnel to provide author visits for our students. In the past two years, the kids have been able to meet Gordon Korman, Patricia Polacco and Avi. These authors have inspired our students to read, enjoy and discuss their books. Preceding their arrival, teachers prepare exciting author study lessons to ignite interest in the lives of these authors and engage students in learning about their unique writing style and craft. The authors motivate our learners to want to write books of their very own because they have met a real author that is successful. Often the author explains their writing process during these visits. As a result, the students frequently attempt the same process to improve their writing.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

In the Menasha Joint School District, we examine multiple measures (nationally normed assessments, state assessments, and local assessments) to determine which students are working below grade level and in need of targeted support. Math and literacy coaches meet with classroom teachers to review data over time and determine the level of intervention to provide the student. We provide three levels of support in our tiered system. Tier 1 support is provided during universal instruction in the classroom, tier 2 support is provided in a targeted small group with a formal intervention structure, and tier 3 support is provided in an intensive

small group or one-one-one setting with a research-based intervention structure. Tier 2 and tier 3 support might be provided during our daily schoolwide intervention block (WIN Time) or may be provided by an interventionist at another time in the day. We co-construct and document an individualized plan to support each student involved in any tier of this process. We identify each student's individual strengths, what is the most prudent goal, and make an instructional plan to address that area of need. We progress monitor students at a minimum of every two weeks and meet every six to ten weeks to review their progress, goal set, and determine next steps. All stakeholders that are involved with the student (which could be the school psychologist, principal, classroom teacher, guidance counselor, speech and language pathologist, etc.) and parents participate in these meetings.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

The Menasha Joint School District believes that a student with gifts and talents is one who demonstrates high performance or possesses the capability to perform at a high level of competence in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic areas. Because giftedness is dynamic and fluid, as well as both innate and learned, the needs of gifted students vary over time and across areas. All children, including advanced learners, are entitled to an education that provides access to an appropriate level of challenge in order to realize their potential.

The Menasha Joint School District strives to follow Wisconsin's Vision of Equitable Multi-Level Systems of Supports. Our program is designed to recognize, support and advocate for those students who have been formally identified as as Gifted & Talented as well as those who have the potential for gifts & talents but may not be formally identified.

Ideally, the academic needs of students will be met in the place where they spend most of their time, which is typically the general education classroom with same-age peers. The need for enrichment and/or adjustments to the universal level of instruction is determined through formative and summative classroom assessment data. These data could indicate a student needing enrichment opportunities in or beyond the classroom. At other curricular times, the student may not be in need of enrichment or different opportunities than the general education classroom.

At Nicolet, we offer Problem Solvers group sessions at various grade levels that are designed to promote thinking at higher levels through challenging tasks and activities. Students who have high achievement in vocabulary study Caesar's English. Caesar's introduces students to the concept of Latin stems as the foundation for English academic language. We also offer Bluejay Science Day to all fourth and fifth graders who enjoy learning about how scientists think, how science affects our everyday life and how to conduct an experiment. Finally, fifth graders interested in challenging themselves in math problem solving can participate in the Fox Valley Junior Math League. The FVJML's primary purpose is to provide a fun, yet challenging experience for students who have an interest in solving mathematical tasks.

### **3c. Special education**

The Menasha Joint School District believes in reaching every student so they can gain the skills to be lifelong learners and responsible citizens in their communities. This belief also applies to our special education population. At Nicolet Elementary this is done with the inclusion of special education students within regular education settings. By being part of a regular education classroom, our special education students are provided the opportunity to access the regular education curriculum. Both regular and special education teachers continuously plan and collaborate to create a positive learning environment for all students. They work together to put different supports in place to foster success. Inclusion also gives our special education students the ability to interact with their peers of the same age. Interacting with peers can support and positively impact both social and academic growth. The ability to interact with their regular education peers exposes our special education students to a range of thoughts and abilities. The involvement of peers for special education students is critical because there are an unlimited number of skills that can be taught in both natural and meaningful ways.

In addition to being part of the regular education curriculum, Nicolet's special education students also

receive small group and individualized instruction to help them gain the skills outlined in their individualized education plans. Even though these skills may be taught in the regular education setting, our special education students may need additional practice and guidance to master specific skills.

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

The Menasha Joint School District offers two types of programming for English Learners (ELs) at the elementary level, including “Two-Way Immersion” (TWI or bilingual education) for Spanish-speaking emergent bilinguals, and “Content-Based Education” (CBE). At Nicolet, we provide CBE. EL teachers co-teach with general education teachers to integrate language instruction into the content of the general education classroom. EL teachers co-teach with up to two grade levels in literacy and ideally in math as well, supporting emergent bilinguals who speak any language. However, the amount of support each student receives is determined based on students’ language levels as determined by the statewide language test (ACCESS) and teacher data, such as speaking and writing rubrics (WIDA), and district assessments (the Baseline Assessment System by Fountas and Pinnell and iReady, by Curriculum Associates.) The focused support is weighted more heavily toward ELs at levels 1, 2, and 3 with decreasing support for levels 4 and 5. Levels 4 and 5 may have a consult level of support instead of co-taught instruction. When EL teachers cannot be in the classroom, EL paraprofessionals support EL students and EL teachers will co-plan with general education teachers. In other content areas, EL teachers will “push-in,” or join a class without co-teaching or much co-planning, as the schedule allows.

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

During the 2018-2019 school year, Nicolet Elementary did not have any students who were migrants. We did have two newcomer students, who had been in the United States for less than one year. These students had limited formal education before coming to Nicolet Elementary, and each student had a composite language level of 1, according to the state language test, ACCESS, and the ACCESS screener. In such cases where students are newcomers or when students are not meeting benchmarks who are at language levels 1, 2, or 3, the Menasha EL Program allows for “pull-out” instruction. During pull-out instruction, the EL teacher instructs students in another setting and teachers teach language more explicitly and systematically. Often, the teacher uses a specific language teaching program, such as Hands on English or Frames for Fluency. These programs are based on research and data, and qualify as a language intervention when done properly for at least eight weeks.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

In the Menasha Joint School District our philosophy is reaching every student every day. The staff at Nicolet works collaboratively to use observations and data to guide our decisions and meet the needs of all students. Our work to engage every student is embedded in our daily decision making and our building improvement plan using culturally responsive practices. Our building improvement plan decisions are based upon academic data and survey data from the Wisconsin RTI Center and the Wisconsin PBIS Network. In order to meet building improvement goals and truly reach every student, our school has implemented the following practices to engage students and build a crucial sense of belonging.

Our building uses PBIS to promote positive behavior and improve safety. We collect data and implement systems and supports for all students on an ongoing basis. This work is supported by a tier 1 and a tier 2 coach at the district level. We have a tier 2 team that meets to review student data, implement strategies to positively impact student behavior and school safety, and create systems to monitor student progress. For students needing more individualized, intensive support, a tier 3 intervention is implemented by the team, which typically includes a behavior specialist, the classroom teacher, and at least one member of the pupil services team. Very student specific plans are put in place to improve academic and behavior outcomes.

During the 2018-2019 school year, our building implemented an I am Somebody List. This list is modeled after the DPI Angel List. It involves staff looking at each student in the building to make sure they have a relationship with an adult in the building. These relationships are built through positive prompts, check ins, and other relationship building techniques. In addition, the building engaged students and families in a We are the World Celebration in February of 2019. This celebration was held at the local Boys and Girls Club and supported students and families in sharing, celebrating, and learning about the cultures and backgrounds of all of the students in our building. This celebration included food, dance, art, music, and books to provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their own culture while gaining the appreciation for the differences in other cultures as well.

Finally, every day staff at Nicolet supports and engages all students by delivering instruction designed around students setting personal goals, being an active part of their own learning, and allowing students to incorporate their own ideas into practice. This work is all supported by our strong belief in every student. We want our students to learn the importance of setting personal goals, monitoring their progress toward their goals and make adjustments along the way. By shifting the responsibility from the teacher to the student, it helps our students become more accountable for their work and take ownership of their own learning.

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

The Menasha Joint School District has made it our mission to engage families and the community. In order to reach this goal, district leadership includes an engagement goal in all building improvement plans. The leadership team also engages in professional reading in order to strengthen their own skill set and support their teams in engaging families.

Many of our systems in our community work in harmony to plan and provide engaging opportunities for our families. To kick off the year, our district holds an open house for all families. During the open house, students and families meet with teachers to discuss classroom and grade level expectations. Throughout the school year, our team provides families with opportunities to partner with their child and meaningfully participate in their child's education. These events are often held during the school day based upon our family event attendance data.

The Menasha Joint School District uses PBIS to guide, support, and engage the learning community. Our building level PBIS team works on an ongoing basis to provide engaging opportunities for students and families. This team meets monthly to review behavior data, plan building wide supports and cool tools, and

plan events for our students and families. The PBIS team holds a movie night, a family game night, and an opportunity for families to attend a Timber Rattlers event with the school community. Finally, families are invited to our monthly PBIS assemblies to join us in celebrating their child for demonstrating a positive trait identified for the month.

Nicolet also offers programming through the Community Learning Center (CLC), district-wide program that offers before and after school care for our students. This educational outlet provides our students and families quality educational, recreational, and social programs that are well-rounded. This has become a valuable resource for families that is safe, fun and engaging.

Our building works in cooperation with our PTO. This team works on an ongoing basis to provide funding for student field trips and other educational and engaging events for students and families. Over the course of the school year the PTO hosts and supports the following events: an ice cream social, bingo, Culver's and Tom's Night, a Dance-a-thon, a school dance, and a family picnic. These activities provide our students, staff and families a chance to connect and build positive relationships and bring together our school community.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

The Menasha Joint School District is dedicated to providing staff with professional development time and collaboration aligned with the district curriculum and mission to focus on "every student, every classroom, everyday." Each month there are in-district staff development days at the district or building level. At the district level, staff is offered a cafe style learning approach, with choices of courses aligned to the district math, literacy, social emotional learning and Universal Classroom Practices. Most often, the district seeks out personnel from within to be lead presenters, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect for learning among staff. At the building level, all learning and collaboration time is linked directly to the school's initiatives, goals and learning outcomes. Staff is encouraged to present and share their knowledge in different areas of expertise.

There are a variety of other training opportunities provided to the staff in Menasha. With the implementation of the units of study for reading and writing, administrators, coaches and literacy resource teachers have attended several literacy workshops hosted by Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Information learned is brought back to the building level to teach other staff and implement new strategies. To support math, teachers are trained each year in AVMR to become skilled interventionists who use diagnostic testing and plot intentional learning trajectories to support students. Likewise, administrators, counselors and teacher leaders participate in the state-wide PBIS conference every year as an ongoing effort to improve student behavior and outcomes in school.

There is a willingness to learn from each other within the school and district. Teachers work closely with the academic coaches to examine math and literacy teaching practices, evaluate student progress and identify areas for improvement. Together, data is analyzed right down to the individual student level and by specific standards to understand each student's strengths and areas of need. By doing so, we learn what is and what is not working for our students and constantly adapt teaching methods to current student needs. As a result of this collaboration, teachers are able to identify targeted areas of focus and set goals for improvement throughout the year. Teachers willingly participate in coaching cycle opportunities to help make informed decisions regarding instruction.

Grade-level teams collaborate weekly to share ideas and professional practices. Classroom data is shared, discussed, and combined with conversations surrounding Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) as they relate to building-wide goals. At any given time, it is common to see classroom teachers, special education teachers, EL teachers, literacy resource teachers and coaches meeting together to problem solve. On a regular basis, the counselor, school social worker, school psychologist and principal are also included in those conversations as we work together to understand the student as a whole. We firmly believe that it is a team effort to help each individual student succeed and reach their maximum potential.

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

Leadership is a shared responsibility within the building. The principal works with a combination of coaches, resource teachers and content teachers to form the school leadership team. Together, school related goals are aligned to a unanimous vision that all students can achieve great success with the right attention and support. We use a variety of assessment results to guide the team in creating our school goals related to our improvement plan. We use classroom, district and state test results, the Schoolwide Implementation Review (SIR) and the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) to help guide our thinking and evaluate the effectiveness of our current systems.

As a staff, we believe that quality instruction and leadership begins with an evidence-based framework which outlines the key elements needed to be successful. The principal, teachers and specialists use the Stronge Effectiveness Performance Evaluation System as a tool for both supervision and reflection. We use this to help set personal goals based on professional standards. This creates a uniform and neutral platform from which we can work to collectively help each other learn and grow as a staff.

The entire team is dedicated to using data to drive our decisions. A variety of assessment data is used to provide students with quality instruction in a safe and caring environment where all students can thrive. The principal works directly with the coaches, school psychologist and interventionists to monitor the effectiveness of RtI process. It is critical to ensure the right strategies are implemented to close the gap and help students progress toward grade-level achievement. Behavior data is analyzed by the Tier 2 Team to provide struggling students with targeted behavioral interventions. The pupil services team (which includes the principal, psychologist, social worker, counselor and school resource officer) offers support to teachers, students and families to ensure the proper resources and strategies are in place for student success.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The foundation for success begins at the district level. In 2012, the Menasha Joint School District recognized the need to streamline teaching and create a comprehensive curriculum aligned to the state standards to provide a stronger academic framework. A strategic, multi-year implementation plan was put in place to achieve this goal. Academic coaches were added to the staffing district-wide. Literacy resource teachers were also added as an additional layer of support. Classes were shifted to a co-taught model between classroom teachers and special education/EL. Elementary schools adopted Bridges Math and began implementing the Units of Study. Throughout this time, a great deal of effort was put toward unpacking the Common Core State Standards, to which all math and literacy assessments are aligned. These shifts in curriculum have played a critical role in Nicolet's academic success, resulting in improved assessment scores in classroom, district and state-wide assessment scores.

Implementing the district curriculum to fidelity is an ongoing process at all levels. Staff are encouraged to participate in and provided with professional development opportunities. Collaboration time plays an essential role in allowing staff to share ideas and make improvements. The principal and coaches work as a team to ensure teachers have the appropriate resources to achieve their goals. Students are provided with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning at the universal level. Tiered interventions are implemented when students are not performing at grade level. To address this, the school-wide intervention block has provided teachers and support staff time on a daily basis to address students' specific areas of need.

We believe high academic achievement correlates with quality and effective instructional practices. To help unify our efforts toward student success, we use the Stronge model for Educator Effectiveness and the Universal Classroom Practices as a common starting point. Through the process of self-evaluation, self-reflection, feedback and collaboration with leadership, there is a great deal of effort to meet our own high expectations for successful outcomes.

Overall, our goal as a school is to provide our students with exciting learning opportunities in a safe, welcoming environment. We recognize the great needs of our students and realize the positive impact all school staff can have on a child. In fact it is this concerted effort toward learning and continuous improvement that unifies and energizes staff. Everyone willingly works together as a team, knowing the outcome is to provide our students with an exceptional school experience.