

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 [X] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

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

Official School Name Poder Academy
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2201 Morrie Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Cheyenne State WY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 82001-4097

County Laramie

Telephone (307) 632-2248 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://poderacademy.com/ E-mail colton@poderacademy.com

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. Marcos Martinez E-mail marcos@poderacademy.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Laramie County School District #1 Tel. (307) 771-2100

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. Robert Salazar
(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):
- 29 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 36 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	13	18	31
1	16	13	29
2	17	12	29
3	15	11	26
4	17	13	30
5	10	14	24
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	88	81	169

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 31 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.5 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 58 % White
 - 8.5 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 6%

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	166
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Spanish, Filipino

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 12 %
20 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 44 %

Total number students who qualify: 74

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %

25 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>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>11</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: 3

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	3
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.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
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	95%	95%	95%	96%	0%
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 prepare students for college and beyond, through rigorous academic and athletic programs.

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

PODER Academy is open to all students that reside in or around the district and accepts students on a first-come, first-served basis. Parents are asked to complete an application that requires only necessary contact and enrollment information, and is available in both English and Spanish. An acceptance letter or waitlist letter is then mailed in mid-July. Parents who receive an acceptance letter are asked to set an appointment with the Office Manager for registration. At registration, parents receive a detailed description of the school’s program along with the Student & Family Handbook, which contains the Family Contract and the Code of Conduct. All applications for enrollment are due by July 1st. Enrolled students and families are then required to attend a Family Orientation Day held the week before school starts that includes additional information about the school and the roles of parents, students, teachers, and administrators. Once classroom capacity has been reached, applicants are then put on a waiting list until spaces open up, and parents on the list are contacted based on the order that the application was received. Priority for enrollment is given only to siblings of enrolled students, and pre-admission activities are not required to attend the school. If a family does not accept a seat for its child, the family of the next student on the waiting list will be notified immediately, and the same procedure will be followed for enrollment.

PART III - SUMMARY

Students of PODER come from all areas of Cheyenne and its surrounding communities in Wyoming. Families served by PODER Academy vary across all aspects of life. Some students began their educational career at the Kindergarten level and are now enrolled at PODER Academy Secondary School, continuing towards their High School graduation. Other students are not only new to the Cheyenne and Wyoming community, but to the United States as well. Cheyenne has a neighboring Air Force base and in turn our school sees a consistent presence from military families moving into and out of the community. The Pacific Railroad has a large presence in the community and has ties to the early days of the city of Cheyenne. Another large component of the community is that Cheyenne is the State Capital and is the central location for all the state employees. Interestingly enough, Cheyenne sits at the intersection of I-25 and I-80, which increases the amount of people passing into the community. These areas bring together people of various backgrounds and experiences, any of which may enroll in our school and make the composition of our student body.

The facility in which the school is now operating has been a major project that has required significant renovation at a large expense. After operating in a wing of Johnson Junior High through the first year, PODER Academy relocated to its own facility on 2201 Morrie Avenue that previously housed the old Triumph High School. In addition to installing new alarm systems, and remodeling IT infrastructure, the school constructed two full size tennis courts to facilitate the tennis program, as well as a playground adjacent to the school to facilitate roughly 60 students. The school also moved forward with a state-of-the-art play area behind the school that provides an additional play space to facilitate more activity. The school is moving forward with an indoor tennis facility that will sustain tennis activity through all the weather elements all year long, which will also be open to the public on select days and times.

As a result of the school's success, student waitlists have increased dramatically. The school is attracting more dynamic and talented professionals from all over the region, and has solidified a significant number of returning families who referred members of their extended families. Several traditions and events are known by students, staff, and families of PODER. Every week classes group together to celebrate the end of a successful week of learning. The "La Junta" celebration is looked forward to by not only the students but the staff as well. Drawings for prizes, highlighting student's hard work, and the announcement of the "Red Shirt Winner" for each grade is recognized. Exemplary work is displayed in the hallways near the classrooms so that all students can view the exceptional work. This culminates with the state WY-TOPP exams. The 2017-18 School Year saw 100% proficiency in Mathematics from both the 3rd and 5th grade classes, and again in the 2018-2019 school year the 5th grade class achieved 92% proficiency in Mathematics and 88% in English Language Arts. Another highlight of the school's development is the PODER Chess team. Students participate in tournaments across Colorado and have won numerous trophies, and recently travelled to Chess Nationals in D.C. where the team took 15th out of 40 teams in its division. They were the only team from Wyoming to compete at this annual event where all the best go to compete. Then with the PODER tennis program, students played in a series of intra school tournaments with a format designed for young and beginner level students. These intra school tournaments serve as a development pipeline where players graduate into the more advanced PODER summer league. Students in the summer league travel to tournament sites across Wyoming and Colorado.

Establishing a school culture that is consistent, fair, and permeates all aspects of the school day lay the foundation that allows the students to be academic risk takers and allow the development of the academic and personal selves. The first week of school teaches the students the behaviors needed to make the most of their learning opportunities which become crucial factors that facilitate learning every day of the school year. Within weeks of the school year starting, available data, from the WY-TOPP Fall Interim, NWEA Map, and previous in school assessments, are compiled and reviewed by Administrators and Teachers in order to select after school student tutoring groups. This tutoring group meets twice a week for one hour and allows small group or independent instruction and practice to be held in Mathematics and ELA. Students graduate from Tutoring once enough data is available to adequately determine the student no longer needs this support. PODER Academy invites specific students to participate in an intensive and targeted tutoring session through the first week for five hours each day and again through the first two

weeks of the summer break. Saturday tutoring has been a program that is used to assist students with recouping skills and abilities as needed through the school year. All directions the school Leadership takes, add to the student's ability to prepare themselves to be successful through their K-12 education and also in their college years and beyond. These decisions ensure all activities in the classroom are efficient and effective, teachers are consistently in the classroom throughout the entire year, and all efforts are made to allow high quality instruction to occur in the finite amount of minutes available in the classroom setting.

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

All of the chosen curricula are delivered through a teacher-centered method of direct instruction. Teachers and administrators monitor student growth based on assessments given after each lesson and at the end of each week, along with observations made in the classroom. Students log into the IXL program everyday, which is an immersive K-12 learning program that provides comprehensive, standards-aligned content for math, language arts, science, and social studies. IXL allows the school to pinpoint exact item types that students are struggling with, track class progress toward meeting state standards, and identify areas for improvement. The NWEA MAPS is also used heavily as tools to track student progression, and will continue to be used even as the school begins to incorporate the fall and Spring WY-TOPP assessments. When a student is not demonstrating reasonably calculated progress in the general curriculum, teachers can make referrals to the Building Intervention Team (BIT). The BIT works to design appropriate and effective tiered interventions and supports to improve the academic progress of the student.

PODER Academy has selected a series of curricular programs that are fully developed and include all necessary resources and instructional materials (trade books, multimedia aids, science kits, etc.). Most of these curricula also include their own summative assessments that teachers can replace or modify based on the dynamics of their class, and that correspond to each unit of instruction. Otherwise, teachers use the objectives stated in each unit to guide creation of their own assessments. Each unit of instruction has been laid out in accordance with Wyoming Content and Performance Standards that provide teachers with a curricular map to ensure alignment. When delivered within a high-structured school model, all of the curricula have produced exceptional results in schools across the country, and have been effective in schools serving students from challenging socio-economic backgrounds. Specifically, these programs have been used effectively to remediate students who come in behind grade level and/or who come in with an economic/academic disadvantage. Teachers also administer daily ‘Exit Tickets’ after each lesson to monitor student knowledge and skill retention on an ongoing basis, and to adjust whole group instruction and individual support as needed. Data from these assessments drive instruction and curricular decisions for each grade level, as well as for individual students.

1b. Reading/English language arts

Reading proficiency is an essential element for the mastery of all other academic subjects. Accordingly, all students in kindergarten through 3rd grade receive intensive phonics and phonemic awareness instruction to ensure they have a solid foundation in these fundamental reading skills. The 4th through 5th grade students make the transition from emphasizing phonics and phonemic awareness to intermediate grammar and novel reading. For example, students start dissecting sentences and classifying various parts of speech, and they read books with higher-level vocabulary and complex novel plots. Throughout their time at the school, students read classical texts from a wide-range of authors in fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.

It is a goal that students will complete their 5th grade year above grade level in reading proficiency. As such, Open Court is the selected curriculum for reading. Open Court is a comprehensive K-5 reading, writing, and language arts curriculum. Students first acquire foundational skills through strong phonics instruction, and then learn to read with comprehension, including re-reading challenging sections for a deeper inquiry into organizational structure and author techniques. The program includes instruction in the five keys areas of reading, differentiated instruction in every lesson, English Learner support, strong inquiry and higher-order thinking, and robust writing instruction. Open Court instruction begins in kindergarten where children are taught that sounds are represented by letters and can be blended to form words. Instruction shifts in grade 1 from mapping sounds to letters to mapping sounds to spellings. To ensure student success, systematic, explicit phonics is reviewed and reinforced in grades 2 and 3. Open Court utilizes a system of tiered vocabulary instruction that places strong emphasis on research and interpretation skills. Relevant words are divided into three categories: words already known without school instruction; words to be learned as part of

general lessons; and words to be learned in a specific content area. Instructors use orally presented texts and content-based explanations to directly teach over twenty new meanings each week, with the intent that students will be adequately exposed to all twenty and fully retain ten to twelve.

Students use the Write Source curriculum to learn the keys to successful writing in a step-by-step process starting in kindergarten. Instructors also use a variety of modern topics, public figures and historic events to inspire students to practice. All students will exhibit a mastery of both formal and creative forms of writing by the eighth grade.

1c. Mathematics

Saxon is the selected curricula for math, and is a teaching method characterized by incremental learning that incorporates a new mathematical concept every day while constantly reviewing old concepts. This method has proven to promote student mastery of specific mathematical skills and knowledge if applied effectively. Saxon Math combines instruction, practice and assessment of interrelated concepts into a condensed period of time, typically within a unit or chapter. The program's pedagogy is efficient and data-driven, separating multiple concepts into connected increments, and acknowledging that small portions of information are easier to teach and learn. Saxon Math then allocates the instruction, practice and evaluation of those increments throughout a grade level.

Data reveals that this approach creates considerably higher levels of student comprehension than presentations found in programs with a chapter-based method. In Saxon Math, each increment builds on the groundwork of previous increments, guiding students to a deep understanding of mathematical concepts. Linked increments are taught throughout the grade level, ensuring that children have the chance to master each increment prior to being presented with the subsequently interconnected one.

Distributed instruction - teaching which introduces concepts to be comprehended over numerous intervals - results in student achievement superior to that achieved through instruction that is not disseminated. Distributed practice throughout each grade level builds full comprehension of basic math skills and long-term recollection of concepts. The common cumulative assessments in Saxon Math measure acquisition and maintenance of concepts. Assessments every fifth lesson assist teachers in measuring student growth and each evaluation is cumulative, so that teachers are able to observe student skill retention over a period of time. Saxon Math's distinctive methodology to math instruction ensures that children achieve and retain foundational math skills on which all future math success is based.

1d. Science

Teachers use the McGraw Hill curriculum to introduce students to a variety of topics in science. Students have an opportunity to participate in science projects and experiments to connect their studies to the real world. The goal is to give students the foundation they need to succeed academically, and also awaken a curiosity about science that can lead them into various careers such as engineering, biology, chemistry, physics or astronomy, just to name a few. Students are encouraged to engage their families and community members, when appropriate, in the development of these experiments, and then participate in the district and potentially state science fair when interested.

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

To guarantee that PODER Academy students have the critical research, conceptual thinking, and writing skills necessary for college preparatory high school history, all students are taught a wide range of historical content and research skills. The history curriculum is a combination of internally developed materials and the McGraw Hill Social Studies curriculum. Students learn about various historical figures both in and outside of the U.S. whose contributions helped shape our national identity, and develop an appreciation for diversity by studying events from different cultural perspectives. The history curriculum fully aligns with Wyoming learning standards and many of these reinforced with reading sources for ELA. Each grade level focuses on their own key areas, which are incorporated into other classroom projects and activities. Kindergarten through Second Grade looks at what it is to be a citizen and how that translates to the school,

classroom, and community. Third Grade focuses on states, their capitals, and compiling researched information into an individual state report and presentation. Fourth Grade delves into Wyoming history, attend a field trip to Fort Laramie and view the Oregon Trail wagon ruts which provide physical connections to the learning completed in the classroom. Fifth Grade challenges the students to expand their view by exploring world history. A key culminating event includes a research project and presentation on the culture and history of a selected country. The presentation has included parents, school staff, and a buffet of foods traditional to some of the researched cultures. Teachers from the school have connected the class and students with individuals living or raised in other cultures and countries.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

End of the year activities for each grade level, primarily in the fourth quarter, all focus on an art based project that is tied into the academic learning through the school year.

Physical education is taught to all students in each grade level, alternating days for 40 minutes. The time covers health standards as well as completing the physical education standards primarily focusing on tennis related psychomotor skills and concepts. They will undergo activities designed to improve their hand-eye coordination as well as their overall fitness. Younger students will have the option of competing in intramural 10-Under tennis tournaments designed for beginners, while older students will compete in leagues and tournaments around the state. At a minimum, students will develop the athletic foundation and confidence needed to succeed in other sports.

The selected curriculum for Spanish is Viva El Espanol. The school will infuse Spanish vocabulary into the school's curricular framework and will also implement a Spanish segment in the daily schedule for every grade. The Spanish segment will introduce students to basic Spanish vocabulary and pronunciation. The hope is that students will develop a foundation to work from when they take Spanish classes in high school, and that they will be more likely to continue their Spanish education in college with more advanced courses. Furthermore, this curricular design will help native Spanish speakers refine and enhance their existing Spanish vocabulary, and will also provide for a more welcoming environment that mirrors the community that students will most likely be living and working in as adults. We believe that we can help all students master English in short order, without sacrificing the opportunity to provide students with a basic foundation in Spanish.

Each classroom has grade level appropriate technology incorporated into their classroom that is meant to progressively enhance and create new learning opportunities. Kindergarten and First Grade Square Panda receptors that connect to the iPads and with the use of headphones all the students to independently practice their phonics. Second and Third Grade have a combination of ipads and laptops to use in their classroom. Fourth and Fifth Grade have full sets of laptops for their students in order to access more research materials and complete essays in a digital format. Google Classroom is utilized to write essays and submit or revise assignments. This is meant to increase the ability of students to use technology independently as they progress to a more complex technological setting at PODER Academy Secondary School, and then in a college setting. A computer lab with a full classroom set of laptops is available for class or small group use as well. Each classroom has their own mini library and a more traditional library can be found in the same setting as the school computer lab.

Several Clubs provide extensions for students. Success Club was established, as well as the schools increased partnership with Safe to Tell Wyoming, in order for students to increase their participation in suicide prevention, peer mentoring, stress relief, coping skill, and self esteem and advocacy development. Chess players are masters of strategic thinking and are trained to think several moves ahead. It requires intense focus, discipline, critical thinking and determination. Research suggests that these qualities go hand-in-hand with academic success, and serve to give students the mental edge needed to compete in high school and college. It is also widely believed that the game of chess serves to increase the attention span. Students

will begin with fundamental concepts, learning how each piece moves, how many points they are worth, and how to achieve a checkmate. As students are conditioned to think several steps ahead, they will also learn more advanced offensive and defensive strategies. Students will receive instruction during the school day for forty minutes every other day, all year around, and have the opportunity to participate in an intramural or competitive after school program.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

PODER Academy excels as a school that is able to assist students with filling holes in previous education experiences and catching up to the proficiency level of their class. The primary supports to assist struggling students include after small group school tutoring twice a week, Saturday morning tutoring, a week long winter break tutoring, and summer break tutoring. These small group tutoring sessions consist of four to six students reviewing mathematic, ELA, or science practice and skill work. This extra time to practice and receive instruction on a one-on-one level, coupled with the extended school day through the year, allows these students to perform at grade level prior to the next school year.

Speaking specifically to the WY-TOPP scores for the 2018-19 school year there were two subgroups that scored more than 10% lower than the average overall student score for their grade level. Third grade Hispanic students scored 50% proficiency in ELA and Mathematics and Multi-Racial students scored 50% proficiency in ELA, compared to the 75% and 72% overall class average for ELA and Mathematics respectively.

To remedy this discrepancy PODER Academy will employ several strategies. Teachers will be trained to use a sheltered instruction approach accompanied with a frequent use of hand gestures, pictures and objects to expand English vocabulary without interrupting the flow of instruction. Other strategies include increasing wait time to give ELL students time to think and process information before the answer is given, responding to the student's message without immediately correcting grammatical errors. The exact word and correct grammatical response will develop with time. Instead, the teacher will repeat his/her answer and put it into proper English, simplification of teacher language when speaking directly to the student, emphasizing important nouns and verbs, using as few extra words as possible, and provide ELL students an opportunity to demonstrate comprehension and knowledge through body actions, drawing pictures, manipulating objects, or pointing.

3b. Students performing above grade level

PODER Academy has opted not to implement a Gifted and Talented program in the traditional form where the highest scoring students are designated as a separate group. Instead, high student achievers are given extensions to the existing curriculum, and potentially promoted up a grade level, if necessary to promote their continued academic development. The school strives to provide an atmosphere that challenges even the most gifted of students, and provides the means for students to excel on all levels. A personal tutoring plan is developed to challenge students who are in need of advanced instruction.

3c. Special education

As a public school, PODER Academy is open to all students regardless of ability and/or prior academic performance. The school currently serves a growing number of special education students, as well as a high proportion of English Language Learners. Accordingly, the school has developed a comprehensive plan to facilitate students with a wide spectrum of learning abilities. A special education teacher (SPED) with the proper licensure works closely with the Administrative team to analyze student performance data, and to structure the appropriate support for each student. The SPED teacher also attends regular meetings with school personnel and parents to discuss the progress of individual students. An inclusion program is provided for all SPED students whenever possible. However, in cases where the needs of the student and the IEP require a different program, the school will meet those needs with existing or contracted staff.

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

PODER Academy actively targets the emerging population of Spanish speaking families in the district, and has comprehensive programs in place to facilitate students who classify as English Language Learners (ELL). Multiple members of the administrative team are proficient in Spanish, and the school actively seeks out teachers with basic conversational Spanish proficiency at a minimum. PODER Academy has chosen to incorporate a Structured English Immersion (SEI) method to help ELL students achieve English proficiency and integration into the regular curriculum as quickly as possible. All ELL students learn with other students in the classroom for instructional time. The school's teacher-center direct-instruction program is geared to all literacy learners, and ELL students have tutoring time in small like-skilled groups, homework tutors, and adequate homework time.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

PODER Academy offers an innovative model that puts on emphasis on the core areas of reading, writing, and math in every grade. The staff does whatever it takes to ensure that all students are reading at or above grade level by the third grade, and that all students have the reading fluency, phonemic awareness, and comprehension skills needed to move on to the upper grades. Furthermore, students develop strong mathematical problem-solving skills with access to a standards-driven curriculum in the other core subjects of social studies and science.

While differing theories exist as to why students are underperforming, the reality is that a large number of students across socio-economic boundaries are underperforming due to behavior issues. Many students come from households that lack structure and are not given the support they need to succeed. As a result, they develop bad habits at home that have an impact on their academic performance. To address this issue, PODER Academy provides a high level of structure where students are taught how to focus on the task at hand and how to make school a priority in their lives. Students learn how to respect others, how to appreciate the value of hard work, how to be persistent, how to budget time effectively, and how to prepare for exams efficiently, among many other important virtues that characterize a successful student. Personal accountability is reinforced.

PODER Academy adheres to a belief that the road to college begins in the early days of elementary where students develop the work ethic and discipline needed to achieve academic success. Students are prohibited from wandering the hallways which serves to minimize excessive ‘horse play’ that can often lead to bullying. Students who exemplify model behavior are given a wide variety of privileges and are recognized at an assembly held each week. High expectations are set from day one and teachers are trained to ‘sweat the small stuff’ in order to rectify any disruptive behavior at its root. Students as young as kindergarten age learn how to maintain good study habits, manage their time, and recognize the appropriate time and place for certain behavior in the belief that a well-structured school culture goes hand-in-hand with academic success. The goal is to limit distractions so teachers can focus on the reason they were inspired to enter education in the first place, and that is to prepare kids for the road ahead.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Field trips have also been planned to a variety of sites including the Terry Bison Ranch, University of Wyoming, Colorado State University, Fort Laramie, and Laramie County Library. A delegation of students attended the Latina Youth Conference, which has become an annual tradition. Furthermore, members of the Parent Advisory Committee have been tasked with organizing fundraisers with local businesses such as Chick-fil-a, in addition to social events where PODER staff, students, and parents can interact with the community at large.

PODER Academy has partnered with a number of community-based and corporate organizations that offered support. Cheyenne Regional Medical Center assisted with obtaining Lifeskills curriculum intended for social emotional support. A local community member completes our student and class pictures, as well as the school yearbook and event documentation. During charter renewals, multiple families provide formal recommendations to the local school board during the in person renewal process. Letters of support are provided from local community organizations and families.

Parent Advisory Committee meetings are held once a month at various times to allow the families to contribute to the meetings and have training sessions available to parents. These topics are set up according to parent input regarding the perceived needs of the students and school. Parents provide crucial feedback and suggestions on students' needs regarding the Title I programs and school-wide support. Parents also provide daily snacks for the students in the classrooms during a mid day break from their school sessions. Family volunteers provide assistance to classrooms during a weekly library session, helping students review

and select books and check out. Family volunteers are crucial to assisting and hosting our Fall Festival and Spring Fling activities for students.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The curriculum can only be as strong as the teachers providing the instruction. Upon hiring, all teachers and support staff participate in a two-week summer professional development program. This development program: (a) lays the foundation for a consistent and structured school culture; (b) ensures common classroom management strategies and class procedures; and (c) establishes school-wide expectations for behavior, student and staff conduct, homework, testing and communication with families.

The professional development training is structured to cover all facets of the school's operations, including finances, parent outreach, employment matters, student culture, curricular coordination, assessment schedules, IT matters, and compliance issues. In addition to reviewing the Accountability plan, teachers undergo a series of role-playing sessions to prepare for difficult conversations with parents and/or staff and will watch various videos covering best practices. During the year, visits are planned with other low and high achieving schools that allow the school's staff to interface with other educators to compare strategies.

Professional development is the primary responsibility of the Principal. In conjunction with the Administrative team, the Principal plays a major role in creating and implementing the two week teacher training in July, while conducting the monthly training for all teaching staff, focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The Principal is responsible for providing valuable feedback on a daily and weekly basis, while evaluating staff and making proposals that inform hiring decisions. Large scale professional development events are provided school wide to staff often at a local, or regional level. This creates staff buy in across all areas, as well as a baseline of understanding amongst staff, and provides exposure for all staff to ideas and problem solving strategies from outside of our organization. Providing these opportunities also allow teachers and staff to capitalize on any extra continuing education credits needed for their license renewal. Specialized PD sessions, such as STEM or STE(A)M conferences, are provided to foster ideas across all grades levels and areas with a specific target in mind. These are reviewed selected based upon school and student needs, usually an area of schoolwide improvement as perceived by the Administration and Staff.

To provide a more continuous experience of growth through the school year, a professional development meeting is built into the weekly schedule. This presents opportunities for the staff to voice their needs to improve their teacher, and the administration to adjust their staff development sessions to match the ebb and flow, as well as unexpected scenarios, through the school year. We've found that through this method, the staff feel more valued, are able to receive much needed real time skill development, and lead in hosting of the professional development sessions which showcases their skills and develops their leadership capacity.

4. School Leadership:

In approximately 400 words, describe the leadership philosophy and structure in the school, along with the roles of the principal, other school leaders, and stakeholders. Illustrate, through examples, how the school's leadership ensures that policies, programs, relationships, and resources focus on student achievement. Please refer to school leaders by their roles, rather than by their names.

The school operates on a belief that all stakeholders, from the parents, to the staff, to the students, must be held accountable for some aspect of the overall mission, and that a culture of high expectations must start with the school's leadership. Accordingly, the leadership team consists of a CEO, COO, Principal, and Office Manager. This structure allows for an effective delegation of administrative duties while promoting a system of checks and balances. It also serves to allow the Principal to devote their full attention to professional development while working with teachers to improve classroom management and student learning. Additionally, the hiring and development of highly qualified teachers is a priority. The Principal is tasked with visiting classrooms daily, soliciting ongoing feedback while evaluating weekly lesson plans. Teachers undergo periodic cross observations to compare classroom strategies as well as travel to other schools for observations. Trips have been made to multiple states for school visits including New York City,

Boston, Colorado, Atlanta, and New Orleans, as part of an effort to incorporate innovative methodologies that are working in other districts. The school also encourages visits from other schools to observe PODER's classrooms to promote a greater interchange of ideas. A portion of monthly staff meetings are set aside for individualized coaching where the staff can share strategies and discuss new ideas. Discussions are held around strategies from Doug Lemov's highly influential first book, *Teach Like a Champion*, which is based on his study of top teachers in high-poverty schools. Each staff member is coached on how to utilize quizzes, handouts, and review activities, as well as how to use their own creativity to supplement each curriculum based on the needs of their students. The school has also incorporated more SMART technology and computer-based educational platforms like IXL and Google Classroom. Finally, the school requires each parent to commit themselves to becoming partners in the education of their student and they are held accountable to ensure that students are in school every day, on time, and in school-issued uniform. If a student is in need of tutoring, parents are obligated to ensure the student is in attendance. Furthermore, every student is required to spend at least 20 minutes reading each night, including weekends and holidays. Reading Logs are sent home every day and must be returned with a parent signature to verify that the reading requirement was met and supervised.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice that has been most instrumental to the schools success is the implementation of the extended school day. To begin with, the school offered an extended day where students attend school from 8:30am-5:00pm during the week, and occasionally during weekends, summer, spring, and winter breaks, if necessary to achieve proficiency. This has been adjusted over the years based upon data from assessments, behavior management, as well as student, parent, and staff surveys. The school day now begins at 8:10am and ends at 4:00pm. This allows the school to host practices, clubs, tutoring, professional development sessions, and meetings without interrupting the evening and homelife of families while accomplishing many of the objectives that were part of the initial intent. The extra school hours serve to reduce the long periods of inactivity that can inhibit academic success while providing a structured environment for students between the hours of 3:00pm to 4:00pm, which is a common window of unsupervised time for kids with working parents. Furthermore, the extended day is roughly one and a half hours longer than the average public school, which equates to approximately two hundred and sixty-five hours of extra instruction over the span of the school year. The single common element in any child's schooling is the access and amount of high quality instruction they receive. There is a finite amount of time available in the days per school year and minutes taught per day, which is expanded past traditional levels at PODER Academy.