

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 906 Pennsylvania Street PO Box 234  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Bedford State IA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 50833-0234

County Taylor County

Telephone (712) 523-2116 Fax (712) 523-2589

Web site/URL https://www.bedford.k12.ia.us/ E-mail dnally@bedford.k12.ia.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. Jason Shaffer E-mail jshaffer@bedford.k12.ia.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Bedford Community School District Tel. (712) 523-2656

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. James Johnson  
(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, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

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, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	23	18	41
<b>K</b>	34	14	48
<b>1</b>	24	15	39
<b>2</b>	31	21	52
<b>3</b>	19	17	36
<b>4</b>	19	17	36
<b>5</b>	15	20	35
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	165	122	287

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0.7 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 96.5 % White
  - 2.8 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 10%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	19
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	9
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	28
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	280
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 46 %

Total number students who qualify: 133

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %  
36 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. 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>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>28</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>15</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</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: 14
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	13
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 17:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

<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. 2010

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

The Mission of Bedford Elementary is to provide each student a quality education through programs, opportunities, and experiences to become productive citizens and lifelong learners. Bedford Elementary believes that high expectations and challenging objectives produce responsible, self-motivated students that become successful, self-directed learners.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Bedford Elementary commenced the 2020-2021 school year with face-to-face instruction within our building. We offered a remote learning option for those families that had medical reasons that put them in a high-risk category to be in large groups of people or for those families that were just not comfortable with their child returning to school in a traditional setting due to COVID-19 concerns. To begin the second semester, we required our remote learning families to provide documentation from a doctor and only accepted medical reasons in order to continue with the remote learning option. During the first semester 94% of our students chose to enter the building for face-to-face instruction. After requiring medical documentation for the second semester, we had 99% of our PK-5 students back in the elementary building for face-to-face instruction.

We have successfully kept our doors open the entire school year, with limited quarantining and absences from students and or staff. The majority of our student quarantines were due to the child being a close-contact at home and not to actual COVID cases within our building. If a student did need to be quarantined, we temporarily put them on remote learning, where with an electronic device, they were able to continue learning from home, until they could return to school within the building.

17. **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 mission of the Bedford Community School District and Bedford Elementary is to provide each student a quality education through programs, opportunities, and experiences to become productive citizens and lifelong learners. At Bedford Elementary we believe it is our mission to unlock the potential in every Bedford Elementary student by giving them opportunities to lead, love, and learn. We believe that every child can learn and achieve success in a safe learning environment where they can feel trusted, supported, and have a sense of belonging. We know our students learn best when they feel good about themselves as well as their environment. It is our belief that optimal learning occurs when students are actively engaged in meaningful, relevant, and challenging work, integrating technology where appropriate, and have the opportunity to be leaders within our classrooms, building, and community. Teachers, staff, and administration believe parent involvement and effective communication is vital to the success of our student learning and thus strive to partner with families regularly through SeeSaw, newsletters, Facebook, phone calls, emails, and scheduled conferences. Our mission and our belief statements guide all decisions made in our building regarding teaching and learning. The mission is our foundation that we build upon every day and we accredit our success to this philosophy.

Our elementary school is composed of grades PK-5. We have two sections of grades PK, 3, 4, and 5 and three sections of grades K-2. We have approximately 287 students enrolled including the Little Dawg Preschool that is housed on our campus. The school district is comprised of Bedford and four small rural towns all of which are in the far corner of Southwest Iowa. These small communities are very supportive of the Bedford Community School District. The school is the heart of these communities and they strive to make the school system the best it can possibly be for their children. Due to the location of our communities, our school culture is not very diverse. In an attempt to broaden our students' knowledge and understanding of various cultures, as well as ethnic and racial backgrounds, our teachers diligently strive to provide learning opportunities which enable the students to see that there is an entire world of opportunity beyond southwest Iowa.

Bedford Elementary employs high quality teachers and staff that guide our students in meeting educational goals and provides a well-rounded program that is rooted in rigorous standards-based curriculum. We have staff members that have taught their entire careers at Bedford as well as brand new teachers. The teachers are dedicated to their profession and have focused on a multitude of professional development avenues throughout the years to provide outstanding instruction to our students. The school personnel continue to learn new strategies to incorporate into our classrooms. With our 17:1 students/teacher ratio, class sizes are small and the use of individualized, as well as differentiated instruction is evident in all classrooms. Our PK-5 students have access to 1-to-1 technology in their classrooms. The students are exploring and learning more everyday through inquiry learning and the excitement of using the technology enhances student engagement and motivation. Our school is unique because we have fully implemented a student-centered leadership program called "Leaders of The Pack". It is based on Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and Franklin Covey's "Leader In Me" program. Bedford Elementary students and staff are creating an environment that reinforces leadership. Teachers integrate leadership language and the leadership habits into instruction daily. We continually build a culture of leadership through school traditions, such as celebration assemblies and service projects. Bedford Elementary students are gaining 21st Century skills to prepare them for life outside of our elementary doors. Students in all grades are provided leadership opportunities in their classrooms and throughout the building. Classrooms and individual students track goals, both academic and personal, in leadership notebooks which are shared and celebrated throughout the school year. This unique program allows our students to showcase pride in themselves, pride in their school, and pride in our communities.

Our vision is to ensure academic success of all students. Together we encourage each child to aspire to his or her highest potential in a safe and engaging environment. We strive to provide opportunities for our students to be successful learners in the 21st Century. Bedford Elementary is an exemplary school where meeting the needs of all of our students is the number one priority. The students experience a first-class education as we open the doors to their future.



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

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

According to the Iowa Department of Education, “A great school system begins with a clear and rigorous set of expectations, or standards, that educators help all students reach. In Iowa, those academic standards are known as the Iowa Core. The Iowa Core sets appropriate expectations for all students and reflects the real-world knowledge and skills students need to graduate from high school prepared for college or to enter the workforce.” Bedford Elementary has embraced the same expectations for rigorous and relevant curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all academic areas.

It is the philosophy of Bedford Elementary that our instructional practices are grounded in strong research. In reading/ELA we follow a balanced literacy approach. Our curriculum focuses on students comprehending what they read through a variety of literary and informational texts. We focus on key literacy components: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Through our balanced literacy approach, we incorporate read alouds, guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, and word study into our instruction. This approach allows us to teach relevant skills within the context of text that individual students can comprehend. Phonics is essential for children to become successful readers and spellers/writers in the early years of schooling and beyond. Therefore, we have vertically aligned phonics and writing programs in grades K-5. We use formative and summative assessment data to drive our instructional decisions and group students for interventions as needed. We provide 30 minutes of daily literacy intervention for students who are not progressing at grade level. Teachers use of anecdotal records and weekly progress monitoring provide indispensable data as a guide to pinpointing gaps and specific student needs.

In mathematics the Iowa Core Standards guide us in providing instruction and learning opportunities where the students develop deep conceptual understanding and skill proficiency. We teach problem solving through problem-based instructional tasks and strive to make our math instruction relevant and connected to the real world. Our math curriculum and instruction are vertically aligned and builds upon prior knowledge. We emphasize connections, across mathematical content areas, to other disciplines, and especially to the real world. Our math textbook provides assessments after every five lessons, therefore we have frequent student data to guide our instruction and provide interventions as needed to ensure students are mastering grade level math concepts.

At Bedford Elementary we have made a significant shift in our science instruction. We have shifted from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered inquiry where our students are now solving problems and exploring scientific concepts rather than memorizing the concepts. We follow the NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards). Our goal is to produce scientifically-literate citizens by providing authentic science exploration, discovery, and direct instruction. Making connections to real-world issues is a priority. These connections involve students engaging with scientific phenomena and designing solutions to problems. Following the NGSS allows for vertical alignment in grades K-5. Assessment is authentic and feedback is provided based upon a problem solved or a phenomena questioned. In order to determine if students are progressing through the standards, students demonstrate competency with tasks like developing models, discussing and analyzing data, constructing verbal and written scientific explanations, engaging in evidence-based argumentation and reflecting on their own understanding.

Social Studies at Bedford Elementary has moved from memorizing historical facts and dates to developing skills of a social scientist. The primary purpose of social studies is to assist our students in developing the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions as citizens of a democratic society. Our social studies instruction focuses on planning for inquiry learning where we develop compelling and supporting questions, gather and evaluate primary and secondary sources, and determine how our students will communicate conclusions and take informed action. We have shifted from traditional assessments to performance assessments. These tasks are connected to real-world challenges and require higher-order thinking skills.

Overall our instruction at Bedford Elementary demonstrates teaching for understanding, is student centered, accommodates and modifies for student differences, is rigorous and relevant, and utilizes assessment and

data to drive instruction. The teachers utilize small groups, differentiated instruction, cooperative learning groups, technology integration, hands-on experiences, inquiry learning, traditional lecture/large group, and student performance projects to deliver the curriculum to the elementary students. Through these diverse teaching methods, the students at Bedford Elementary are highly engaged throughout the instructional process.

While Bedford Elementary has firm procedures in place to help mitigate COVID-19, and that has allowed us to provide face-to-face instruction for the entire school year, we do have some students, due to medical reasons, who have chosen remote learning. Additionally, students who have been quarantined temporarily due to COVID-19, were able to transition smoothly from traditional face-to-face instruction to remote learning for the duration of their quarantine due to systems and resources we have had in place from the first day of school. We have successfully been able to provide effective instruction and rigorous learning opportunities to our remote learners. Each PK-5 student has an electronic device assigned to them and portable hotspots for those families who have limited or no internet access. Each PK-5 teacher was required to create a Google Classroom that is utilized periodically with students in both the face-to-face instruction and full time for students in remote learning. We purchased various online resources to supplement our curriculum standards in the areas of reading, phonics, math, and science. Our teachers also utilize Zoom with our remote learners to interact directly with the student to teach lessons, provide interventions and specially designed instruction, and progress monitor. We have also integrated paper learning packets as temporary alternatives, if needed. Assessments are done through the teachers' Google Classroom or by Zoom. While we believe in-person instruction offers the most effective learning environment where students can directly interact with teachers and peers, we understand the need for a remote learning option. Aided by our extensive technology resources, the hard work and dedication from our teachers has made remote learning a positive experience for our students and families who truly needed the learning option.

**1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):**

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

Bedford Elementary houses the Little Dawgs Preschool program on our campus. We have partnered with Head Start and utilize their performance standards for accreditation purposes. We believe in the whole-child approach where we not only develop math and literacy skills but also social-emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. We use exploration and discovery as a way of learning. The Iowa Learning Standards are referenced to ensure we are providing a quality education to our preschool students as well as positively impacting their readiness to enter our kindergarten program. These standards focus on social-emotional, physical well-being and motor development, social studies, creative arts, communication, language, literacy, mathematics, and science and technology. Creative Curriculum resources are used in our PK classrooms and are directly aligned to the Iowa Early Learning Standards as well as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes. We use assessments that provide ongoing assessments. The data from these observations and assessments help our teachers be intentional in their teaching by accurately determining where children are in their development and learning. Our strong curriculum and instruction in the PK significantly impacts school readiness for the students that enter our kindergarten classroom. Approximately 85% of our kindergarten students come directly from our on-campus Little Dawgs Preschool. Early language skills, the foundation for reading ability and school readiness, are acquired and built during the first years of life. Through our PK program, we are able to help children build those skills and then transfer those skills into the kindergarten setting. Our preschool teachers collaborate frequently with our kindergarten teachers to ensure instruction is aligned to kindergarten readiness skills. Having our preschool program on our elementary campus is a benefit for those students who enter our kindergarten classrooms. They have had the chance to visit our elementary building frequently, sometimes daily due to utilizing our gyms for recess. The preschool students interact in the elementary building and this takes some of the anxiety away for the incoming kindergarten students and allows the kindergarten teachers to focus on the academic rigor more quickly.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

To ensure we are producing well-rounded students, Bedford Elementary offers the following non-core subjects: PE, art, music, band, large group guidance, and library. All of the non-core subjects are taught to our K-5 students, with the exception of band, which is only offered to fifth graders. The non-core classes are on a mixture of a M, T, W, Th, F schedule and a day 1, 2, 3, 4 schedule which rotates throughout a typical 5-day week. Therefore, students receive PE approximately two days per week and the other non-core areas are offered to off-set PE. Library and large group guidance are offered one time per week for each grade level. Band is offered daily for those fifth graders that choose to participate. In order to keep smaller numbers in our non-core classes, such as PE and music, we decreased the amount of time they have PE and music during the week. In a non-COVID 19 year, all sections in the same grade level had the non-core class together. For example, all three sections of second grade would have gone to PE at the same time. In order to meet our district COVID guidelines, only one section of a grade level go to PE and music at a time. Due to many of our non-core classes being in smaller classrooms or having more kids in them than their regular classroom, students are required to wear masks during their non-core classes. However, PE is an exception to this rule since we feel if the students are actively moving and outside when possible, the masks are not needed. Instructional activities in music have also been altered due to COVID-19, such as we are not allowing our fourth graders to play a recorder this year as part of their music curriculum and winter and spring concerts were virtual instead of live concerts at the school. Since all of our PK-5 students have individual electronic devices in their classrooms, technology standards are integrated into multiple curriculum areas within the classroom. Health is taught within our science curriculum at all grade levels K-5. Even with all of the challenges that COVID-19 brings, we have successfully offered all of the same non-core curriculum areas we would in a non-COVID-19 year allowing us to immerse our students in all of the essential 21st Century Skills.

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

Everyday our classrooms are growing with diversity. Even though in our rural school, the diversity may not be racial/ethnic related, our student population's diversity lies in its skill and knowledge of content. Therefore the teachers in Bedford Elementary plan and provide instruction to meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms.

We provide inquiry learning throughout multiple core areas in our classrooms to meet the needs of all of our diverse learners. This instructional strategy gives our students an opportunity to explore and foster curiosity about various topics. It increases their motivation and engagement and allows them to understand the importance of asking questions. Through inquiry learning, students are able to take ownership of their learning and we have found that this is very motivating for students. Kagan Cooperative Learning differentiated instruction takes place in all of our elementary classrooms. Through cooperative learning, the students are actively engaged and excited about learning. Our balanced literacy program supports our instructional philosophy of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of our diverse learners. It provides flexible grouping, which allows students to gain and master literacy skills while reading text within their comprehension level.

To monitor student learning, we utilize state screeners and formative and summative classroom assessments. This data not only drives our instruction, but it also assists us in grouping students for intervention purposes. The data aids us in the diagnosis of deficient skills for students and enables teachers to home in, during intervention time, on specific skills. Students who are struggling with reading are provided 30 minutes daily of intervention time above and beyond their literacy block time. Interventions for other curricular areas are provided as needed for students. Weekly progress monitoring determines if academic growth is being made.

In addition to general education interventions, we provide Title I reading and math, and Special Education Services for our students who are consistently performing below grade. When a student begins to academically struggle, we have a student assistance team meeting, made up of an instructional coach, administration, general education, title, and special education teachers. This

team brainstorms general education interventions that are tried before moving towards special education and Title I. The team collects data to determine the success of the intervention. If the data shows the student is still not performing at grade level, then we look towards supplemental Title I services or a special education referral for more standardized diagnostic testing and ultimately specially designed instruction in the deficit area. Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP), our state mandated standardized test, is one piece of data we use to determine need for Title or Special Education. Other assessment data used are the FastBridge fluency screener, classroom assessments, student work samples, and placement tests used to determine specific skill deficiencies in multiple curricular areas.

For those identified students in grades 3-5 who are performing above grade level we offer a TAG program to challenge their critical thinking skills. The TAG program serves students who demonstrate a need for a differentiated program because of consistent achievement and high performance in the area of general intellectual ability. These students meet 2-3 times per week to develop and utilize their critical thinking skills.

Ten percent of our PK-5 population receives Special Education Services. We offer three classrooms, two of our classrooms are a combination of inclusion and pull-out and provide an education in the least restrictive environment. One of our classrooms is self-contained for the core academic areas due to the students having significant academic and health needs. The students in our self-contained classroom are on alternative assessments and make up only 1% of our population. All of our special education programs tailor the teaching for all learners. The instruction is differentiated and provides more explicit, intensive instruction. Multi-sensory instruction is found in our classrooms to meet the diverse learning needs of the students.

Bedford Elementary has risen to the challenge of educating all of our students through the unprecedented times of COVID-19. To meet the needs of our diverse learners at home we have given each student an electronic device. Teachers upload video lessons, assignments, and activities through the Google Classroom platform. Students on IEPs interact daily with their special education teacher through video conferencing. They receive their specially designed instruction and interventions from home while still interacting with the teachers. We also utilize paper learning packets as needed to supplement the online component. Classroom materials are provided along with Title reading and math supplemental materials and TAG enrichment activities. Students learning in a remote environment have contact with their teachers through phone calls, text, emails or video conferencing. We also utilize video conferencing to do weekly progress monitoring with our students. Technology integration PK-5 has been vital in the success of the learning opportunities for all of our students, including our remote learners.

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

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

Bedford Elementary strongly believes it's people not programs that are vital to the learning of every student. While we implement sound, motivating instructional practices in the classroom such as inquiry learning, hands-on learning, cooperative learning, problem solving, and opportunities for our students to take informed action, we are convinced it's the students taking ownership in their own learning that is the most engaging. Providing simulations is an important tool in instruction at Bedford Elementary. The staff is committed to planning and implementing learning that will connect students' school life with real world.

Authentic learning was achieved as our entire elementary student body honored our community veterans with a poignant Veterans Day Program. Another group of students researched school funding, community taxes, and proceeded to talk with our business owners about the need for promoting shopping locally. This connection between school and real-world application is paramount in guiding and planning our instruction.

We strive to create a culture that reinforces leadership through our "Leaders of The Pack" program. Our students are learning that they have a voice. They are given the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process that truly impacts them. For example, we have had groups of students research ideas, create plans, and present the plans of action to the administration to change some recess rules, allow the use of electronics during indoor recess times, and add new playground and recess equipment. While these changes are minute in the grand scheme of things, they are very important to the elementary students. When they are able to take informed action, they start to realize they are a part of our school and truly make a difference.

Celebrating successes and growth are essential to the positive culture at Bedford Elementary. We have building, classroom, and student and staff individual goals. We feel that we monitor what matters and we want students to be able to monitor their own learning and celebrate when they reach their goals. Prior to social distancing due to COVID-19, we had monthly leadership assemblies. This was an opportunity to celebrate growth towards meeting our goals and also allowed the students to showcase their leadership skills. Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, we had to move to virtual celebrations or small classroom celebrations. Students in the remote learning environment do miss out on some of the face-to-face initiatives and celebrations we have, but with technology and social media we are able to include them when feasible.

Creating a positive environment produces a powerful ripple effect that continually enhances learning: when students can see that it is ok to make mistakes, celebrate their successes, and feel empowered as change agents, they will actively engage in learning and, consequently, learn more effectively. A positive school atmosphere encourages student attendance. We have a 95% attendance rate at Bedford Elementary. When students are in school, they are learning.

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

Raising productive citizens is a shared responsibility between families, community, and schools. Having strong family engagement aids in regular school attendance and increased homework completion, which leads to better grades. Engaging families and community builds trust and enhances the culture of the school. We utilize many forms of communication and social media to keep our families and community members engaged with the learning that is taking place. Preschool teachers complete home visits with their students and their families prior to starting the school year. These visits also ease the transition to school for the child and help build the bond between the teacher, student, and family. We offer an open house at the beginning of the school year for students to visit their classrooms. Due to COVID, this was modified for the 2020-2021 school year. We continued with an open house, but it was for incoming kindergarten students and new students to our district only. We offer parent/teacher conferences twice a year. To accommodate the families and address social distancing and health concerns related to COVID, we offered phone conferences in lieu of a traditional conference. The parent still had the option of a face-to-face conference, but we limited the conference to one adult. Families that have students in our Title I Reading or Title I Math program have the opportunity annually to provide feedback to the school on the effectiveness of our Title program.

A strong partnership with the community is another key component to our strong school system. At Bedford Elementary, we strive to partner with businesses and community members when we can. In non-COVID years, we have had a student leadership group that highlighted a local business monthly for our leadership assemblies. Prior to the assembly the business owner would be invited to meet with the group and they would discuss the leadership habits and those they felt were the most important. Fifth graders partnered with the local nursing home and would go up and do activities with the residents monthly. Again, due to COVID, this could not happen this school year, but we hope to continue this as soon as it is safe and healthy to return to the nursing home. Annually, we do a service learning day called Bulldog Beautification Day. Typically the elementary students clean around the PK-12 buildings and grounds as well as the nursing home grounds. We also have School Improvement Advisory Committee meetings to gain valuable input from community members and families about various aspects of our school, instructional programs, and assessment data. This committee has the opportunity to help our school make short and long term goals and gives community members and parents a voice in what they feel their children need from the school in order to be successful.

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

To continue with our philosophy of it's people not programs that impact students, we know the importance of supporting our teachers and staff. A good work ethic and elevated performance inevitably produces successful outcomes, which in a school setting is increased student learning. To show appreciation for our staff and continuously build a positive culture within the building many things are done such as jeans and birthday coupons, 12 Days of Christmas celebrations, food, and recess coverage periodically. To ease the stress of planning for remote learners we provided coverage with substitutes, so teachers had extra plan time to devote to remote learning. As a district, we went to weekly early out Wednesdays so teachers had the afternoon time to devote completely to remote learning.

Providing the supports teachers need to be successful in the classroom is a top priority. When COVID shut our school down during the 2019-2020 school year, we immediately provided training and professional development on Google Classroom, knowing we were going to have to have an effective online presence for students the following school year. We have weekly collaboration time that focuses on “just in time” teaching to help bridge instructional gaps due to the school closure. The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) resources are being utilized to help us implement teacher leadership, educator effectiveness, and best instructional practices.

Professional development days for the elementary are facilitated by the building/district leadership team and administration. The content focus for the 20-21 school year is on effective writing instruction to enhance our students’ ability to communicate effectively through writing. The use of the “accelerated learning” model to assist in closing the gap from loss of instructional time due to school closure in spring 2020 was our initial focus. Collaborative teams analyze student work and data and use the data to guide instruction as well as focus on effective instruction in an online learning environment. Through the weekly cluster meetings, teachers are able to gain a better understanding of the System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP) rubric in effective instruction, analyze student work, as well as analyze their own instruction in the classroom. These collaborative teams have become support teams to build student success and grow professionally. The job-embedded cooperative groups of teachers focuses on student learning, working together to promote learning, research-based strategies, implementation of effective instructional strategies, and student success across the curriculum.

The focus of all of the Bedford Elementary professional development is to increase student achievement. In order to do that, teachers have to continuously be learning and improving in the area of instruction. The professional development program is designed to advance the knowledge of our staff in the areas that are going to actively engage the students and facilitate life-long learners.

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

The leadership philosophy of Bedford Elementary is to provide leadership opportunities for others to foster growth and share responsibility for attaining building goals. We strive to create a culture of collaborative

inquiry within the school where teachers and administration work together to implement new instructional strategies to improve student learning. Bedford Elementary believes that it is imperative to provide an atmosphere that promotes intense learning opportunities on a daily basis. We are student-centered and make decisions based upon data and what is best for students. The leadership structure of the Bedford Elementary is made up of a shared Superintendent, Pk-5 Building Principal, Instructional Coach, and four mentor teachers. They work collaboratively to analyze student assessment data, analyze, model, and implement effective instructional strategies, investigate the needs of the staff and students in regards to professional development, plan weekly cluster meetings (staff collaboration) and plan professional development. The leadership team investigates further strategies that will enhance student engagement and learning in the classroom. This team is fundamental in providing a supportive atmosphere at Bedford Elementary. The building principal and instructional coach ensure that the teachers are focused on student learning by coaching them to analyze student work and effectively study data and make instructional decisions based on data. The building principal provides positive and constructive feedback to staff in regards to their instruction, always with the expectation that instruction will get even stronger and therefore student learning and achievement will increase. Every decision made by the leadership team is supported with student data and is continually made with the initiative of improved student learning. Bedford Elementary has high standards for teaching and learning, and these standards have given us positive and consistent student achievement results.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Bedford Elementary believes in valuing each child's voice. We know that practicing social and emotional learning skills improves culture and cultivates an environment that is welcoming, supportive, compassionate, and safe. Our school is a place for our students to grow as a person, therefore, we implement the "Choose Love For Schools" curriculum throughout our K-5 guidance program. This program is a social-emotional learning program that teaches mindfulness, character, and emotional intelligence. The students learn about and focus on four character values through this program: courage, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion. The "Choose Love For Schools" curriculum also includes a multicultural literature component that teaches diversity, social justice, and inclusion. Through literature students learn to appreciate their own cultures as well as those of others. Engaging in children's literature provides them opportunities to gain perspective and develop empathy, increase social-emotional development, establish a growth mindset, and foster creativity.

We also use a Second Step curriculum in grades K-5 where students learn about empathy and through literature children are able to learn to appreciate their own cultures as well as those of others. They are able to gain perspective, increase social-emotional development, and establish a growth mindset.

The Bedford Community School District also implements K-12 the "Olweus Bullying Prevention Program". This program focuses on the whole school environment and helps to positively change and improve the climate of the school. The program is focused on long-term change that creates a safe and positive school climate. At Bedford, we created "Bulldog Belief Statements" and we consistently reference them with our students. Those statements are: we will respect all others, we will try to help students who are not being respected, we will try to include students who are left out, and if we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

Current cultural and social events have created a very uncertain environment for our students, staff, parents, and community members. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a culture where fear is the norm. The one stable place for many of our students was temporarily taken away from them and left many of our students wondering when things would return to "normal". Bedford Elementary knew we needed to get our doors back open as soon as possible and provide a safe,

structured environment for our students. We had to overcome the obstacles of social distancing, masks, parents disagreeing with safety procedures put in place, hygiene, sanitizing, contact tracing, quarantining, creating a successful remote learning option for students, reducing learning gaps from the mandated school shut down, all while trying to maintain normalcy and educate all of our students. We believed for the social-emotional and academic learning we needed to have the students in the building with face-to-face instruction daily. We provided both routine and structure for our students so they could thrive. Both of our social-emotional learning programs have assisted with overcoming the many obstacles the pandemic provided for our students and have helped to ease the anxiety the cultural and social events has created. At the beginning of the school year, each classroom read and discussed events from children's literature books that dealt with COVID-19, pandemics, viruses, masks, online learning, washing hands, and returning to school after the shutdown. These valuable discussions gave the students the opportunity to face their fears and see that we were all going to work together to have an elementary school where we are safe, where we are going to stay, and most importantly a place where learning is fun again.

Our county public health department has provided an immense amount of support for Bedford Elementary and understands the importance of doing everything we can do to continue instruction within the building. Our county emergency management office provided support for the school by assisting us with personal protective equipment at the onset of the pandemic and contacting us periodically to ensure our needs are being met. We have also ordered many academic resources to assist with our remote learning as well as materials for intervention as we diligently work towards closing the academic gap that was created due to school being shut down in the spring of 2020.



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

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Commitment to providing continuous and quality education since the initial school shut down due to COVID-19 in March of 2020 has been Bedford Elementary's priority. In May of 2020, the PK-5 staff was trained in Google Classroom and Google Sites and were given the responsibility of having their own Google Classroom and/or Google Site up and running by August 2020 as we were uncertain if we would be able to start back to school with face-to-face instruction and we knew committing to our students having continual access to instruction and learning was vital. We expressed to our teachers that our goal was to be able to move to full remote learning at a moment's notice. In order for our remote learning to be effective every PK-12 students were provided with 1-to-1 technology. We leased portable hot spots to issue to families that did not have adequate internet at home to be successful with remote learning. The students use their own devices in the face-to-face instruction on a daily basis. When a student has to temporarily quarantine due to COVID or being a close-contact, they could immediately continue their learning with the remote learning plan we have in place. Students who are full-time remote learners also have the school issued device and work off of the same curriculum as their peers. All instruction for our remote learners is provided by their classroom teachers. Students in remote learning, who are on IEPs continue to receive their specially designed instruction by the special education teachers. This instruction is synchronous learning provided through Zoom and Google Classroom. Daily interventions and weekly progress monitoring has also continued with students when needed and is also done through synchronous learning provided through Zoom and Google Classroom.

Before starting the school year, Bedford Elementary teachers, staff, and building principal asked four critical questions: What do we expect our students to learn? How will we know students are learning? How will we respond to unfinished learning? How will we respond if students already understand the content? To plan on meeting the needs of our students due to the learning gap from school being shut down, we referenced "Planning for Acceleration in the 2020-2021 School Year" from TNTP reimagine teaching.

After considering the social-emotional needs of our students, we needed to diagnose the unfinished learning of our students. As an elementary team, we brainstormed the tools we had in place to determine what skills had been missed due to the school closure. After determining exactly what unfinished learning needed to be addressed, we used the accelerated learning approach. With this approach, teachers identify the content knowledge and skills their students might struggle with in their current grade level and filling those potential gaps "just in time" when the material occurs in the school year. Instead of remediation, accelerated learning requires that students consistently receive grade-level materials, tasks, and assignments along with appropriate differentiating and scaffolding to make the content accessible. The teachers were trained on effective scaffolding strategies to implement in the classroom to assist with accelerating learning and "just in time" teaching.

Bedford Elementary put mitigation procedures in place to ensure that we could start our school year with the majority of our students being in the classroom with face-to-face instruction and have remained that way throughout the entire 2020-2021 school year. With this and our philosophy of accelerating learning and "just in time" teaching, we have seen success this year. We are seeing academic growth on a daily basis not to mention the social-emotional benefits from being back into a structured school setting where basic needs are being met. An example of our academic growth is our building reading fluency data. We went from 69% of our students in grades K-5 meeting their fluency grade-level benchmark in the fall of 2020 to 84% of our students in grades K-5 meeting their fluency grade-level benchmark in the winter of 2021. Bedford Elementary is devoted to its students and their learning. Through the teachers, staff, and administrator's dedication and hard work, we created a learning environment where all of our students, whether face-to-face or remotely are mastering grade-level concepts and growing academically as well as socially and emotionally.