

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 301 Main Street PO Box 218
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Hills State IA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 52235-0218

County Johnson County

Telephone (319) 688-1105 Fax (319) 688-1106

Web site/URL https://www.iowacityschools.org/Domain/1663 E-mail boeset.reagan@iowacityschools.org

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. Matt Degner E-mail degner.matt@iowacityschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Iowa City Community School District Tel. (319) 688-1000

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. Shawn Eyestone
(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

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

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):
- 21 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 28 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
PreK	9	9	18
K	8	14	22
1	15	11	26
2	14	15	29
3	11	16	27
4	7	11	18
5	14	19	33
6	13	13	26
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	91	108	199

*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
 - 9 % Black or African American
 - 42 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 40 % White
 - 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: 12%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	24
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	203
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 31 %
62 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 67 %

Total number students who qualify: 133

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
24 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>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>19</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>15</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 9
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.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 15:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	97%	95%	94%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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.

The mission of Hills Elementary School is a commitment to serving the whole child. We acknowledge that each student's physical, emotional, social well-being, and creativity are integral to their learning and their academic experiences. The needs of all learners are accepted, fostered, and challenged. We strive to foster lifelong learning in a safe and nurturing environment. We believe that high expectations inspire lifelong learning for successful students. Our mascot is Bolt who represents our learning community as the "Lightning Bolts" who are struck with pride!

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.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Hills Elementary has followed the guidance of the Iowa City Community School District’s (ICCSA’s) Return-to-Learn Plan by implementing all three learning modalities: 100% off-site, hybrid, and 100% on-site.

Parents had the ability to choose between standard enrollment (with the understanding that learning modality could change based on current COVID-19 conditions) and 100% off-site learning through the ICCSD Online Learning Program. These enrollment choices were established per trimester and could be adjusted based on good cause exceptions. Each enrollment period honored parent choice and required staffing adjustments to support the learning of all students.

The determination of the learning modality for students in standard enrollment was guided by the district-established matrix set by the ICCSD School Board in conjunction with the recommendations of the Iowa Department of Education. Preschool through sixth grade students in standard enrollment transitioned between learning models at the following times:

* September 8, 2020 - September 25, 2020 = 100% off-site learning model

* September 28, 2020 - November 13, 2020 = hybrid model

* November 16, 2020- December 11, 2020 = 100% off-site learning model

* December 14, 2020- February 12, 2021 = hybrid model

* February 15, 2021 - Present = 100% on-site learning model

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

Hills Elementary is part of the Iowa City Community School District (ICCSA) and is located in the city of Hills, 8.5 miles south of Iowa City. The rural town of approximately 800 residents exemplifies a community where the school system is the primary link between families and services available. The city of Hills does not have a library, recreation center, medical/health service, grocery store, or public transportation that serves the community. The school and community are geographically isolated and disconnected from the Iowa City metropolitan area; therefore, Hills Elementary is the smallest elementary and the only rural school in ICCSA. The school has a preschool through sixth grade enrollment of 199 students. The enrollment has fluctuated between 185 and 230 students in the past five years due to school boundary adjustments, availability of affordable housing, and family/student mobility.

The student population is derived from a large rural area including the community of Hills and farm homesteads; additionally, Hills serves the students of two affordable mobile home courts, Regency and Cole, which are located between Hills and Iowa City. Children and youth who live in rural areas and those who live in poverty throughout the United States too often have limited access to sufficient academic and social services. Hills Elementary has designated staff that work as a student and family support team to connect families with resources with regards to counseling needs, medical/health care, enrichment activities, home stability, food insecurity, before and after-school care, and educational access. This is accomplished through two major initiatives: community partnerships and the formation of positive relationships between school and families. Strong and connected partnerships exist between Hills Elementary and the city of Hills, Iowa City, Johnson County, and the ICCSA. Positive relationships between Hills Elementary and families are fostered through open communication via phone calls, in-person conversations, invitations to visit school and/or volunteer, home visits, inclusive cultural education and celebrations, surveys, emails, postcards, and Talking Points (a text-email messaging program that translates into preferred languages). Some of these avenues have had to be modified this year due to COVID-19. The relationships developed between school and community demonstrate the value of excellence in education, the pride in our thriving community, and the commitment to collaboration on behalf of our Hills Lightning Bolts!

Hills Elementary has fully utilized the Self Assessment of Multi-Tiered System of Supports Implementation (SAMI) to guide and direct areas of improvement within the state's differentiated accountability model to evaluate the healthy indicators of leadership, infrastructure, universal instruction, intervention systems, and assessment and data-based decision-making. Our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) in collaboration with Grant Wood Area Education Association (GWAEA) literacy consultants, crafted our school improvement plan based on an analysis of areas that SAMI data indicated improvement needed to occur. Since our universal screening data from the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) initially indicated greater than 40% of our students were not proficient in the areas of reading and math, the leadership team developed goals around universal instruction by focusing on three building block areas: time and opportunity, instructional strategies and differentiation, and assessment for learning. Integral to our plan were time audits of literacy and math instructional minutes, continued professional development on Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) with implementation logs and reflective practice in vocabulary and literacy, whole class intervention (WCI) in literacy and math, and differentiation of skill instruction and practice based on student data. After the first year of implementing this plan in conjunction with fidelity checks of the action steps, our ILT assessed growth according to the SAMI, with increases in each area: leadership (+10%), infrastructure (+13%), universal instruction (+8%), intervention systems (+15%), and data based decision making (+4%). The ILT has since added a leadership goal to build teacher efficacy and teacher leader capacity, as well as a common formative assessment (CFA) goal to assist with data collection in narrowing student differentiation and skill focus.

Hills Elementary staff's commitment to high expectations that inspire lifelong learning for successful students is evident through Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS), the framework for Collaborative Academic Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), and reflective practice and cycles of instructional strategies with use of student data. The growth mindset and collaborative culture within the teaching staff has been built through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and a high level of respect and trust among each team. Weekly meetings have focused on priority standards (and accelerated learning templates due to

COVID-19), instructional strategies, student assessments and achievement data, and the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to ensure rigor, student learning, and closing of the achievement gap. The Hills multi-year focus of the EDI instructional strategy, vocabulary instruction, and content learning has brought a depth of knowledge. Teachers have used implementation logs and student learning indicators to identify next instructional steps for student learning. Additionally, teachers have video-taped and/or observed lessons to refine their instructional practice. The ILT's investment in building efficacy is evident in the initiative of #ReflectwithMe and their desire to learn and assist in professional development for staff that encompasses EDI, technology tools, and student engagement strategies. This has also led to increased knowledge of student learner profiles that facilitate differentiation and opportunities for infused targeted skill practice for students throughout the day. All of these pieces have enhanced student learning and have translated to our school's performance profile report through the state of Iowa rating system. Hills Elementary School has moved from an acceptable, to a commendable, and then to a high achieving rating.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Hills Elementary utilizes a structured literacy approach to instruction with consideration of developmental appropriateness, instructional time and opportunity, and cultural responsiveness. Students engage in literacy learning in both whole class and small group settings in the areas of reading and writing with integration of speaking and listening skills. The addition of a whole class reading intervention when indicated by student FAST data on the universal screener has been an integral part of instruction as it targets foundational skills crucial to achieving grade level standards. In the early grades, teachers provide systematic and structured phonemic awareness and phonics instruction with strong integration of fluency practice, writing skills, and comprehension skills. As students move through the grades, teachers gradually shift the focus to reading comprehension through deep analysis of the text, building inferences, and close reading. Writing progresses in a similar manner to reading with early focus on sound-symbol correspondence, sight words, and sentences and gradually movement toward increased content communication through established purposes of persuasive, expository, and narrative writing. EDI and vocabulary focus are key practices used in literacy instruction. The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) structure also provides opportunities to effectively engage in fluid intervention groups to address student learning needs and skill areas. The ongoing use of formative assessments and student progress monitoring data guide instructional strategies and focuses. During PLC conversations teacher teams determine next instructional steps and adjustments to enhance student learning. Classroom teachers are working to further collaborate with Title I interventionists, English Language Learners (ELL) teachers, and Special Education teachers to infuse and embed practice of highest priority skills throughout the day.

Hills Elementary works to embed and use critical thinking within mathematics through a math instruction that considers developmental appropriateness, cultural responsiveness, and whole group instruction with fluid and differentiated small groups based on formative assessments. Math instruction fosters students to become independent thinkers who are active, creative problem solvers, able to effectively apply skills, strategies, and concepts with confidence. The FAST universal screener is also used to determine the type of whole class intervention in math which uses the EDI process and number talks (explanation and meta-cognition of problem solving) to build mathematical thinking. As data is continuously collected, refinement of whole class intervention and small group math instruction occurs. During PLC conversations, summative unit assessments, formative assessments, and progress monitoring data guide instructional focuses and strategies to support student learning. The MTSS structure also provides opportunities to efficiently adjust intervention groups to address student learning needs and skill areas.

As the literacy and math areas are aligned with the Iowa Core English and Language and Math Standards, a critical component at Hills is mapping back the standards (identifying prerequisite skills nested within the grade level standard) to meet student needs and understanding. Instruction is then scaffolded to achieve grade level expectations. Time is spent identifying prerequisite skills and building upon these skills with guided and repeated practice.

Hills Elementary provides opportunities for students to engage in the principles of science, engineering, and technology. Students gain understanding through a hands-on, inquiry-based, experimental approach with Full Option Science System (FOSS) in key science areas: physical, earth, life and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). The Iowa Core Science Standards are embedded throughout science instruction and evolve in complexity throughout the grade levels while building upon prior knowledge. Formative assessments from class experiments and discussion guide the teachers' instruction.

Hills Elementary's social studies provides an integrated study of the social sciences and humanities that promotes and develops responsible and informed citizens in a culturally diverse world. Hills Elementary applies the Iowa Core Standards in Social Studies which provide coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, religion, and sociology. During this period of societal unrest, teachers have taken a deeper look at culturally responsive, diverse, and appropriate materials. Teachers are implementing an integrated approach that encompasses nonfiction text from our reading series in conjunction with other resources, such as Newsela, BrainPop, and Social Studies

Alive. Formative assessments through class assignments and discussions guide teachers' instruction.

During the 2020-2021 school year, students accessed both science and social studies content areas asynchronously during off-site and hybrid instruction.

As a district, we utilized the accelerated learning model for addressing the missed learning due to the pandemic. Rather than remediation (which focuses instruction on teaching missed content from previous years and often results in students never attaining grade-level), accelerated learning prioritizes grade-level content and inserts instruction on missed skills "just in time" as they are needed to access grade-level content. The Hills principal served as an elementary leader of the district accelerated learning team and several Hills teachers were on the committee that identified missed learning from the spring 2020 closure, determined the most essential skills and understandings from what was missed, and created a plan at each grade level and in each content area to infuse those missed skills into the coming grade level content. As we began the school year, each core-content area as well as music, art, library, and PE, had accelerated learning guides that captured the learning missed from the previous year and identified the point in the current year in which to insert this learning. At a building-level, these guides have been used by grade-level PLC teams as they planned for instruction. This process of accelerated learning analysis has also been utilized by grade-level teams throughout the year to identify missed learning from the current year due to COVID-19, to evaluate the most essential skills, and determine where to place those in the remaining instruction in order to maximize student learning.

During the spring 2020 school closure, Hills Elementary used the Lexia Core 5 (reading program) and Dreambox (math program) technology platforms to engage students in a systematic and differentiated approach to learning at home. Both of these programs provided personalized instruction that adapted to student responses and addressed learning gaps in each content area. Teachers met weekly in PLCs to monitor student Lexia and Dreambox usage and to make adjustments in the programs to address student specific needs. ICCSD created at-home schedules for families with connections to learning resources in all content areas with a reading challenge incorporated; Hills Elementary communicated this with families through principal emails, teacher emails, and weekly newsletters. Additionally, all teachers reached out to families to check in and understand needed resources; staff worked with families to link them to community resources and to troubleshoot technology and learning platforms for students. During the spring 2020 closure, Hills teachers collaboratively worked with ICCSD to complete and provide a comprehensive list of online learning resources, workbook and technology distribution, meal distribution, learning around Dreambox, Lexia, Zoom, and SeeSaw (an online learning portfolio). These were instrumental in connecting with students and families and providing learning opportunities.

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

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

Our young Lightning Bolts participate in a full-day preschool program at Hills Elementary School. The program is funded through statewide preschool dollars and Shared Visions Grant monies for income-qualifying families. For families who do not qualify for Shared Vision Grant dollars, funding is provided through tuition. The program's vision is to serve preschool children who might otherwise be unable to attend preschool and to promote their development into well-rounded, self-confident individuals.

The class enrollment is limited to 20 children, with 14 Shared Visions eligible children and 6 non-eligible children who are covered by private pay or Johnson County Empowerment scholarships. The preschool classroom staff includes an experienced, highly qualified teacher who is dual certified in early childhood education and early childhood special education. There are three highly qualified para-educators that maintain the classroom ratio of 7:1 at all times. Wrap-around child care funded through a Wrap Around Grant or tuition is provided before and after school on school days from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and 2:55 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The teacher participates in home visits with children and families before their first day of attendance in the program; this year home visits were virtual via Zoom. Parent/teacher conferences are provided at least twice per school year. Parents are included in the development of their child's learning goals and the assessment process of their children. COVID-19 provided further opportunities to connect with families via Zoom during hybrid and off-site instruction during daily morning meetings and scheduled instructional time; SeeSaw was also used for ongoing preschool activities.

Components of the program are closely aligned with the Iowa Early Learning Standards connected to the Iowa Core and are designed for children from birth to five years. Our program is National Association for the Education Young Children (NAEYC) accredited which also aligns with Iowa's Quality Preschool Program Standards. These components are embedded throughout the preschool program and all activities. Research-based curriculum materials support the Iowa Early Learning Standards and include the Creative Curriculum GOLD, Second Step Social/Emotional materials, Read-It Again, and Handwriting Without Tears. Developmental assessments to track student progress are as follows: Teaching Strategies GOLD, Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), and Get Set for School (GSS).

Shared Visions extended preschool programming has had a positive effect on kindergarten readiness. According to the Hills kindergarten report for the 2019-20 school year, 86% of the students who participated in Shared Visions preschool programming were proficient as incoming kindergarten students on the fall FAST screener.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Hills Elementary provides instruction in a variety of additional curricular areas to create a well-rounded educational experience. Students in kindergarten through sixth grade participate in weekly lessons in the areas of music, art, library, physical education, and guidance.

Students participate in general music instruction three days per week. These lessons address music standards in four main areas: active music making, musical understanding and cognition, cultural connections and proficiency, and social-emotional connections. Our general music teacher utilizes the Orff-Schulwerk method which emphasizes creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication. Students showcase their developing musical skills with concerts twice a year. In addition to weekly music classes, students in fifth and sixth grade have the opportunity to join band and/or orchestra. Band and orchestra students receive weekly small group lessons as well as ensemble rehearsal. Performance opportunities include ensemble concerts as well as small group and individual music contests, honor band, and honor orchestra.

Visual arts are taught through weekly art classes. These lessons align with the National Core Arts Standards relating to creating, presenting, responding, and connecting to the visual arts. Students learn about techniques, vocabulary, and history through project-based units that utilize a wide variety of artistic mediums. Student art is showcased throughout the school as well as at community events throughout the year.

Hills Elementary has a certified school librarian who teaches weekly library lessons for each class, curates the library collection, provides technology support and instruction, engages students in reader's advisory and book selection, and provides point-of-reference support. The library curriculum aligns with the Iowa CORE State Standards, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards, and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards and includes instruction in the areas of future readiness/21st century skills, information literacy, and reading/literature. Students also participate in weekly library checkouts that include librarian book talks showcasing diverse materials at each grade level. In addition, the librarian frequently collaborates with grade-level teams and individual teachers to support research and inquiry projects, provide resources and literature to support classroom learning, and support teachers in integrating technology in meaningful ways to enhance student learning and engagement.

Weekly guidance lessons are taught by a certified school counselor and support student's development in the areas of academics, career exploration, and personal/social skills. In addition, our school counselors provide

support to students in one-on-one and small group settings to address social-emotional needs.

Hills students engage in physical education classes two to three times per week that promote student health and well-being. Through physical education classes, students develop skills in three broad categories: fitness/wellness, basic movement skills and concepts, and movement forms. Each of these broad areas include cognitive, psychomotor, and affective components. Lessons align with the National Physical Education Standards from the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE).

In addition to the scheduled classes described above, specialist educators frequently collaborate with classroom teachers to build cross-curricular learning opportunities, support building initiatives, and enhance student learning.

Specialist instruction has continued during the COVID-19 shifts to remote and hybrid learning modalities in much the same way as described above in the Core Curriculum section. All specialist areas participated in the accelerated learning during the summer of 2020 to identify missed learning and infuse it into the coming year. For both remote and hybrid learning modalities, a districtwide schedule was created to provide a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities for all students at all grade levels in each of the above areas. This has allowed our students to continue to benefit from the whole-child education that is a cornerstone of our mission.

3. Academic Supports:

Hills Elementary's approach to meeting the needs of diverse learners is built upon the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). As mentioned above, enhancing universal core instruction is an important part of meeting our students' academic needs. Whole class interventions are implemented at each grade level to address high priority skills in which a significant percentage of the students are not proficient. Our system for data-based decision making involves a convergence of data among FAST screening, formative and summative classroom assessments, and the annual Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP). For students who do not meet benchmark on the FAST screeners, teachers give follow-up diagnostic assessments designed to pinpoint the specific instructional needs. All of this data is analyzed during grade-level PLCs to create intervention groups to address student instructional needs. Progress monitoring data is kept to track effectiveness of interventions. Groups remain fluid, allowing students to move between groups as they are ready for more challenging skills or if they need additional time to fully master a concept. Grade-level PLC discussions also address instructional modifications that can be put in place for core instruction to better meet the needs of students who are struggling.

In addition to data analysis by grade-level teams, our leadership team and student support team regularly review data to look for trends, identify students who may need additional supports, and plan for professional learning opportunities. The Hills student support team, in collaboration with GWAEA staff, also monitors the effectiveness of interventions by looking at the response rate of each student intervention group in the areas of social-emotional-behavioral (SEB) and academic instruction. If more than 30% of the group is not responding to the intervention based on the group's overall data, the following steps are considered: analyze other student-related data, fidelity check of the intervention, or further diagnostic assessment of the skills. Decisions are then made to modify and/or enhance the intervention, change the intervention or review the intervention practice. Consideration for special education programming at Hills Elementary occurs through the MTSS process. First, interventions are intensified through group size, frequency, and duration, with phase changes noted in the intervention plan. If time and opportunity for changed interventions do not yield results that close the discrepancy in comparison to grade level peers and increase rate of growth, then the disability suspected process begins. This process determines if the student is eligible for special education services. GWAEA, Hills staff, and the student's family work as a team to determine the next steps based on the student data and learning needs.

We utilize a similarly data-driven and rigorous process for identifying and responding to students who are performing above grade level. In analyzing the data discussed above, students who are performing above proficiency are identified and instructional differentiation is planned to meet student needs for increased challenge. We also have a district-level annual screening for participating in the Extended Learning Program (ELP). Parents and teachers may also nominate students for ELP. Students are identified for programming through the use of multiple criteria including objective and subjective data. The Extended Learning Program provides for the educational needs of gifted children through a pullout program that offers a challenging curriculum and opportunities for independent research projects.

At Hills Elementary, approximately one third of students participate in the English Language Learning (ELL) program. All Hills teachers have been trained in the English Language Proficiency Standards and use information from the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) dynamic screener to address the needs of ELL students at their reading, speaking, listening, and writing levels. This collaboration provides modifications and scaffolds for appropriate practice and accessibility to learning experiences. Classroom teachers and ELL teachers work to align instruction and reinforce key concepts through EDI in academic and conceptual vocabulary.

Achievement gaps greater than 10 percentage points exist between ELL students and non-ELL students, as well as between Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) students and non-FRL students. This gap has indicated the need for EDI, vocabulary instruction, use of student engagement strategies, and specific learning targets with immediate and frequent feedback for student learning. The Iowa small group module for instruction has assisted in providing a format for differentiated small group instruction and independent work incorporating targeted and priority skills. This module also addresses the need to provide specific feedback as frequent as every half hour to enhance student learning.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At Hills Elementary, “We are struck with pride: in what we think, in what we say, and in what we do. We are respectful, we are responsible, and we are ready to learn. We are Bolt BRAVE!” This is Hills Pride Promise that we state as a community of learners, striving to show how we are BRAVE: Brilliant (we each have talents to use and grow), Respectful (we demonstrate kindness in thoughts, words, and actions), Accepting (we accept and celebrate diversity and various perspectives), Valiant (we embrace change and challenges with perseverance and stamina), and Electric (we bring a positive, growth mindset and energy). Our school branding of #BeBoltBrave embodies the foundational belief that mistakes help us grow, and taking risks through participation and perseverance in challenges are key in our learning.

Our Hills Pride Promise is followed by morning meetings in each classroom. This time is dedicated to fostering and establishing connected and positive relationships with students through the use of greeting by name, sharing, group activity (this may be team building and/or academic reinforcement), and a message or daily schedule review. During this time, teachers also have opportunities to set the stage for learning and explicitly and directly teach social-emotional skills through the use of Collaborative Academic Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) resources. Each year within the first month of school, it is a goal for teachers to make a positive phone call home for each student and to learn three non-school-related facts about them. This is often accomplished by teachers completing 5x2’s (5 days of 2 minute conversations with a student). These are some of the ways connections and relationships are established.

Positively reinforcing academic work and social-emotional-behavioral (SEB) choices are focal points as we frequently review procedures and routines throughout the year. Hills staff provides specific feedback for students (both regarding SEB and academic skills); these are proactive and thoughtful structures to provide a consistent and warm learning environment. Students may earn Bright Star certificates for academic gains and Lightning Bolts for positive decision making. Teachers strive to give specific, positive feedback versus corrections and redirects at a ratio of five to one each day. The early adoption of morning meeting practices, the teaching of social-emotional skills, and use of PBIS has enabled staff and students to live our Hills Pride Promise and Be Bolt Brave. As a result, our office disciplinary reports have decreased by 65% in the past five years. On an annual climate and culture survey that is facilitated through a partnership between the ICCSD and the University of Iowa, Hills students reported a 14% increase (72% to 86%) in students respecting each others’ differences, and 90% of the students indicated that the school values diversity. On the State of Iowa Conditions of Learning Survey that assess relationships, emotional well-being and safety, Hills students scored two percentage points higher than the state of average on the composite score and fifteen percentage points higher in the area of positive adult-student relationships.

In addition to building relationships, teachers strive to engage students through student interests, learning styles, technology, and various total participation techniques (TPT). The gradual, scaffolded release of responsibility for learning to students through the EDI lesson design provides ample opportunity for TPT and formative assessments, which all guide teachers to adjust instruction to engage students. Due to COVID-19 safety mitigation measures, student morning interest clubs for the intermediate grades (book, art, chess, sports, leadership, and music) have not occurred this year; last year this was a positive connection and engagement opportunity for students with staff who volunteered their time.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Hills Elementary has a strong and warm community that is evident through kindness, teamwork, and support. Through a focus on relationship-building with students and families, Hills staff are able to openly communicate and partner with families to positively affect students in both SEB and academic areas. This is fostered through phone calls, Zoom meetings, emails, newsletters, Talking Points, and parent-teacher conferences. Parents are integral in all programming for our students; their input is specifically sought when preparing a 504 plan (accommodation plan regarding a health impairment), Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and phase changes in interventions. The school community continuously reaches out to families to

inform them of school initiatives, goals, events, and community resources. This occurs through monthly newsletters that are sent through emails, posted on the school website, and linked to the school Facebook account. These means are also used for the delivery of reminders and any other pertinent information that arises. The ICCSD Blackboard Connect system also assists in delivering messages in text, phone call, and email formats.

During a non-COVID-19 school year, Hills Elementary hosts Back to School Night, Grandparent's Day, Family Game Night, Literacy Night, and Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) Night. The school community has also gone out to the neighborhood areas to share information and visit with families. There has been a concerted effort to distribute breakfast and lunch meals to students during the spring 2020 closure and following summer months; Hills Elementary also partnered with community members to distribute holiday meals to students and families. Addressing food insecurity through connecting with Johnson County Food Pantry and Hills St. Joseph's Church has supported a large population of Hills families.

Within the city of Hills, Hills Elementary has formed several reciprocal partnerships. The Hills City Council annually donates \$20,000 to the school to support technology, summer reading programs, and enrichment opportunities for students. In turn, our Hills Lightning Bolts participate in clean up days, tree plantings, and visit residents in the Atrium Village care facility (many of these are on hold due to COVID-19). The school principal attends Hills City Council meetings, provides school updates, and shares school improvement plans; additionally, the principal writes for the quarterly city newsletter and shares the overall progress and highlights of the school. Local businesses including Hills Bank, Stutsman, and Casey's also donate to the Hills Elementary community through volunteers and donations that are used to support or recognize student work. The Hills PTO supports the school through meals on conference nights, PBIS acknowledgement rewards for students, book fairs, appreciation weeks, and fundraising. The Hills principal shares school improvement plans and building data at PTO meetings throughout the school year, and teachers take turns attending meetings to share classroom highlights.

Another aspect that enhances family engagement is a parent volunteer who can fluently speak both English and Spanish and serves as a community liaison for the PTO. This parent is able to reach families and build trust and comfortability which has increased parent involvement. Hills Elementary also works closely with the ICCSD At-Risk Liaison who assists with home visits and communication by use of her bilingual capabilities and friendly rapport. Lastly, former students often return to Hills Elementary to visit and continue relationships within the school community. An example of this is Miss Dasia Taylor, Hills alum and current ICCSD West High student, who was nationally recognized as one of the forty finalists in the Regeneration Science Talent Search for her color changing sutures. After receiving this recognition, she returned to visit staff and current students at Hills Elementary to share her joy, journey, and success: "Once a Lightning Bolt, always a Lightning Bolt."

During this time of COVID-19, more emphasis has been placed on Zoom, phone calls, and ongoing communication through newsletters and emails. Consistent outreach and response to families and partners have been key to continuing our relationships. At the beginning of the year, all teachers held a virtual meet and greet for families and provided classroom tours via Zoom. Teachers provided classroom information through a Google slide presentation during the meet and greet that also prompted student and family participation. The slide presentation was also sent out with follow up communication with families unable to attend.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

A strong collaborative professional culture is the foundation of our school. Teachers work closely with grade-level teams and support teachers through weekly PLC meetings and weekly team time planning. Collaborative culture is further revealed through teacher participation in peer observation and reflection within grade-level teams. This past year, the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) has worked to further extend and deepen our collaborative reflective culture with a program entitled #ReflectWithMe in which each ILT member partnered with an ILT team member outside their typical collaborative circle to set individual goals. Partners met regularly to discuss progress, successes and challenges, and to collaborate on

next steps. The ILT is planning for a schoolwide rollout of #ReflectWithMe for the coming year.

Last year the ILT collaboratively created a golden circle promise to summarize our shared commitment to student learning and our plan for continuing to grow as educators to best serve our students. The golden circle promise states: "Because we believe high-expectations inspire lifelong learning for successful students, we are focusing on EDI, reflection logs, vocabulary, and small group module. We will continue to collaborate, reflect and refine our practices to reach our student achievement goals."

Our professional learning, PLC discussions, and school improvement action steps all connect back to this golden circle. Rather than engaging in a new initiative each year, which can create teacher burn-out and undermine buy-in, focusing on these key instructional practices in a multi-year plan has allowed teachers to deepen their understanding, refine implementation, and increase reflective practice.

Pandemic education has placed unprecedented stresses on our educators as well as our students, and we have responded as a building by finding ways to support each other as well as students. From creating staff check-in Zooms early in the pandemic, to organizing a self-care challenge mid-year, our principal has consistently shown concern for staff wellbeing. As an ILT we have frequently revised our professional learning plans throughout this unprecedented year; looking for ways to modify action steps that will yield the same rich learning, discussions, and instructional planning while making steps more efficient and less time consuming amidst all of the additional demands of pandemic teaching. The ILT has also worked to align professional learning to our golden circle and to build upon prior learning. This has created opportunities to apply what we know about high quality instruction to this new reality of remote and hybrid learning. Professional developments are often differentiated; thus, allowing staff members to select a specific aspect of our general learning topic based on teacher experience, goals, interests, and alignment to teaching assignment.

To provide adequate support to teachers as they transitioned to hybrid and remote teaching for student learning, ICCSD leadership, with the help of teacher leaders, developed the accelerated learning templates and a field guide to support instruction in these modalities. During the spring 2020 closure, teachers completed four webinars to learn the SeeSaw online learning platform to prepare for possible learning modalities in the upcoming year. Throughout the school year, technology based professional development was delivered to increase knowledge and apply skills relating to tools such as Google Suite, Smart Learning Suite, PearDeck, Jamboard, and SeeSaw.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of Hills Elementary is built upon our shared commitment to student growth and learning. We embrace the values of teamwork, mutual respect, growth mindset, and have a high degree of trust among our team.

The building's ILT is composed of grade-level teachers across the range of grades served by the school, an English Language Learner teacher, the teacher librarian, the Instructional Design Strategist (IDS), and the building principal. GWAEA literacy and technology consultants also participated on an occasional basis. Through utilizing a collaborative inquiry process, the ILT utilizes student data as well as building data on MTSS implementation to determine our areas of focus, to analyze effectiveness of our plans, and to make revisions to our improvement plans as needed.

The ILT has grown considerably in leadership skill and efficacy to the point where leadership is truly shared among members of the team: no one member dominates, team members rotate through leading different sections of the discussion, all voices are heard, and there is strong accountability in collective commitments. A portion of this collective commitment each meeting includes sharing information between the ILT and grade-level PLCs as well as returning to the ILT with grade-level feedback and summaries of team discussions. The collaborative inquiry process involves authentic discussion and decision-making; there are ample opportunities for divergent thinking, questioning, brainstorming, and refining of ideas. One of our team norms is "Be hard on the data, and easy on each other; we are a team." The team really embraces this as it does not shy away from asking challenging questions and tackling difficult discussions head-on, while not losing sight of the core values of mutual respect for each other and our students, our growth mindset, and

deep sense of trust. As a result, there is a strong sense of ownership in the process, and the resulting plans are more nuanced, thorough, and stronger than if they had been crafted by an individual. This distributed leadership and sense of ownership in our school improvement plans have resulted in increased collective teacher efficacy - the shared belief among teachers in a building that what they do makes a difference, and that they can reach all students. Research has shown collective efficacy to be a powerful factor in student learning growth.

Another way the ILT has grown is through seeking out professional learning and bringing it back to the building. The ILT identified the need for deeper learning around student engagement. A team of interested ILT members attended a full-day seminar on student engagement, shared the information at ILT and created professional development sessions for building teachers to learn new strategies and develop a plan for applying these strategies to content areas.

Another strong area of teacher leadership is centered on the PBIS Tier I team's work on schoolwide expectations, schoolwide SEB data analysis, refinement of schoolwide teaching around need areas, and schoolwide celebrations of collective student successes. The schoolwide expectations are used as a point of reference for instruction, reinforcement, and reteaching. The use of attendance data, FAST universal screening, office disciplinary reports, and numbers of PBIS reward points, Bright Stars, and Lightning Bolts are used to determine areas of focus for reteaching or celebration. The team works to provide support for morning meetings, social-emotional instruction through CASEL resources, visuals prompts, active supervision, and procedures and routines.

At the heart of supporting both teacher growth and student growth is our principal. She is a strong instructional leader who is invested in growing the leadership capacity of our entire team. She masterfully balances high expectations with a deep sense of care and concern for each student and staff member. She guides teachers and students to become their best selves: setting high, yet achievable, goals and providing both inspiration and learning opportunities to get there. She creates a strong positive relationship with each student: knowing their strengths and weaknesses as well as any unique family circumstances that could affect their learning. With this year of COVID-19, she has managed quarantining protocols, assistance with contact tracing, health and safety protocols, staffing changes, and networking with online teachers. Her numerous connections in the community combined with this knowledge of student needs helps to facilitate partnerships that enhance students' experiences in many ways. She nurtures the positive, growth-mindset-focused culture and is an unwavering advocate for our families and students, our school, and educational excellence.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The entire teaching staff at Hills Elementary has participated in an examination of and training on implicit bias. This work has incorporated reflection and sharing. Concrete examples of interactions and responses spurred discussion and deeper understanding. Hills teachers have also participated in the ICCSD districtwide equity training. This training has brought forth greater understanding of various marginalized groups in our country and community. Each person took the time to evaluate their own beliefs systems by using a cultural competency scale with evidence supporting their own rating regarding each marginalized group. Later, teachers reflected with a trusted partner by having that partner rate them on the same scale pertaining to each group. After this process, pairs had conversations and left with thoughts and actions steps regarding how they can grow in areas of cultural competency. During preservice in the fall of 2020, as a staff we discussed the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and ways to respond and instruct in the classroom setting. We spent time on the CASEL resources and planned for ways to embed safe and accepting environmental characteristics whether in the virtual or the on-site setting. The school principal participated in the ICCSD optional administrative team learning regarding equity which brought a variety of resources to the school level. A repository of books, videos and articles have been put together and shared with staff to deepen understanding and heighten awareness; thus, increasing teacher's awareness when designing instructional plans.

Teachers have taken a deeper look at culturally responsive, diverse, and appropriate materials while implementing an integrated approach that encompasses nonfiction text from our reading series in conjunction with other resources, such as, Newsela, CNN10, and BrainPop. Vetting lessons through a District Padlet resource has also guided instruction and has provided teachers a repository of lessons to be more culturally responsive. Lessons can also be submitted to the ICCSD Equity Team for further review and feedback to glean best ways to inclusively and responsively teach culturally sensitive topics.

Restorative practices within each classroom community and the school as a whole are very much integrated into our practice and responses with students. This has enabled students to better resolve conflicts, take responsibility for their choices and actions, and show forgiveness and empathy for others. The ILT and PLC teams disaggregate data into various subgroups to identify disproportionality and determine action steps to best address any areas that are disproportionate.

The ethnicities and cultures represented in our school community are recognized and celebrated through sharing and community building. Students are encouraged to share about themselves and their families; in the past we have had families come in and share about their culture. We incorporate their stories and information about various cultures and celebrations in daily schoolwide announcements, instructional teaching points for morning meetings each month, and through displaying culturally and ethnically rich books, posters and information throughout the building and in classrooms.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Our key strategy for academic success during the COVID-19 closure has been to continue to develop our collective efficacy as a staff. Collective efficacy is defined as the shared belief among the teachers in the school that their actions have a positive impact on student outcomes. This shared belief leads teachers to embrace behaviors that support student achievement goals such as an increased willingness to try new things and adjust instruction, to accept challenges, and to respond to challenges and setbacks with greater resilience and persistence. Instead of focusing on the many challenges of COVID-19 that we could not control, collective efficacy reminds us to turn to those things we can control and that we know have been effective in reaching our students: explicit-direct instruction that includes vocabulary across content areas, teacher reflection and refinement of practice, data analysis to reveal highest impact skill needs for each student, building relationships with students and families, and student engagement in and ownership of the learning process.

Collective efficacy is demonstrated in the ICCSD district summer 2020 accelerated learning work to capture missed learning from the spring 2020 closure, identify the most essential concepts and skills, and design plans for infusing those into the following grade level's instructional plan. These accelerated learning templates have been utilized by grade level teams and content area teachers throughout the year and have to be modified based on student needs, content missed due to learning modality changes, quarantine, and other pandemic-related disruptions of learning. There will be further refinements as we look to the coming school year to capture missed learning from the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID-19 and infuse those skills into the following year. This fundamentally different approach to missed learning requires strong collective efficacy in rethinking how we can focus student learning on grade-level content instead of remediation and gives our students the best opportunities to reach proficiency.

Collective efficacy can also be seen in our approach to responding to student screening data with a sense of urgency and purpose. Our screening data during COVID-19 revealed many students were struggling academically and socio-emotionally. This reflects trends that have been reported nationally showing that low-income, minority students have been hit hardest by the pandemic. While there are many factors brought on by the pandemic that are beyond our control, we chose to focus our attention on the ways we can most positively affect students. Within a few days of receiving this data, we held a special ILT team meeting to review the data, brainstorm potential action steps based on what has been shown to be effective in the past, and plan for how to share the data with our teams. Each team leader worked with their team to determine which action steps would be most effective at that grade level and to make a plan for implementation.

In addition to being evident in academic strategies such as accelerated learning, EDI, and student engagement, collective efficacy can also be seen in our restorative practices, PBIS strategies, and social-emotional supports. The reflective processes in place foster efficacy in these key areas to close the achievement gap and improve student learning. This collective efficacy continues to propel us towards our vision of high expectations inspiring lifelong learning for successful students.