

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

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

School Mailing Address 261 Randolph Street P.O. Box 818  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Douglas State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 49406-5101

County Michigan

Telephone (269) 857-2139 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL https://saugatuckpublicschools.com E-mail mgust@saugatuckps.com

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Timothy Travis E-mail ttravis@saugatuckps.com  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Saugatuck Public Schools Tel. (269) 857-1444

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. Nathan Lowery  
(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
PreK	15	11	26
K	20	25	45
1	22	32	54
2	27	18	45
3	37	26	63
4	30	26	56
5	30	27	57
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	181	165	346

\*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 88 % White
  - 0 % 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: 6%

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

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

<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	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	9
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	359
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
2 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 28 %

Total number students who qualify: 97

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %

37 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>2</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>6</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 10

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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	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 22:1

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	95%	95%	93%	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.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

The mission of the staff at Douglas Elementary School is to put children first and assist them in achieving their personal best.

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.

Thanks to the hard work of our staff and parents, Douglas Elementary School has been open safely all year for in-person learning. During the summer, we reconfigured our building space to social distance students and reworked our protocols to make school as safe as possible for students and staff. Moveable walls were opened up to double classroom size. Spaces like the school library, specials rooms, and cafeteria, were reimaged and used as classrooms. Students in each class were split into PODs of 8-15 students (depending on the classroom space available to social distance). PODs were separated in the classroom by a barrier and, in some cases, each POD was in a separate classroom.

The district hired 17 additional adults, mostly parents, to supervise PODs in the classroom and assist teachers as they moved between their PODs to teach. Specials teachers came to classrooms on a rotating schedule limiting their exposure to roughly 1/3 of the groups of students at a time. Students were seated 6-feet or more apart in classes. Students ate breakfast and lunch in their classrooms. On the playground, student PODs were assigned to zones and only interacted with their POD, in their zone. Building visitors were limited to only those who were essential. All students and staff were required to wear a mask in the school and on the playground.

For families who did not feel comfortable with in-person instruction, a regional remote option was available through an Intermediate School District Consortium. Two of our Douglas Elementary

School teachers were assigned to the consortium as our part of the collaborative. During the first semester, 63 students chose to participate in the remote learning option. During the second semester, 34 students chose to continue with the remote learning option. Other students returned to in-person instruction.

As of today, April 1, 2021, there has been no community spread of COVID19 in our school.

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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Douglas Elementary School (DES) provides an optimal place for learning. Our teachers strive to teach each child as an individual and recognize that all students bring something special to our school community. We are committed to providing a rigorous educational program and building a solid foundation while fostering each child's individual gifts.

As one of three schools in the Saugatuck Public Schools system, Douglas Elementary provides educational programs for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students and offers a 3-year-old preschool and a 4-year-old Great Start Readiness preschool. Our small district of fewer than 850 students, serves the cities of Saugatuck and Douglas, Saugatuck Township, and part of Laketown township. Small class sizes, excellence in offerings, and a commitment to providing a personalized education make Saugatuck Public Schools a choice district for many families. Roughly one-third of the students in the district are schools-of-choice from other communities.

At Douglas Elementary, our classrooms are student-centered. We know that a combination of rigor and relationships is necessary to help students grow emotionally and achieve academic excellence. As a staff, our goal is to increase student achievement and foster student wellbeing. We maintain high academic standards and provide the early intervention and support needed for all students to achieve at high levels. In addition to the personalized attention our students get from their classroom teachers, our reading teacher, math coach, behavior interventionist, and special education team provide support to individuals and small groups who need extra assistance using targeted, research-based interventions. Together with classroom teachers, our intervention team helps students to build emotional resilience and provides the support necessary for each student to achieve his/her personal best.

Douglas Elementary School has a full schedule of academics and specials that includes art, physical education, general music, and technology and science. After school clubs are offered each year to provide additional enrichment. Athletic offerings in basketball, football, softball, baseball, and soccer through our community recreation department help to round out the choices available so that everyone has something that is appealing to them. During most years, roughly 80% of our students participate in extra-curricular activities.

Douglas Elementary teachers are curriculum builders with an ongoing commitment to school improvement. Grade level teams constantly seek out better practices and work with consultants and coaches to continue to grow as professionals. Grade level teams work together to find new strategies and methods that reach students and help them meet the rigorous Common Core standards. Our teachers become resident experts and bring new ideas to the faculty. As a school system, we value their expertise and depend on their involvement to make curricular decisions and drive school improvement. Throughout each school year, you will often see teachers and teacher teams using release time to learn new skills from a colleague or team of colleagues.

Of the many things that make Douglas Elementary special, the arts are very important here. Saugatuck is an artist community and is home to the University of Chicago's OxBow School of Art and the Saugatuck Center for the Arts. We have a unique opportunity to bring that love for art into our school. Each fall, an Art a' Loan program gives our student artists a real-world experience. Student artwork, created during regular art classes, is chosen by a panel of community artists who serve as judges. The work is matted, framed, and available to be rented at a community auction held each October. The art pieces are hung in local businesses, doctor and dentist offices, local municipalities, and other visible public places. All money from the auction is used to support the school art program.

In addition to our Art a' Loan program, Douglas Elementary students create and exhibit hundreds of art pieces each spring through the school's Visiting Artists Series. The program pairs local artists with each grade level. Those artists work with students to create pieces that are thoughtfully displayed [the displays themselves are often works-of-art] throughout the school. In May, the school hosts an evening gallery stroll, inviting the community into the school to view the artwork.



One of the best gifts we have as a school is the gift of greater community. Our active Parent-Teacher Organization and community volunteers bring opportunities and support to our students and staff. Each week, parents and other volunteers can be seen throughout the building working with students or helping in places like the library and cafeteria. Outside of the school day, volunteers do all of our school fundraising, so teachers can focus their attention on their students rather than having to raise money for field trips and extra projects. Our students' parents, parent groups, and community organizations have built powerful relationships with our teachers and staff. Because of their efforts, we have been able to create strong ties between school, community, and home.

To put it in a nutshell, Douglas Elementary School is a place where students, parents, bus drivers, teachers, administrators, custodians, kitchen staff, and support staff all walk through the door each day with a common goal: to be the best school possible for our students.

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

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

Michigan Core Standards guide our school curriculum. Because we are a small faculty, curriculum development is everyone's responsibility. School wide curriculum decisions are made by our building steering team [with rotating members so that everyone has a voice] by looking at outcomes data, researching best practices and program needs, and making recommendations for changes. In many content areas, grade level teams determine the unit sequence, method for delivery, learning materials, dedicated time, and formative and summative assessments used to determine proficiency. DES teachers have tremendous influence over the school's curriculum choices and a responsibility to ensure those choices are the right ones.

Although teacher autonomy is embraced at our school, we do have some universal school wide programs - EngageNY math, the Michigan Citizenship Collaborative Curriculum (MC3), and Mystery Science. We use some common practice, such as Daily Routine, Drop Everything and Listen (DEAL), and most recently, SeeSaw. When a new school wide program is adopted, we take our time to make the best selection and map out a plan for successful implementation. We start with the research and reason. That means analyzing our data over multiple years to determine gaps and analyzing the research that indicates the new program may be a sensible solution. The change has to fit our staff's style and vision. That does not mean we don't sometimes disagree, and a few teachers may not be totally convinced the new program is the answer when we adopt it, but it does mean that everyone's voice is heard and when the team makes the move, we all move together and do our best to embrace the change.

In English Language Arts (ELA), our teachers use a hybrid approach to meet standards. Teacher teams start with core materials, like MAISA (Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators) units, and pull in multiple supplementary resources. Lower elementary teachers use Haggerty phonemic awareness; and, upper elementary teachers use Patterns of Powers. Specific strategies and resources may be modified year-to-year and grade level to grade level to meet the unique needs of current students. For example, 5th grade teachers may use materials from the Florida Center for Reading to create a fluency boot camp, second grade teachers may use Words Their Way for spelling. Over many years, teams have worked together to create units and lessons. Teachers are constantly improving their practice and finding new ways to bring the best teaching methods, strategies, and materials to their classrooms. It's what they do best. They plan together, coach each other, and learn more each year.

Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) guide the school's science curriculum and the inquiry-based units we have created. In 2019, our science team chose Mystery Science as a core program. Grade level teams pull in supplementary resources to fill the gaps. We also have a science special where Transition to Kindergarten (TK) through fifth grade students have opportunities to work on projects that integrate many of Michigan's computer science standards. Over six years, our staff was transitioning to the NGSS, teachers worked multiple times a year with VanAndel Education Institute to learn best practices using their inquiry-based investigation model.

Using the scope and sequence developed by Oakland Schools and adapted by our Intermediate School District (ISD), teachers work to meet Michigan Social Studies Content Expectations using MC3 units of study. The curriculum was researched and recommended by a cross-grade-level DES team several years ago and was embraced by teachers as a good fit. Teachers at all grade levels also use age-appropriate literature to reinforce social studies content and expose students to different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences as a regular practice.

Teachers use formative assessments to adjust their teaching and provide feedback. Summative assessments are used at each grade level to measure proficiency. Standardized test data Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), Michigan Early Literacy & Math Assessments, DIBELS, Delta Math Screeners, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (Map), and Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (MSTEP) - are broken down and analyzed by the building principal and used by the reading teacher and math coach to set goals for student and teacher support. Data are presented to the building steering team to set school improvement goals and identify curriculum or program gaps. Teachers use this data to differentiate

instruction in the classroom, create Individual Reading Plans (IRIPs) and Response to Intervention (RtI) math groups, and identify areas where specific supplementary materials may increase student achievement.

When the stay-at-home order was issued last March, teachers immediately gathered in teams to plan for online instruction. By the end of the first week, they had schedules and directions to students and parents. By April, they had prioritized essential learning in reading and math and were teaching new content. It was not easy and there was a learning curve. Because of COVID-19, our focus did change. When students returned to in-person instruction, early assessments showed some deficiencies in reading and math. Teachers were strategic about targeting those deficiencies. By winter, assessment data showed almost no difference in student achievement compared to the two previous years. Throughout the pandemic, our teachers have been champions. Because of their efforts, during the three months of online learning last spring and the eight months of in-person learning this year, we've continued to thrive.

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

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

Douglas Elementary offers both a tuition-based 3-year-old preschool and a 4-year-old Great Start Readiness preschool. Our preschool uses the Creative Curriculum for Preschool program as a core curriculum to meet early childhood standards. The curriculum is theme and literature based and is part of a coordinated early childhood continuum of connected programs that includes our transitional kindergarten and kindergarten. While exploring themes and patterns, students acquire kindergarten readiness skills in all content areas. Daily lesson plan objectives, daily schedules, activities, toys, materials, and physical set-up of the classroom space are designed to help accomplish these goals.

All preschool students are assessed three times during the school year using the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment System in the following areas: Social/Emotional Development; Physical Development; Cognitive Development; and Language Development. These assessments help to ensure students are ready to transition to our transitional kindergarten and kindergarten programs. The preschool teacher, through consultation with each student's parents, works with the Douglas Elementary special education team to recommend any additional services an individual student may need to be ready to move to the next level of learning.

During the stay-at-home order, preschool teachers provided materials and support to families of preschool students throughout the spring. In the summer, all preschool students were given a kindergarten readiness kit, created by the Douglas Elementary reading teacher, with books, materials, and activities to help each child get ready for kindergarten.

Like our elementary school, our preschool has been open to in-person instruction throughout the 2020-21 school year.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Douglas Elementary has a full schedule of specials that includes art, physical education (PE), general music, and science & technology instruction. TK-5th grade students participate in specials classes each day. During a typical year, students receive 1.5 hours of PE, 1.5 hours of science & technology, one hour of art, and one hour of general music each week throughout the school year.

The skills taught in specials classes are essential for all of our students to grow to be well-rounded, knowledgeable adults. Music and art classes are where they learn how people of different cultures and backgrounds express their values and history and tell their stories. They learn how to play instruments and paint with watercolors that can express their feelings. In physical education class, our students learn the importance of movement, play, fairness, teamwork, and good health. Our science and technology classes guide students to think critically and evaluate evidence. They practice logical thinking by writing code to

move robots and connect with the natural environment around them through outdoor experiences. They learn practical computer skills and how to use technology responsibly. These classes represent what both our school community, and the Saugatuck community as a whole, truly value - the whole educational package.

Similar to other academic areas, the Michigan Core Standards guide our school specials curriculum. However, unlike grade level teachers who work in teams to build curriculum, specials teachers are often working as a team of one charged with the challenging task of determining the sequence, method of delivery, learning materials, and formative and summative assessments used for their course. This makes it essential we hire teachers with program building skills as there are limited opportunities in our small district to work with others who teach the same subject. We rely on them to work throughout their career to become experts of their content area, always increasing their pedagogy to bring the curriculum to life for their students.

During the stay-at home order last March, specials teachers developed rotating clubs reaching students at home using videos, identifying creative ways for students to do projects, and gathering websites with interactive lessons and activities from places like zoos, history centers, and museums, that could temporarily take their place and enrich their students' learning experiences. They met with groups via Zoom and kept students engaged.

At the beginning of this school year, our school safety protocols included limiting exposure to the number of student groups specials teachers worked with weekly to reduce their risk of contracting COVID-19. We developed a rotating schedule that changed every five weeks. All TK-5th grade students were still able to participate in at least one special each day, but instead of having all the specials classes each week, they had the same specials multiple times a week. As classes rotated, all TK-5th grade students were able to participate in all specials throughout the school year.

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

The 2019 M-STEP scores show two subgroups have an achievement gap of ten or more percentage points. Our non-economically disadvantaged students outperform our economically disadvantaged students and our non-special education students outperform our students with disabilities. Our plan to close the achievement gap and help all of our students who are struggling academically includes the following:

In reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, our commitment to differentiation and our teachers' adeptness at adapting curriculum to meet the needs of students at all readiness levels, provides assistance to students needing support. Students who require extended time to complete work, shortened assignments, or alternative assessments in the regular classroom are provided those accommodations (including Title I eligible, special education, and English Language Learners (ELL) students). Teachers also use formative assessments and observational data to adapt lessons and provide a rich learning experience for each student.

In addition to the accommodations teachers provide in the classroom, several other services are available to students outside of the general education classroom. Classroom teachers utilize volunteers and assistants to work with students regularly in the hallways and in the reading room or the Learning is Fun Together (L.I.F.T.) room. Students who qualify for specialized instruction through our special education program, receive both classroom push-in and resource room support as outlined in each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Through research of best practice, our school Title I team has adopted several programs to be used as interventions for at-risk readers. Each program is designed to target specific skills. Title I eligible students, including ELLs, are assigned an intervention based on individual need as shown through analysis of universal screening assessment results and outlined in each student's Individualized Reading Intervention Plan. Targeted reading interventions are administered by our

Title I Reading Teacher, typically over a 9-12 week period during regular class times. Title I eligible students are progress monitored bi-weekly throughout each intervention. If progress monitoring shows an intervention to be successful with the student, work is continued. If students show little growth over a period of a few weeks, the intervention is stopped and a new one is prescribed.

In math, our RtI Coach works with small groups of Title I eligible students, including ELLs, identified at risk to provide remediation, break down grade level content and present it in alternative ways based on student readiness levels. Also in math, struggling students receive targeted classroom math support aimed at strengthening weak areas in math fluency and/or problem solving by their classroom teacher.

Outside of the regular school year, two of our Douglas Elementary School teachers provide a free summer science and literacy program to at-risk students. Parents of all eligible students are contacted personally by the building principal to discuss this summer school option.

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

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

Douglas Elementary has a positive school climate, even in a pandemic. Our family atmosphere and shared belief that each individual child is important makes our school an emotionally and physically safe place for students to take risks, explore, and grow as learners. Each day as students get off the bus or out of the car in the drop-off line, they are greeted by the building principal and several teaching and support staff. As they enter classrooms, teachers start each day by connecting with students first.

Student engagement is very important to us. Teachers create high-interest lessons, build on student pre-existing knowledge, and use a multitude of best practice instructional and formative assessment strategies to keep students engaged each day. Student engagement is a part of every classroom walk-through and formal teacher evaluation too. We know students learn best when they are engaged in the learning.

A multi-tiered system of support is in place to provide students with additional emotional and behavioral needs a supportive environment. Our behavior interventionist checks in and works on peaceful problem solving strategies each day with individual students. Our school social worker and other ancillary staff also meet with special needs students to assist them in developing the skills needed to navigate social relationships and grow emotionally.

Because of the challenges brought by the pandemic, this year has been especially difficult for everyone. From the very start of the school year, our collective goal was to make Douglas Elementary a physically and emotionally safe place to resume in-person learning. In the summer, teachers worked in teams to re-imagine all our school procedures and protocols, making safety a priority. They created a new drop-off and pick-up system; assigned groups of students to different doors, bathrooms, and zones on the playground to minimize crowding, and developed safety procedures for hand washing, cleaning, and sanitizing desks and equipment. They created student PODs and re-arranged their classrooms to keep all students 6-ft or more apart. They modeled the importance of masks and good hygiene throughout each day and provided the emotional support necessary for students to feel secure in their school environment. Then they did what they do best, engaged their students in learning.

In February, we were able to resume some after school enrichment activities. Boys and Girls Club began offering after school support to Douglas Elementary students in our building while maintaining assigned PODs and social distancing practices. We also provided some healthy student-to-student interactions through Community Recreation basketball and soccer programs.

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

Douglas Elementary has an involved Parent-Teacher Organization and supportive community. Our students' parents, parent groups, and community organizations have built powerful relationships with our teachers and staff. Because of their efforts, we have been able to create strong ties between school, community, and home.

What makes our relationships with families and community members successful is mutual respect. We work to engage in positive, two-way communication and value everyone's interest in making both our school and our community viable. We are interdependent partners. As a destination community, our schools attract new families to the area who help to support local businesses. As a school, we depend on our community to fund our facility and programming needs.

Our Parent-Teacher Organization is the bridge that brings us together. They help us to build true partnerships that are beneficial to all parties by working to promote community activities that include students, fundraising to support special projects that bring community into the school, and serving as one of our greatest enrichment assets. They work tirelessly to raise money for additional academic supports, teacher materials, field trips, extra-curricular activities, and added technology.

The strength of this partnership was evident during last spring's stay-at-home order when in-person instruction ended abruptly. As a community, we pulled together to support our children. Teachers and staff immediately worked to identify family internet connectivity needs and arranged device delivery. They flipped instruction from in-person to remote learning in a short period of time - focusing first on student engagement and then on teaching new content. Douglas Elementary staff, community members, and business owners reached out to support students and families by providing food, books, art supplies, and emotional health resources. At the same time, Douglas Elementary parents and extended family changed work schedules, arranged daycare, and prepared spaces for at-home instruction. They worked with students on assignments, set up Zoom sessions, and connected with teachers to reinforce learning. They also created support circles with other families and members of the community and made sure the work got done.

This fall, we were able to start the school year with in-person learning partly because 17 parents and community members stepped up to work as additional adults in classrooms. They have come to school every day this year to help teachers and staff maintain a safe environment for students. They supervise students on the playground, serve as paraprofessionals in the classroom, help with drop-off and pick-up, and serve our school in whatever capacity they are needed. They are our heroes.

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

Our practical plan for ongoing professional learning has a tremendous impact on the capacity of both teachers and the building principal. We have built a culture that truly values the skills each individual brings to the school and encourages everyone to continue to grow professionally. During most years, teacher teams use release time to participate in professional learning and develop curriculum. New teachers are given two additional days to work with their mentor each year. These days not only help teachers to get the work done, but they also give teachers time to bond with their grade level team, provide an opportunity for teacher leaders to share strategies and model new practices, and give all teachers the time and support they need to implement new programs. For example, teacher teams used four days of release time each year for the past four years to work with the ISD math consultant identifying power standards and learning best practice strategies for teaching a new math program. The building principal did walk-through classroom observations with the ISD consultant identifying key elements of good math instruction and targeted math lessons for observations and teacher feedback. Having both the principal and the teachers grow in their capacity made the implementation of the new math program successful and resulted in higher student achievement.

This year has looked different. Teaching during the stay-at-home order last spring and in-person with so many mitigation procedures in place has been incredibly challenging. We have put some professional development (PD) on hold and focused on identifying strategies for teaching core standards during the pandemic. In anticipation that we could be vacillating back and forth between in-person and remote learning in the fall, we looked for ways to prepare for both. We chose one common remote learning platform, watched training videos about the platform in August, and taught parents and students how to use the platform with practice activities throughout the first semester. The district also purchased four online micro courses for teachers and administrators through the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE) in preparation for creating engaging and equitable remote learning.

This past summer, the district added three additional PD days to give us time to develop new protocols and procedures. We shared knowledge and ideas around the use and effectiveness of digital tools and resources that support remote learning and planned curriculum to coordinate a seamless transition between in-person and remote, should it be necessary to flip instruction. The school social worker and special education director also lead a half-day PD for staff focused on realistic strategies teachers could use in the classroom including tips and strategies for self-care. Teachers and administrators were given access to mental health support resources provided by an area trauma specialist and a school mental health team. Teachers and support staff were also trained on safety, health, and cleaning protocols.

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

At Douglas Elementary School, leadership is shared. Everyone in the school has a role and responsibility to help shape the school's collective vision and move the school forward by bringing fresh ideas, researching best practices, stepping up to lead and support new teachers, and continuing to grow as professionals. Although the building principal serves as the leader of the school team, it is through a collaborative process that we set goals, make decisions, focus effort, and allocate resources.

In the area of school improvement, the principal serves as a storyteller. She breaks down achievement, demographic, program, and perception data, identifies trends, collects and presents research, and brings topics to the Building Steering Team that need attention. She tells the data story and steers the conversation. The Building Steering Team uses that information to determine what professional learning would be most effective, decide which new programs to explore, and recommend the next steps for growth.

Teachers, teacher teams, specialists, union leaders, support staff members, parents, and students also serve in leadership roles. As a small school, our goal is continuous improvement. We are always looking for better ways to do things. If the data supports a change, the people best equipped to lead that change are given the reins. Whole school curriculum decisions are made by a team of representatives from each grade level who use student achievement data to identify gaps, diagnose the problem, and find the best solution. Process changes are often initiated by a teacher, or a student, or even a community member. The principal's role is to create a plan for changes that links school priorities together to work toward our shared vision and guide stakeholders' focus on achieving school and district goals. The principal and a team of teacher representatives serve on the District Steering Team where district initiatives and school initiatives are coupled in a systematic district improvement plan.

District leaders worked throughout the summer to create a Saugatuck COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. The team established everything from safety protocols to curriculum priorities. They have met regularly throughout the school year to make decisions about procedures and staffing that have kept the school safely thriving with in-person learning. Throughout the entire process, the administrative team has been reliant on teachers, support staff, and parents to work alongside the building principal by helping to solve problems and support teachers, students, and families as they worked through this tough time.

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

Several years ago, our District Improvement Team set a collective goal to prepare students to be critical, creative, and conscious thinkers. Throughout our work defining and exploring how to best teach conscious thinking, we have studied poverty and the need for practices and policies that ensure equity for students living in poverty (including examining some of our own backgrounds, values, and potential bias related to poverty). We worked to build a system of mental health support for all students and researched how to reach and teach boys who struggle in school. We have also learned about and infused growth mindset and mindfulness research into classroom instruction and used what we've learned to create behavior management protocols that support students with different needs.

Our district improvement goals include building a school climate of compassion and service. We want to create citizens who know that both culture and race play an important role in who we are and seek to understand and respect cultural and racial differences. This summer, we expanded our focus to name race and cultural sensitivity as essential parts of our conscious thinking goal. A district team of teachers and administrators met in June to determine a starting point. The team set our work to include the following topics: cultural awareness, bias, race, lack of diversity in our community, and our staff's lack of experience with racial issues. We also purchased a summer learning module for teachers - Ensuring Equity and Inclusion in Online Learning.

Douglas Elementary demographics are not very diverse. The only subgroups in the student body of more than 10% are gender and socio-economic status. The racial makeup of our school is 88% white. So as a staff, we began by reading scholarly articles related to talking about race in mostly



white schools and teaching anti-racism to students. Our first step was to intentionally bring picture books to classrooms that show people of different races and cultures. We purchased 35 new books to begin a multicultural case in the school library that depicts children with different racial identities and contains a diverse representation of children, families, traditions, nationalities, religions, and cultures.

Our next step as a district and school will be to bring new learning in the areas of equity, implicit bias, and culturally responsive education to our teachers, staff, and families. Because of our lack of experience with these topics, we do not even know what we don't know. Many of our families may be unaware the impact current events and social movements related to race have on people and communities. So, our team plans to bring in trainers who can assist us in determining the best path for growth.

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

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The single most important element of our practice that made us successful this past year was our belief that relationships needed to be at the forefront of our COVID crisis response. Teachers have always worked to meet students at their current level academically and supported them emotionally in the classroom. However, during school closures in March of 2020, when fear, uncertainty, and stress filled students' lives, the entire Douglas Elementary staff put everything else aside to make relationships their first priority. They worked together to provide whatever students and families needed to feel connected and supported.

Right from the time of the initial shut-down, everyone sprang into action. The building principal and union president worked with other Saugatuck staff members to deliver food, technology devices, and internet hot spots for remote instruction to students' houses. Teachers used whatever online platform they could learn quickly - including FaceBook, Zoom, FaceTime, Google Classroom, and SeeSaw - to reach students. Before they even began to work on academics, they focused on making connections by checking in, reading aloud to their students, sending notes of encouragement, and being available - often outside of school hours - to listen and support. They kept weekly remote learning logs that included goals and expectations, communication and connections with students and families, supports needed, and student engagement to alert the building principal of students who needed additional resources and support.

The entire staff remained focused on supporting students by making them feel as safe and 'normal' as possible. Within a week of the stay-at-home order, we had an online school routine with set expectations for student engagement and the relationships with students and their families that allowed us to return to academics. Teachers prioritized teaching new reading and math content and created activities students could do at home that were engaging, fun, and educational in science, social studies, music, art, and physical education. Specialists worked with classroom teachers to plan interventions and support learning for students with special needs as required by student IEPs, IRIPs, English as a Second Language (ESL) plans, etc.

When our students returned to in-person learning in the fall, the slight learning loss we had experienced in reading and math was quickly targeted and remediation plans were put in place. By the end of the first semester, progress monitoring showed virtually no difference in student achievement levels as during the previous two years.

Throughout this entire year, our commitment to providing emotional support and stability for our students has not changed. What it took to make it happen was a keen focus on relationships first.