

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 10050 191st Avenue NW
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Elk River State MN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 55330-0000

County Sherburne County

Telephone (763) 274-7242 Fax (763) 274-7243

Web site/URL https://www.isd728.org/TwinLakes E-mail daniel.collins@isd728.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* Dr. Daniel Bittman E-mail daniel.bittman@isd728.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Elk River School District Tel. (763) 241-3400

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 Ms Holly Thompson
(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):
- 10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 5 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 20 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	0	0	0
K	49	46	95
1	70	42	112
2	65	49	114
3	46	58	104
4	53	46	99
5	62	49	111
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	345	290	635

*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):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2.8 % Asian
 - 5.7 % Black or African American
 - 2.2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 83.4 % White
 - 5.7 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 7%

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	29
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	48
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	652
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Swahili, Spanish, Creolized English, Russian, Burmese, Hmong, Yoruba, Philippines, Ukrainian, Laotian, Afrikaans, Khmer, Gia

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 6 %
38 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %

Total number students who qualify: 72

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
99 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>12</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>12</u> Developmental Delay | <u>21</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>11</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>25</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 14
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 24:1

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	96%	95%	95%	95%	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.

We educate, inspire and empower our diverse learners, to shape their futures, to accomplish their dreams and to contribute positively to our global communities.

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.

Twin Lakes Elementary School started the 2020-2021 school year with a face-to-face learning model for all students in grades K-5. However, some families who were more comfortable having their children learn from home took advantage of our distance learning option. In November, state guidelines directed us to a hybrid learning model for all Twin Lakes students, unless already participating in distance learning. By December 1, 2020, we were in a 100 percent distance learning model for all Twin Lakes students. In January of 2021, Twin Lakes kindergarten, first and second graders returned to face-to-face learning. Third, fourth and fifth-graders returned to school two weeks later. We continue to offer a 100 percent distance learning model for families who preferred that option for their child(ren) (grades K-5). Our teachers, staff and support have been amazing in handling these shifts in learning models throughout this unprecedented year.

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

Twin Lakes Elementary School (TLES) opened in the fall of 2007. Twin Lakes is located in Elk River, Minnesota and is part of Independent School District No. 728. Twin Lakes is a community in a suburb of Minneapolis. Twin Lakes is at the heart of our community, thriving on parent and student engagement.

Twin Lakes is a certified Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) school blending beauty with cutting edge technology. To date, Twin Lakes is one of only 16 schools certified in the state of Minnesota. Being a LEED certified school offers the opportunity to educate our students on their environmental footprint. The principal has a tradition of taking all students on a school tour to highlight, explore, and discuss the unique energy efficient designs throughout the building. This allows students to take pride in, respect and understand their school environment.

Twin Lakes has a strong tradition of academic success and community/family support. We believe that all people have value. We respect and appreciate differences. We are proud to provide an environment where people feel connected, supported, and affirmed. At our core, we believe everyone can learn and that through hard work we can inspire and empower lifelong learning. Twin Lakes Elementary received the School of Excellence Award by the State of Minnesota, a true testament to our mission.

In 2019, 82.3% of Twin Lakes students demonstrated proficiency on the Grade 3-5 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) for Mathematics. This places Twin Lakes 21.9% above the state average. Similarly, in 2019, 72.8% of Twin Lakes students demonstrated proficiency on the Grade 3-5 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) for Reading. This again places Twin Lakes above the state average by 14.4 %. Together, both scores helped establish ISD 728 as one of the top large school districts in Minnesota in those two subjects. For each of the last four years, ISD 728 has placed 1st or 2nd in Math AND Reading proficiency when compared to the other nine (9) largest school districts on the State assessment.

Twin Lakes offers a variety of innovative and creative programs within our school. These programs continue to grow with our ever-changing population to meet the needs of our students. With support from our school district and families, we continue to meet the needs of our families with curriculum, technology, and connection as demonstrated by student achievement results and parent/community surveys.

Additionally, Twin Lakes teaches “Otter Pride” to all students. Otter Pride encompasses the whole child. It teaches our four core values: respect, responsibility, kindness, and safety. Our principal starts each morning off with our news show, WTLN, and teaches all students these values. All staff members model, teach and reinforce these values throughout the school day.

Students have many ways to earn an “Otter Pride” tag. Some examples include: Act of Kindness, something above & beyond, Otter Pride in building or with others, display of leadership, honesty, work habits, respect, citizenship, compassion, integrity, and cooperation (they will also get the principal card with this tag).

WTLN, our in-school news channel, has been a key strategy at Twin Lakes to engage all staff and students. The principal, student leaders, and our mascot the friendly river otter, Ollie, give so much more than daily announcements. This is a vital kickstart to everyone's day reminding us of key words like family, respect, responsibility, kindness, safety, and fun! WTLN's purpose is to help students become a better person and grow as a learner by embedding these key words in their minds. Students love different parts of the show, such as school news, student council updates, entertaining did you know facts, birthdays, and lunch choices. Students are also recognized on WTLN for displaying leadership, honesty, strong work habits, respect, citizenship, compassion, integrity, and cooperation by staff members. Our principal rewards these students with cards and medals. During distance learning, WTLN kept staff, students, and families connected.

Twin Lakes has gone through all three learning models this year. Teachers were able to take time to plan for each model change, so they could be fully prepared and equipped for new challenges. Our school and staff takes a lot of pride in making sure students and families feel connected, informed, and valued throughout all

the changes this year. Twin Lakes offered whole school virtual activities when full distance learning was in place to help families feel connected even though we were apart.

Twin Lakes offers programs before, after, and during the school day that help promote academic, emotional, and cultural support and success. Lunch Buddies caters to students who are working with our social and emotional support team. These students are allowed to explore and develop peer relationships in a safe and fun environment.

I-Empower offers students opportunities to promote self confidence in a safe and controlled environment. The American Indian program is a statewide initiative that offers students culturally responsive lessons on their heritage. Our enrichment program includes unique opportunities for high achieving students to explore and create. These opportunities include university-level field trips, after school programming with Edison Robots, problem-solving strategies, writing workshops, and differentiation within the classroom. Future Chefs of America encourages healthy eating and life skills through recipe development. Bus and walking patrols develop lifelong leadership skills while building safe relationships across grades. Student Council encourages students in second through fifth grades to become active in developing a positive and inclusive school culture.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Our students have had opportunities to engage in learning this year, both in-person and virtually. Flexibility has been offered to families, so that they are still able to access grade-level academics as well as intervention opportunities as needed regardless of the learning model. There have also been opportunities for students, who have needed a fully virtual option, to continue to be engaged in all content areas and build community and relationships with peers and their teachers. Platforms, such as SeeSaw, Schoology and Google Meets, have been essential this year as the conduit for high-quality instruction and community building. The use of differentiation practices to both enrich and remediate has been occurring in both in-person and virtual learning environments. Small group and individual instruction has been maintained to support student learning through our Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS). Teachers continue, whether virtual or face-to-face, to provide both formative and summative assessments to drive instruction decisions. Assessments that previously needed to be taken in-person were modified and adjusted to allow for data collection regardless of learning model. GoGuardian, a tool to monitor the digital activity of students when they were at home, was also used. It served both as a way to provide immediate feedback to students, but also as a way to monitor what students were doing at home. This allowed teachers to come alongside learners virtually and support them when they noticed someone struggling or needing redirection. Some lessons that were traditionally taught in-person needed adjustments as well to make learning come alive in the homes of our students. Energy was put into creating virtual experiences as well as establishing “material pick up days” so students still were able to engage in hands-on, creative learning activities. Regardless of the learning model, our collaborative teams have focused on the Four Corollary Questions of a Professional Learning Community (PLC). By doing this with fidelity, we are ensuring our students are receiving the best opportunities we are able to provide.

Reading/Language Arts:

Twin Lakes Elementary uses Benchmark Reader’s Workshop and Benchmark Phonics and Word Study as our core reading curricular resources. This, paired with Benchmark Universe, includes both physical and digital materials to support in person and virtual learning. There are skill-based lessons that focus on reading comprehension as well as foundation skills, such as phonics and phonemic awareness. Our reading curriculum has an interdisciplinary focus as well and integrates many social studies and science standards as well. Benchmark Universe also offers online assessments for students. Not only does this support our 21st Century Learners, but it also enables teachers to use current data to support instructional decisions.

Our reading curriculum delivers instruction through a workshop model. Teachers provide mini- lessons and then students are gradually released to practice the skills on independent tasks. This model also provides time for the teacher to work with individuals or small groups. Teachers are able to meet with students and give direct instruction that meets the students’ needs. These learning opportunities are all able to be data-informed, because teachers are using both formative and summative assessments regularly to direct their instruction practices for the whole group as well as small-group remediation and enrichments.

District teachers and our Teaching and Learning Team have developed scope and sequence for our reading instruction and identified power standards to drive our instruction. Our goal is to give students instruction that will help them become lifelong learners and critical thinkers. Students who are not meeting their power standards are discussed at weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Teachers discuss interventions and the direction on which they should go with the student. Students are able to work with our instructional assistants, our intervention teacher, or our Minnesota Reading corps tutor if they are in need of more support.

Mathematics:

Math in Focus paired with Calendar Counts supports our school both vertically and with successful instruction aligned to Minnesota State Standards. Leveraging the curricular resources, students have opportunities to work on conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. During virtual learning, tools

were available to keep learning engaging and rigorous. Math in Focus is rigorous and really pushes our students to deepen their math skills, so they are then able to apply those skills.

Social Studies and Science:

Leveraging the curriculum maps resources, we at Twin Lakes are able to incorporate interdisciplinary activities as well as hands-on learning experiences to help students grow in their problem-solving and communication skills. Our curricular resources include Teachers Curriculum Institute (TCI), Full Option Science System (FOSS), and Science A-Z. Improving literacy skills, while also providing opportunities to be 21st Century thinkers and problem-solvers, encourages our students to develop their wonder and curiosity as they explore both social studies and science.

Assessment:

Three times a year, Twin Lakes administers the FAST test (Formative Assessment System for Teachers) to collect and analyze data to meet students' needs. Assistants and intervention teachers provide support outside of the classroom in a small group or online for our distance learners. The FAST assessments are accessible online for all learning models.

Teachers give informal and formal reading and math assessments that align with state standards to drive instruction in the classroom. We then use the results from the assessments to maximize learning opportunities, partnering with our students and families to create and implement plans. These practices result in outstanding achievement and positive relationships throughout our school and community.

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

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Twin Lakes offers four specialist classes for students, including physical education, music, art, and technology. Twin Lakes specials are on a five-day rotation, based on digital days. During the five-day cycle, Twin Lakes students receive 90 minutes of music instruction, 90 minutes of physical education, 60 minutes of technology, and 60 minutes of art.

The TLES music department follows State and National Music Standards and our district developed Scope and Sequence when developing our core curriculum. It touches on all aspects of music at increasing difficulty in every grade level. The music department supports students in their acquisition of essential skills and knowledge by reviewing skills, introducing/practicing new skills, and providing opportunities for the students to build on and create with their new skills. Students are encouraged to be independent learners/thinkers and to make the music their own. Through creative thinking and technology tools, we have been able to alter the teaching in ways that allowed the students to be musically successful at school, home, and in the community.

The physical education (PE) department at Twin Lakes is an integral part of our students' physical development. Our curriculum is based on the National PE standards. We teach students skills to continue to lead an active and healthy lifestyle. Teamwork and sportsmanship are the core of our lessons. These lifelong skills were adapted and applied to all learning models to accommodate student needs. These skills, along with our partnerships with our families and community, help make these skills part of each and every day, while helping to foster healthy behaviors and relationships.

The technology department follows ITEM (Information and Technology Educators of Minnesota) standards NBRS 2021

to embed the necessary media literacy skills. The ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) standards are also used as a framework to develop a scope and sequence which identifies specific outcomes to be introduced, practiced, mastered, and reinforced at each grade level. The collaborative process between classroom teachers and media specialists helps to ensure students have the opportunities to use media literacy and technology to further their understanding of key concepts taught in the classroom, while also allowing for opportunities to apply newly learned technology and media literacy skills in other subject areas. Based on this collaborative process the curriculum was easily adapted into all learning models.

The art department uses art elements as a starting point for artistic exploration and expression. Lessons highlight a new medium or artistic process for students to discover. These range from painting and drawing, to clay, printmaking or even Paper Mache. In addition to meeting the needs of our core curriculum, students have opportunities to learn from Artists in Residence, go on a variety of field trips and museum visits, create collaboratively on legacy projects, and art raffle creations. Students are also given opportunities to showcase their artistic accomplishments at the district office art gallery. During distance learning it was essential for our art department to collaborate with other schools and to maintain high quality instruction. Materials continue to be gathered and distributed to all distant learners, to provide an equitable learning opportunity. Some lessons even provided exploration of household materials to create masterpieces. Exposure to multiple artistic opportunities provides students an opportunity to choose their own creative journey as a lifelong artist.

3. Academic Supports:

Twin Lakes uses the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) process for students who are performing above and below grade level. MTSS starts with effective differentiated core instruction in the classroom and provides varying interventions and enrichments for these students in math and reading. Strong core instruction is the foundation of this tiered model. Twin Lakes uses a researched-proven curriculum that balances the whole group as well as readiness groupings to meet the students' individual learning needs. This allows us to provide Tier II, small-group interventions to students who need them, as well as groupings to provide extensions to students who have mastered grade level material.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) meet each week to discuss and review student benchmark data and progress monitoring from common assessments. This data is used to identify students and determine the best academic and behavioral strategies and interventions that are effective in the classroom.

Twin Lakes has worked with the Minnesota Reading Corps tutors for many years to help provide reading interventions. Our tutors work with students who are struggling with fluency from kindergarten through Grade Three. These tutors use researched-based interventions to increase academic growth. Another intervention Twin Lakes utilizes is Power Hour - a program offered to students in need either before or after school. It provides support for students struggling in reading and/or math. This small group setting allows students more intense one on one instruction.

Twin Lakes has received an Alternative Delivery of Specialized Instructional Services (ADSIS) position, or an intervention teacher, through a grant from the district. ADSIS works closely with our teachers, assistants, and administration. ADSIS meets with teams at PLCs to discuss students who would benefit from interventions. This is part of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) process and involves many steps before students are referred to Special Education. ADSIS analyzes data to make informed decisions on what specific intervention is needed. ADSIS works closely with assistants to train and guide them in delivering interventions.

Our special education program supports students and staff. Students, who have gone through the MTSS process and have not shown adequate growth, are referred for special education. Within the

special education program at Twin Lakes we believe in the least restrictive environment and increasing inclusiveness with peers. Special education teachers collaborate with general education teachers and provide a co teaching environment that offers students flexible and equitable learning opportunities.

Our special education and English language learner students are offered proactive procedures to support them with transitions. Year to year we create time to share student information between grade level teachers, special education teachers, and ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers. It is particularly important for our early childhood staff to meet with the kindergarten staff. We bring kindergarten parents into these meetings, as well, to create a welcoming, positive connection between families and teachers. Our Twin Lakes team helps students make connections with their new teacher before the school year begins. This year, with multiple learning models, special education and English learning students have been given opportunities to connect with their teachers virtually before returning face-to-face for an easier transition.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Twin Lakes Elementary uses Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to help promote those positive behaviors. Our teachers and staff look to acknowledge students who are being respectful, responsible, kind, and safe. We truly believe that encouraging those positive behaviors will encourage students to continue those behaviors. Each year our principal starts off the year with a ceremony to read a book and talk about our theme for the year. At the end of the year, we gather together as a school to revisit our year's theme and to talk about how we can continue being respectful, responsible, kind and safe throughout the summer.

Staff members hand out paper tickets, called Otter Paws, to students who are following directions and making good choices. Students collect their Otter Paws to earn a prize or reward. Students also get to put a piece of their Otter Paw into a fish tank to meet a school goal. In the past these whole school rewards have included dunk tanks, lunch with the principal, and magic shows.

Twin Lakes has taken pride in fostering great communication with parents in any learning model - including distance learning. We provided one-to-one devices and hot spots for families who were unable to access the internet. Our kindergarten through second grade students and families use the online program Seesaw, while our third through fifth grade students and families use the online program Schoology. Both platforms help parents and families stay connected with student learning on a day to day basis. Our students look forward to the interaction they can have with family members over these platforms. We also make a point to connect face-to-face learners with distance learners throughout the year.

Twin Lakes also offers many academic events where students are encouraged to grow and compete. These include Book Bowl, Knowledge Bowl, and a Geography Bowl. Twin Lakes is also known for engaging traditions throughout grade levels. These include a fifth grade student versus teacher basketball game, author visits, artists in residence, arts night (which is an evening of musical concerts and an art gallery of student work), and curriculum-directed field trips to sites, including Orchestra Hall, The Kelly Farm, Baker Park Reserve, The Science Museum of Minnesota, volunteering at Feed My Starving Children, as well as an all school outdoor water event called "Spring Splash."

Some traditions at Twin Lakes have been adapted so they would continue even through distance learning. These include birthday books available for car side pickup, ice cream sundae celebration coupons instead of serving ice cream at school. Catapult and egg drop projects were shared virtually; field day was created virtually for kids to participate in at home; a Google Meet schoolwide holiday sing-along, and musical performances were shared digitally for friends and family; and, art displays within the building now include work by distance learners as well as face-to-face learners.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We pride ourselves in being a community school that is always adapting and creating new ways to reach our students, families, and community members. Twin Lakes has had a strong impact in our local community and has been a school that the community seeks out for their students' education. Our engagement with families includes such activities as school dances, family carnivals, Veterans Day programs, WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students), PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), and volunteers.

Events create multigrade and multigenerational interaction along with community outreach. For example, our school dance is funded by our very active PTO organization, which thrives because of our continued relationships and partnerships with parents. All students and family members are invited to this event and are encouraged to donate a food item to our local food shelf, Community Aid of Elk River. The school carnival is our biggest fundraiser for PTO. The funds that PTO raises are spent directly back in our school and community.

In the spring, we welcome back former students who attended Twin Lakes to a school celebration and video in their honor. Students find their names and pictures displayed in the school, and they are greeted by past teachers with tears of joy and hugs of triumph!

Community volunteers in our school are a huge asset for our students. The Watch D.O.G.S. program encourages dads, uncles, and grandpas to connect with students and build positive male role model relationships. Twin Lakes also has a reading buddy program set up with a local charter school for kindergarteners. Other volunteers have included parents, senior citizens, past students, and district leaders. Their commitment to student success is highly motivating for our students.

During the pandemic we continue to reach out to our community through safer and more creative measures. We have offered a drive-thru book fair, food support for our families, and ongoing, meaningful virtual events. These efforts have allowed us to stay connected and continue to build relationships that are so important at this time. The drive-thru book fair is an opportunity for families to shop for quality literature at an affordable price. Twin Lakes has also offered Every Meal Weekend Food Program. This is available to all families of our school and provides a bag of food for families prior to the weekend. Our foster grandparent volunteers met virtually one on one with students as well, which allowed extra support for our students. Our virtual events have ranged from family holiday singalongs to virtual Veterans Day programs highlighting family members who have served in the Armed Forces. These virtual events continued to help support the SEL (Social Emotional Learning) for our students.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Teachers and support staff at Twin Lakes are highly valued. The term family is often used within the walls of Twin Lakes. During distance learning this was even more evident and appreciated by our staff.

Teachers and support staff collaborate and motivate each other within their grade levels, but also across grade levels and cross-curriculums. We value each other's professional opinions and ideas.

Twin Lakes takes time to acknowledge teachers who have reached milestones in their careers. Teachers and staff are highly praised when they have been nominated for the district staff teacher of the year and also the teacher of the week award.

The administrator makes certain every teacher and staff member feels important. He sends positive postcards in the mail to teachers' homes, praising their work ethic, attitude, and dedication. Staff members are also provided with treats and notes, throughout the year, to show how much they are appreciated.

The community is part of this "family" as well. Twin Lakes PTO values teachers by catering meals during long days of conferencing. They also show their support during teacher appreciation week. The PTO understands the needs of classrooms, so they provide teachers funds to spend each year on their students, as well as contribute books to their classroom libraries.

Twin Lakes does many activities to bring staff together, connect, and learn about each other which creates a feeling of value. For example, Fun Friday is a day where staff are encouraged to play a game with each other creating laughter and community. It is a great reminder for teachers to have fun at school.

Staff members feel valued in being a part of our family when we all participate in Spirit Days. Homecoming week, Winter Week, and other holidays/special days give staff a chance to celebrate together. Students sense the positive community and thrive from the environment the teachers and staff create.

Gathering together around a table to share stories, smiles, and a bite to eat is a great way for all staff to feel connected. Birthday celebrations, potluck lunches, and payday treats are just a few examples. These are simple things but truly bring us together as one.

Additionally, a Sunshine Committee welcomes new staff with school apparel, and gives well wishes as they transition into their new adventure. They also recognize the personal life achievements and hardships our

staff members face throughout the year. Some of these events include weddings, birth of a baby, retirement, and losing a loved one.

4. School Leadership:

Capitalizing on the leadership skills of our entire staff is an area of strength at Twin Lakes. It is common to see and hear a shared leadership approach throughout the building. Everyone's opinions matters and are heard. This shared leadership culture honors and utilizes the strengths of all staff and helps us grow professionally, build relationships, and share responsibilities to create a successful school environment.

For example, each year the administrator sends out a Google Form for all staff to "Share Their Thoughts" on what they feel is working well, changes that they have seen, and what they would like changed to best support students. The school leadership team takes this information and helps establish goals for the upcoming school year. The leadership team collaborates as a family and uses the established goals to set the path for our Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

At the PLC meetings, the leadership team members along with the PLC team discuss data, best practices, curriculum, interventions, and reflect on student progress. The administrator participates in the various PLCs in order to listen to and learn from his staff. The administrator takes information from the PLCs back to the leadership group to discuss professional learning ideas. We take pride and are proud of all the knowledge and talent that our staff members possess. It is important to share and learn from one another.

The administrator models the family approach where every voice matters. Our learning environment is strong because of the family, fun, and relationship centered mindset that the administrator shares with all students and staff. The administrator's positive presence is often seen in all classrooms creating relationships and working together with students and staff. This family leadership style is also seen at PTO meetings.

The administrator manages resources to ensure students and staff have what they need to be successful. In order to get the best resources into the hands of our students and staff is to organize a fundraiser. This has been a huge success run by our leadership team. This has purchased playground equipment, library books, intervention programs, classroom technology, such as interactive Smart Boards and surround sound systems, and one-to-one technology for all students. The one-to-one technology has been crucial for success in all learning models.

During COVID-19 and distance learning, it was very important to stay connected and to share up-to-date information. We also attempted to support students' and staff members' social and emotional well-being. Our administrator would keep students, staff, and parents connected with his live WTLN daily show, Google Meets, phone calls, and emails.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Twin Lakes has continued to take steps to ensure equity, cultural awareness and respect in our community and school. Our school and district are growing every year. With that growth we have seen an amazing increase of different cultures in our community and school.

Upon entering Twin Lakes all visitors are met with a captivating display of more than 25 flags. These flags represent all of the cultures and heritages of our students and staff, and give students, families, and staff a sense of belonging in our school.

We also provide a wide variety of diverse literature within our library. These books are displayed and encourage students to identify and relate. Our reading curriculum explores cross cultural experiences and historical events and figures that are relevant to all members of our school. Students also have the opportunity to research and explore these events and historical figures within each reading unit.

All staff members are provided with training by our district and school equity specialists that highlight new social movements or current events that have implicated our community. We have also been trained in restorative circles, gender and racial biases, and mental health awareness. These restorative circles allow students and staff a safe and confidential environment to build relationships and create a community where respect and forgiveness are key.

Staff are also provided with a curriculum that highlights events, such as Black History Month, new year celebrations, and other holiday observances.

Throughout their academic years at Twin Lakes, students have received lessons within the classroom from our equity specialists as well. These lessons include, but are not limited to, skin color, cultural dress, food, music, art, and ceremonies. Students in our school have also had the opportunity to engage in cross cultural correspondents, comparing and contrasting cultures, and the introduction of literature and alphabets. These learning opportunities continued during our distance learning time. These lessons were provided to students through their teachers and also included self-paced exploration.

Families are also encouraged to participate in programming to share information about their heritage and culture in the classroom. These families work together with our equity specialists to create presentations that highlight their unique cultural experiences. Families are encouraged to share pictures, bring in items, read a story, teach a traditional song, dance, or game. Twin Lakes also provides the opportunity for families to educate classrooms on disabilities. Many families have provided presentations in the classroom to help students better understand their child's disability. These presentations open the door for a truly inclusive and safe environment.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Twin Lakes Elementary school employs multiple strategies to ensure all students' success. There is no doubt that all of these strategies together is what makes us a strong and impactful elementary school. However, it is when you dissect all of these strategies you find the same common theme, relationships.

As mentioned before WTLN, morning news show, is an intricate part of our school's culture. It has been adapted and refined for all learning models. In March 2020, Twin Lakes was in a full distance learning model and WTLN continued to stream into the homes and hearts of students. The administrator kept students' attention by highlighting different areas and classrooms in the building. These broadcasts were filled with birthday recognitions, songs, laughter, student home visits, special guests, and jokes. Students were motivated and inspired to practice our four core values at home.

Efforts to nurture our relationships with students and families during distance learning was a priority for all staff. Google meetings began with relationship building strategies. This helped students to feel connected and valued and gave staff a chance to check in on students' social and emotional health. Many staff members made efforts to deliver holiday gifts, books, and supplies to the homes of students along with sending postcards, emails, and other positive messages to families.

This fall each team created a welcome video for all students enrolled at Twin Lakes. The video allowed families to meet teachers and become comfortable with their learning environment, while relieving stress or anxieties from the previous state mandated shutdown of schools. We then had an open house where teachers were available in small group settings on Google Meet to inform and answer questions of the student or parents. Kindergarten families were given the opportunity to attend an outdoor, socially distanced meet and greet open house. This was important because we understand that the first impression of school should be a positive and comfortable experience. In addition, the kindergarten students were provided smaller class sizes during the first week of school, so the student/teacher relationships could be established.

Virtual conferences were offered and well received by families. This gave our staff a chance to not only inform parents of their child's successes, but also inquire about students' and families' well-being during the pandemic.

Our community is facing many uncertainties and is experiencing social and emotional crisis. This has caused hardships for families, which directly impacts students' learning. We recognize these challenges and will continue to adapt and support our Twin Lakes family by keeping relationships between students, families, and staff our highest priority.