

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

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

School Mailing Address 117 Green Belt Drive 312 N. Weaver  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Belgrade State MT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 59714-9553

County Gallatin County

Telephone (406) 924-2037 Fax (406) 924-2047

Web site/URL https://www.bsd44.org/RV/home E-mail mjohnston@bsd44.org

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

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Godfrey Saunders E-mail gsaunders@bsd44.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Belgrade School District #44 Tel. (406) 388-6951

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. Dee Batey  
(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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	46	30	76
1	40	36	76
2	47	64	111
3	48	56	104
4	44	37	81
5	0	0	0
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>	225	223	448

\*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
  - 0.5 % Asian
  - 0.5 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 90 % White
  - 3 % 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	11
(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)]	30
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	474
(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: 3 %  
14 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 33 %

Total number students who qualify: 150

8. Students receiving special education services: 2 %

39 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>1</u> Autism                  | <u>4</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>21</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>2</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<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.	24
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.	8
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 18:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	96%	94%	94%	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.

<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.

Our mission is to educate students to become responsible members of society. We value students as our priority with a commitment to excellence through partnerships with the community and families.

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.

Ridge View Elementary has been operating under two models for the 2020-2021 school year. We have been providing instruction in person as well as online learning opportunities for students who may have medical concerns due to COVID. Each grade level, kindergarten through fourth grade, has the combination of in person and remote learning platforms. Students who began the school year in remote learning have the opportunity to come into the building full time at the end of each quarter or as circumstances change within their household. Building level instruction changed this school year due to protocols put in place to limit the exposure to COVID. These protocols have been embraced by the faculty and students, which limited the interruption of student learning. Outdoor learning spaces were predetermined prior to the beginning of the school year to provide opportunities for students to socially distance and take breaks from wearing their masks.

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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Belgrade is located nine miles west of the city of Bozeman and historically, has served as a more affordable residential community compared to the more affluent Bozeman. Young families sought out housing in Belgrade which brought a higher number of young children into our community. The affordable housing is changing, and Belgrade is starting to gain in the housing market, competing with Bozeman.

The school district is bordered on the east side by Bozeman, the west by Manhattan, and the south by Monforton school districts. Students reside in town and in many large subdivisions outside city limits. A large area of the district necessitates an expansive student transportation department. Ridge View Elementary opened to students in 2000. It is located outside city limits and is the heart of a large suburban community.

Belgrade has seen tremendous growth over the past 30 years and has been the fastest growing community in Montana over that time. The population growth is amazing for the school district but has created many challenges. In order to keep pace with the increase in student enrollment, the district must provide new schools, staffing, materials, and maintenance to older buildings. The local tax-burdened residents are asked to offset the operating costs which is vital to maintaining the quality education we are providing. The community has historically been conservative but that is changing slightly with the addition of new residents. The school district is becoming more diverse but most new enrollments come from other areas inside the state.

The elementary schools in Belgrade have tremendous pride in the quality of education provided. The focus is on learning basic skills and character development. Ridge View Elementary School implements the Montana Behavior Initiative (MBI) which is similar to the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports system which has now become the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). The Office of Public Instruction provides an MBI Institute every summer and Ridge View sends a large team for continued professional development. There are many positive behavior and academic supports based on MTSS and district leadership meets regularly to try to improve those protocols.

Professional development can be a challenge due to the geographic location of Belgrade but with the available internet and social media avenues, it is becoming increasingly accessible. Educators at Ridge View work within the Professional Learning Communities at Work framework (PLC) to increase their collective efficacy. The days of teaching in isolation are over. Grade level PLC meetings focus on student achievement, assessments, instructional best practice, and differentiation. These PLC meetings also help define school culture by realizing avenues to improve student outcomes can always be enhanced.

The state of Montana has adopted the Common Core State Standards and our elementary schools have embraced them completely. Teacher leaders attend professional development each year in order to advance and refine a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all students.

Ridge View Elementary also recently acquired a new program to address the mental health of many students. This program is outside the realm of school counselors and focuses on individual mental health therapy. A partnership was created with a local service to provide what is called Comprehensive School and Community Treatment (CSCT). A licensed mental health therapist and behavior specialist work as a team to assist qualified students with their individual needs.

COVID-19 has created many challenges for the Belgrade School District which we met with a positive proactive approach. Students have been attending school five days a week all school year with limited interruptions due to quarantine issues. Many families chose the option to learn remotely, and the elementary schools have provided individual teachers to address that need. Student and staff safety continue to be a priority during this difficult time. Masks are required of everyone and personal hygiene is stressed throughout the school. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is purchased by the school district and re-supplied when needed. Students are kept together in a cohort model to limit potential exposures and quarantine concerns. Social distancing in the classroom is a challenge due to the number of students who

have made the choice to return to in person learning. Our schools have been able to operate successfully all school year and that can be attributed to the positive culture within the buildings. The flexibility and adaptability of teachers, support staff, students, parents, and the community at large has been integral in making our school year successful.



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

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

The district core curriculum in ELA and Mathematics is developed by the district’s Standards Based Instruction (SBI) team derived from the Montana Common Core ELA and Mathematics Standards. Science and Social Studies are integrated into the ELA and Mathematics curriculum. Curriculum maps were developed with input from many sources. Professional development, facilitated through a curriculum enhancement consortium, provided the framework for our SBI model. They assisted us in creating a year long context, or curriculum map. Input from grade level meetings assisted the SBI teams to refine those maps to meet the needs of our students. These maps outline when certain standards should be taught based on prior student knowledge and previous grade level curriculum maps. They include guiding instructional information such as enduring understandings, essential questions, concepts, skills, vocabulary and carefully vetted assessments so teachers can have common data for planning instruction. Proficiency scales were developed for each standard which, in turn, provided the outline for creating Common Formative Assessments (CFA) for each standard. The standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how each teacher needs to teach each standard. The developed assessments determine if the students know the standard to a level of proficiency. Teachers then determine where to differentiate based on those assessments along with instructionally embedded formative assessments. The result being reteaching of a concept or potential enrichment of that standard based on the Depth of Knowledge at which the standard is written.

Foundational skills are the focus of a balanced literacy approach in ELA. Teacher professional judgement is relied upon to utilize multiple approaches, practices, materials, and resources to meet the needs of their students. Standards based instruction affords teachers the ability to be innovative in the delivery of their instruction. Teachers use research based best practices to deliver instruction through mini lessons, shared reading opportunities, differentiated guided reading groups, independent reading, and engaging students in rigorous and relevant conversations in order to develop critical thinking skills. Writing is explicitly taught through opinion, narrative, and informative formats. These writing formats are incorporated throughout ELA instruction during daily lessons, assessments, and project based learning opportunities. Teachers utilize many web based resources, such as Epic, Guided Readers, RazKids, NewsELA, ReadWorks, and Scholastic News. The incorporation of these resources prior to school closure in the spring of 2020 allowed continued access to leveled reading materials for students. Teaching the foundational skills through these multiple resources, instructional best practices, communication modalities, and student learning styles helps foster a deeper love of reading and writing.

Instruction of the Common Core Math Standards forms the bedrock of daily lessons. Foundational skills are spiraled into daily lessons, across all grade levels, to ensure automaticity. The focus has shifted from standard algorithms to multiple pathways to the same outcome. A deeper understanding of mathematics through this approach helps students apply their knowledge and skills to other areas of learning including science, technology, and the arts (STEAM). Students are often called upon to explain their thinking through number talks, partner discussions, and group projects. Data from district and school Common Formative Assessments (CFA’s) drive instructional decisions and allows teachers to differentiate to meet the needs of all students. Productive struggle in math concepts is met with a growth mindset and lessons are scaffolded to provide many opportunities for students to be successful.

Science is focused on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) which has been adopted by the state of Montana. Mystery Science is our main resource and many teachers incorporate STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Art and Math) activities to teach the standards. A Makerspace cart was purchased for teachers to have structured lessons and allow students to explore their own creativity. Teachers are encouraged to implement coding with devices such as Spheros, Ozobots, and Lego robotics kits.

Montana has updated their social studies standards with the incorporation of Indian Education For All (IEFA). All grade levels have an emphasis on civic learning and community with a shift toward Montana history in fourth grade. Teachers are creative in utilizing a variety of resources and materials including Scholastic News, National Geographic, NewsELA, ReadWorks, and Epic. Students participate in

discussions around social issues and the importance of voting. Teachers use community resources such as the Museum of the Rockies for classroom visits, live streaming, local libraries, and guest speakers that teach students about local and Montana history as well as include Indian Education For All (IEFA) elements.

Initially, when schools first moved to distance learning in March of 2020, instruction switched to posting assignments, readings, and instructional check-in with students through Google Classroom and Google Meetings as well as learning packets for families with limited or no internet access. Lessons and student workload was significantly reduced to accommodate parental assistance and the emotional toll students were facing. Online learning for the current school year is drastically different from the spring of 2020. In order for students online to keep pace, online learning has to mirror in person instruction as much as possible. Expectations for online students to meet all grade level standards remain in place. Online learning consists of scheduled whole group instruction, small group instructional meetings, individual check-in meetings for understanding, and timely feedback to students. Consistent communication with parents is vital to the success of the online platform. Online teachers are adapting materials used in the classroom into a virtual format. Common formative assessments are still given online to determine proficiency.

**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:**

Ridge View has a music program that provides a safe and welcoming place for our students to express themselves in a creative musical way, enhancing their academic and socio-emotional learning. All students in kindergarten through fourth grade attend music classes twice a week. Singing, instrument playing, and movement are the vehicles used to promote the musical skills of reading, writing, improvising, and performing. Through these skills our students are exposed to many genres of music. This gives them the opportunity to experience and connect with other cultures, history, and the present. Adjustments to the music class were made to provide social distancing, sanitizing of instruments, and the use of outdoor learning spaces when the weather permits.

This year kindergarten through fourth grade students attend library classes once a week for thirty minutes. Under normal circumstances, kindergarten would be scheduled for 30 minutes while first through fourth grade students would attend for 40 minutes. Due to COVID, the master schedule was altered to accommodate for early release on Fridays.

Students at Ridge View learn the lifelong skill of finding books for their own personal interests and enjoyment. Students also delve into author and genre studies, library organization, library database, and research skills. They learn about how to be responsible digital citizens when using information and social tools. Utilizing the inquiry process, students learn how to find and use reliable reference resources and also analyze print and web-based resources to complete digital projects they share with their peers.

The counselor provides Ridge View students with a comprehensive school program that targets the three important domains of academic, emotional/social and career readiness along with student advocacy. Within these domains, the delivery system involves group, individual and classroom guidance. The school counseling program is structured around particular counseling themes for each month, which helps guide lessons. The counselor works closely with the administration to focus on building trusting relationships with families and provides a safe environment for students facing life challenges.

Ridge View Elementary offers health enhancement classes to all K-4 students twice weekly for thirty minutes. They learn a variety of sport specific and lifelong physical skills that promote a healthy, active lifestyle. The goal of the program is to encourage lifelong physical fitness and acquisition of physical skills

through a standards based instruction approach. Lessons are designed and implemented using Montana's Health Enhancement Standards. Lessons were adjusted this year due to COVID allowing for social distancing, the use of outdoor learning areas, and sanitization of equipment between classes.

Students leave Ridge View with the understanding that leading an active lifestyle is important for both their physical and mental health. They acquire teamwork and leadership skills that carry on into their future. Incorporating small-sided, team games as part of skill development fosters an environment that encourages togetherness in working towards a common goal. Sportsmanship, problem solving, and being a team player are essential life skills learned during physical education classes at Ridge View.

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

Addressing student needs is what we do best at Ridge View Elementary School. Our Standards Based Instruction helps students have a clearly focused view of what skills they have mastered, what they are currently learning, and what they will be learning to master in the future. Beginning in Kindergarten and continuing through fourth grade, these skills are scaffolded to ensure a comprehensive education. Students who are performing below grade level are offered support through Title I Intervention which involves in-class and pull-out support that focuses on Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction. Students who display splinter skills and those that struggle with learning disabilities benefit by working in small groups or individually with the Title I Interventionist. Activities and assignments in these groups are aligned to the learning target based on interventions created in collaboration with the classroom teacher and the intervention specialist. At Ridgeview, we benchmark test all students three times a year in both reading and math. We progress monitor student skills weekly using programs such as FastBridge and Read Naturally. These assessments monitor phonics skills, vocabulary acquisition, phonemic awareness, decoding, reading fluency, and reading accuracy. We also monitor and strengthen student progress using a program called iReady. This is an online program that monitors student growth and provides targeted lessons in areas where students need to improve and build upon skills. These progress monitoring measures allow teachers to have current data on student strengths and areas of deficit in order to create interventions, provide differentiated instruction, and teach specific skill building lessons.

Students who are diagnosed with a disability, that qualify for special education services, are provided a Special Education Teacher, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational and Physical Therapists, and instructional paraprofessionals, depending on individual student needs. This collaborative team help create Individualized Education Programs (IEP) that address specific areas of deficit. The special education staff often collaborate with classroom teachers on strategies to help students be successful in the general education setting. The strategies can be in the form of push-in support, pull-out services, accommodations, and modifications to provide students with the opportunity to be successful in all educational settings.

English Language Learners have support from a certified English as a Second Language teacher who is designated to address their specific needs in relationship to language acquisition. This teacher works with students both in and out of class and offers strategies to classroom teachers to help students access the grade level curriculum.

Students in transition and migrant students have a team of counselors and a local mental health provider offering support to those who may have circumstances in their life that negatively impact their learning. These vital personnel help students both in class and in small groups, offer food packs from the local food bank, and other essential supports focusing on making sure these students are given the best opportunity to learn. At Ridgeview we also offer a breakfast in the classroom program to all students. Our breakfast program received special recognition from the Montana Governor's office for the large increase in total number of students served. It is our goal at Ridge

View Elementary School to provide a quality education, looking at the whole child and meeting both academic and social and emotional needs.

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

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

The state of Montana mandated school closures in March of 2020 during spring break for Ridge View Elementary. It was unbelievable to witness the flexibility, adaptability, and teamwork of the staff, students, and families as they adjusted to this new way of teaching and learning. Students without access to technology in their home were provided with a laptop and we also assisted families obtaining internet access if needed. The social emotional needs of our students were a major concern during the unexpected school closure. Lessons were pared down, whether online or through individual packets, to meet the most crucial standards to end the school year. Teachers were mandated to check in with their students through virtual meetings, utilizing the Google platform, or individual phone calls. These conversations were to gauge their well being and reinforce that the staff is available to meet the needs of students and their families. Two events were held to keep students engaged and connected to our school community included an organized teacher parade through our neighborhoods and a year end bubble ceremony through the school parking lot. The transition to distance learning brought into sharp relief how much we missed our students being in the building.

This school year opened with many questions and challenges that schools had to face regarding COVID. The staff at Ridge View met this challenge with positivity and enthusiasm for having students back in person full time. Our counselor, along with the innovative support of the staff, has implemented a comprehensive school counseling program, taking place both in the building and also online, that engages and motivates students in three distinct domains including academic, social emotional growth, and career readiness. Families of remote learning students continue to feel engaged and supported through regular school activities and often participate in food drives, school spirit weeks, and school competitions. We are still able to provide a positive environment and support through school closure and remote learning.

A concerted effort was made this year to try to offer everything we typically do in a normal school year, with some modifications. Academic field trips were suspended so teachers had to look for innovative ways to bring the outside world into their classrooms through virtual experiences. We still focus on student character development through our positive behavior support system. Academic interventions through our Title I program are still offered, though students are kept together in classroom level cohorts.

Our school felt the impact of COVID just like every other school in the nation, but the determination and resilience of the staff and students shine through with their ability to overcome these great challenges. We firmly believe all students, whether in person or remote, are an integral part of the Ridge View family. Once a Ridge View Cub, always a Ridge View Cub.

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

The Belgrade community has been rapidly evolving over the past thirty years. Engaging families within the school community has had to adapt more significantly in the last decade. We have found that most of our parents stay current with events through various social media platforms which has become our primary source of communication with our families, especially due to COVID. Publishing school newsletters via our website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts more quickly pushes our message to the community, and we also accommodate those families who prefer paper copies. The Belgrade newspaper publishes articles and op-ed submissions from the district staff. Teachers and staff utilize Bloomz, Remind, Seesaw, email, etc. to share learning and communicate with families. Parents of kindergarten students participate in home visits prior to the beginning of the year. Teachers discover the hopes and dreams a parent has for their child during these events.

We are fortunate to have an actively engaged Parent Teacher Council (PTC). Teachers and parents collaborate about ways to improve student learning, engage families, and support staff. The PTC also utilizes Facebook and group emails to reach parents with their newsletters which highlight school successes and initiatives. The collaboration with our PTC extends to family engagement opportunities in order to build

lasting relationships with our community. Family outreach is provided through Back to School Night, Welcome Back Barbecue and Fun Run, movie nights, pumpkin carving night, buying books for students, and science fair to name a few. Some of these events had to be suspended for the current school year due to COVID restrictions while others were moved to a virtual platform using social media.

We also work with the Belgrade Chamber of Commerce where Ridge View's principal currently sits as the Vice President of the Board of Directors. Administrators also participate in the Building Belgrade business group via the Chamber of Commerce which keeps business partners personally informed of what is happening within our schools. The Gallatin Valley Food Bank works with Ridge View families providing weekend meal assistance and in turn our school participates in bi-annual food drives. We have a great relationship with the Greater Gallatin United Way to provide a quality afterschool program at a reasonable cost to our families. We also partner with the YMCA providing our families with information on the wide array of services offered. Our strategic readers can attend the YMCA Y-Achievers summer literacy remediation program. This program was suspended in the summer of 2020 due to COVID, but our hope is that it will continue in the future. We are fortunate to have these community partnerships at Ridge View, and we value these strong relationships.

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

At the start of the new school year, protocols were put in place in order to limit COVID exposure as student and staff safety are of paramount importance. All of the necessary sanitizing and personal protective equipment, for students and staff, is delivered to the classrooms and resupplied as needed. Due to these new protocols, teachers lost a portion of their daily preparation time. The master schedule was adjusted to provide early student release on Fridays in order to make up that missed time for collaboration in the PLC model. Teachers are able to recoup lost preparation time on Friday afternoons. Committee and staff meetings are limited this year to give teachers the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues and plan engaging lessons efficiently. Providing teachers with uninterrupted time is a crucial avenue to show them they are valued. Professional development opportunities are researched and offered. The school district provides professional development through professional conferences, guest speakers, and a unique teacher learner week. Our own teachers participate in presentations to other staff based on their own expertise and successful implementation in their classrooms.

Designated online teachers were provided for students who opted for remote learning. Our curriculum director searched for resources for those teachers that would allow as close to an in person learning experience as possible. The teachers for online learners are still in the school building and attend the grade level PLC meetings ensuring continuity of instruction. Upgraded technology, including dual monitors, high definition web cameras, faster laptops, and microphone headsets, were also purchased for our online instructors to provide a quality teaching and learning experience.

In order for our staff to be at their best for our students, we encourage and support physical and mental well-being. The Belgrade School District works with outside agencies to offer gym membership discounts, stress recognition and relief courses, group and individual therapy, and vaccination clinics. Recently, our district collaborated with Community Health Partnership, which now has an office in our Middle School, to provide easily accessible medical support.

We put so much focus on the whole child sometimes forgetting it is vitally important to take care of each other. Ridge View has a staff led committee, called the Nest Eggers, providing support to teachers and their families experiencing traumatic events. Teachers donate money to the committee in order to purchase flowers and cards signed by staff, provide monetary donations, and deliver organized meal service to staff in need. Teachers also organize monthly staff luncheons which are great opportunities for teachers to socialize. In addition, our PTC hosts staff appreciation lunches and provides meals during parent teacher conferences. Supporting our teachers in these ways, in and out of the classroom, inspires them to perform at their best for our students.

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

Our principal believes learning is the top priority for both students and teachers. In order to provide the best education possible, he encourages teachers to attend relevant professional development opportunities whenever possible and incorporate that knowledge into their lessons. Sharing professional knowledge is a moral obligation if we are to improve student learning. This includes sharing of information our principal has learned from conferences, webinars, collaborating with colleagues, and educational literature. We have adopted the Growth Mindset and the concept is emphasized with students, teachers, and administrators throughout the district.

Teamwork is the foundation to our success. Working collaboratively through the PLC process is stressed by leadership in order to ensure that all students succeed. He strongly believes every student deserves the opportunity to learn grade level standards that may need to be differentiated to individual needs. Time has been allotted in the schedule every week to allow teachers to review the assessment data, instructional process, differentiation for students not demonstrating proficiency, and enriching those students who are proficient.

Our principal works with other district administrators in a PLC to promote collaboration and consistency, especially in the area of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). Our movement to Standards Based Instruction, grading, and reporting was accomplished through this collaborative effort. Teachers were supported in this effort by providing time and resources through professional development to create a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Input from teachers and the community is valued by leadership leading to shared decision making and acceptance of initiatives.

He worked collaboratively with other administrators in the district, prior to the 2020-2021 school year, developing protocols related to recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) regarding COVID-19. These protocols allowed our school to open full time at the start of the year. Protocols focused on personal protective equipment, social distancing, and sanitizing options. He solicited teacher input to adapt the master schedule in order to incorporate those safety protocols. The roles and responsibilities of our principal expanded to also include a focus on COVID protocols and contact tracing for quarantine issues when they arise. He also made a conscious effort to limit disruptions and remove extraneous distractions from teachers so they could focus their efforts on student learning.

Through the ever-changing leadership role during the pandemic there remains a constant. The principal strives to treat his staff and students like family, always recognizing their needs and building ever lasting relationships.

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

The needs of our students and families are a constant concern in the Ridge View community. In order to meet those needs, there are many support systems in place. Economic diversity is accommodated by offering school supplies to students who need them. We also have a liaison in the district office supplying snacks and additional school supplies to students. A partnership with the local food bank helps us deliver meal assistance to families every week, at no cost, called Kids Pack. There are no qualifications needed for Kids Pack and any family can sign up for that service. Our PTC organizes clothing drives to assist students with obtaining winter clothing such as snow pants, snow boots, hats, and gloves.

The English Language Learner population is growing in Belgrade. We offer a certified ELL teacher to assist those students. This teacher also serves as a translator during parent teacher conferences and is a liaison to families. Providing a culturally aware role model who advocates for ELL students is crucial to student success. We also have access to a contracted translator/interpreter for IEP meetings through an outside agency.

Mental health for our students is a two pronged approach. We have a school counselor who provides lessons to classrooms and implements Kelso's Choices focusing on conflict management

skills. Students with more intensive needs can qualify for our CSCT (Comprehensive School and Community Treatment) program provided through a local mental health provider. CSCT is housed within the school building and gives students direct access to mental health therapy. This program also provides comprehensive family therapy for qualifying students.

Respect in the classroom and school is a significant focus utilizing the universal practices of MBI. At Ridge View, we ROAR. We are Respectful, Organized, Always Learning, and Responsible. We teach these practices, emphasizing what it means to ROAR in the classrooms, hallways, restrooms, cafeteria, playground, and every other area of the school. We also read a “PAWSitive Practice” for the week during morning announcements each day. These positive practices are posted throughout the school in various locations as a visual reminder.

Cultural awareness is primarily introduced through our Social Studies and Reading instruction. The virtual opportunities now available to teachers allow them to bring the world alive in the classroom. Many cultures are introduced and discussed affording the students the realization that their world is much larger than the local community. Our teachers strive to improve awareness of diversity through culturally relevant material. Students have access to a variety of diverse texts and resources expanding their knowledge of other cultures. Students learn fascinating details about these cultures during lessons, including Indian Education For All.

We recognize that our population is not necessarily representative of the country and world. Our teachers address current events and social issues through classroom dialogue and help students develop meaningful response strategies. Teachers cultivate curiosity and awareness in order to engage in age appropriate discussions around contemporary issues with their students.



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

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The most instrumental practice that encompasses all areas of our school is a Professional Learning Community. In order to implement the PLC framework, the school district invested in our teachers. We provided an opportunity for multiple teachers to attend a conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, entitled Professional Learning Communities at Work offered through Solution Tree. This conference established the foundation for our teachers to begin developing their grade level PLCs. The four questions that drive PLC discussions are: What do we want students to know and be able to do? How will we know when they have learned it? How do we respond if they did not learn it? How do we respond if they did learn it?

Academic growth and support is the driving force behind PLC meetings with grade level teams. The teachers look at standards, proficiency levels on those standards, and intervention or enrichment concepts. Assessments are constantly being reviewed to ensure validity through PLC meetings and the larger Standards Based Instructional team at the district level. We firmly believe that PLCs generate collective efficacy. We feel morally obligated to collaborate with every staff member necessary to support all of our students.

The reliance on our implementation of the PLC framework was never more evident than during the school closure in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic. Teachers were thrust into a new direction for continuing quality instruction overnight. Due to the trusting relationships previously established in their grade level teams, teachers were able to navigate this difficult time. They depended on the continued collaboration regarding instructional materials and pedagogy which would have the highest impact on student learning.

Our Student Assistance Team works as a PLC reviewing student progress and addressing individual student needs through interventions, accommodations, or modifications. They also identify students that may need a referral for special education testing. Our MBI team works together to refine or extend our behavior initiatives and increase student engagement through various activities, such as reading and math challenges, spirit weeks, and school wide assemblies. The counselors collaborate focusing on the emotional needs of the students based on various life circumstances.

PLCs are not just about academics or assessments, although that is a major focus. The concept of a community extends beyond the classroom into all areas involving students. The subdivision around Ridge View has created a true neighborhood school making it feel like a family. The ideology of working together as a team has permeated into every committee, activity, and our community at Ridge View.