

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 321 Central Avenue W PO Box 529
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Cascade State MT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 59421-0529

County Cascade

Telephone (406) 468-9383 Fax (406) 468-2212

Web site/URL https://cascade.k12.mt.us/ E-mail michelle.price@cascade.k12.mt.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Rick Miller E-mail rick.miller@cascade.k12.mt.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Cascade Public Schools District 3&B Tel. (406) 468-9383

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 Mrs. Valerie Fowler
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	8	16	24
1	3	9	12
2	9	14	23
3	6	7	13
4	14	10	24
5	9	6	15
6	16	11	27
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	65	73	138

*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 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 91 % White
 - 2 % 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.

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	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	156
(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):

German, Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %

4 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 29 %

Total number students who qualify: 40

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %

13 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2

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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	8
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.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17:1

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%	94%	93%	95%	94%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
 Yes No

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

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

The mission of Cascade Elementary is to provide high quality instruction with every student learning at high levels.

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

During the 2020-2021 school year, Cascade Elementary was open for in person instruction as well as providing online instruction to those who chose to learn remotely. Each student was issued a Chromebook to help bridge the gap for online learners.

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

Cascade Elementary was established in 1888 and has been the center of the community since its creation. Not only does the school provide a location for community and school events, it has also provided the education for many of the town's leaders. Our small rural community is located just outside of Great Falls, Montana and is cradled by mountains, grasslands, and the Missouri River. The people who make up the community represent diverse populations ranging from those who live on the surrounding farms and ranches, to current and former members of the military, and those who have chosen to trade in the busy, crowded cities for the secluded mountains and foothills. The school district spans an approximate 20-mile radius with some students transferring into Cascade from the surrounding areas.

The district is comprised of the elementary, the middle school, and the high school all under one roof. This allows the elementary the unique ability to collaborate with the middle and high school teachers and students. Prior to the COVID-19 closures, it was common to see high school students teaching science and agricultural lessons and activities to our elementary classes, as well as serving as academic role models for the majority of the students. Students in the elementary, middle school, and high school are known by name creating a strong sense of belonging.

Cascade Elementary operates on a four-day school week allowing Friday's to be used as a homework help for any student needing assistance. The four-day week also allows the teachers an opportunity to gain valuable professional development and data analysis sessions two Fridays of each month. The elementary teachers are able to draw on the vast experience and education of each member of the faculty with nine teachers having fifteen or more years of experience and five teachers having received master's degrees.

The teachers at Cascade encourage learning during school and after hours. They have organized Homework Club to provide additional assistance for students for at least one hour each night. Homework Club runs under the umbrella of our XCell program which is funded by a 21st Century grant. The XCell program provides the students a safe environment to socialize and extend their learning of key skills important to their education. While at Homework Club, the teachers and staff support the education of all grade levels and can be seen celebrating the accomplishments of the students.

In order to achieve high levels of learning for all students, Cascade Elementary has adopted MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support). The goal of MTSS is to provide students the data-driven support academically and behaviorally. Using benchmark testing and progress monitoring, individualized data is analyzed to identify and address each student's weakest area in math and reading. An intervention program is developed, and results are continuously revisited to ensure students are learning to their fullest potential. Data on student behavior is also compiled and analyzed on an individual and schoolwide level. Proactive behavior plans are developed for students needing support. If problem areas or trends are identified schoolwide, expectations are revisited and retaught to provide students structure and encouragement.

As COVID-19 brought about changes to our educational system, Cascade Elementary maintained its mission of ensuring each child would learn at high levels. The elementary teachers and paraprofessionals developed small group sessions that focused on reading fluency, reading comprehension, and mathematical practices. The teachers developed fifteen-minute lessons that allowed them to work with small groups of students more intensely. The kindergarten through third grade teachers provided prerecorded lessons and read alouds on their websites for the students who had internet access. The principal, superintendent, and cafeteria staff delivered work packets and breakfasts and lunches to students who could not come to the school to pick up the items. Each member of the staff worked to ensure the students' physical needs were being met, as well as their educational needs.

Cascade Elementary has developed into an organization that nurtures and educates the whole child. Using a growth mindset, all students are provided the needed tools to learn at high levels. In order to maintain academic growth, the teachers focus on providing students the encouragement and opportunities to see themselves as learners. With the strong relationships within the community, a culture of trust provides the foundation for continued growth both in and out of the classroom.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Cascade Elementary uses a variety of methods to ensure that all students learn at high levels. The school's core curriculum, understanding of Montana's Content Standards, MTSS process, and data analysis all play major roles in ensuring all students maintain growth.

Cascade Elementary began using the Wonders English Language Arts curriculum for kindergarten through sixth grades in 2014. The mix of relevant fiction and non-fiction literature provides the students ample opportunity to practice and hone their reading fluency. The curriculum focuses on phonics, vocabulary building, comprehension strategies and skills, genres, spelling, writing, grammar, and fluency. Students learn through daily reading activities geared for whole group, small group, and independent practice. All grade levels incorporate writing seamlessly throughout the subject areas allowing students the opportunity to reflect on their thought processes while practicing their writing skills.

For mathematics, our school utilizes Eureka Math, a rigorous math curriculum written and developed by math teachers. The math program focuses on rich math talks engaging students with explaining thought processes using content specific vocabulary, experiment with multiple strategies, and gain a deep understanding of concepts. Lessons are structured to begin with an application problem that reviews skills previously learned and aids in the day's lesson. The teacher then begins the concept development to provide the students with models or hands-on activities that encourage engagement and creative thinking. When working on the concept, the program fosters student explanations through scaffolded questioning by the teacher. After guided practice, the students review learning through a ten-minute debriefing. Exit Tickets are then given to assess skills and depth of understanding. Ongoing formative assessments create an environment that instills confidence and allows students to take risks with their learning.

Cascade Elementary has a tradition of developing strong scientific thinking. For the past few years, the elementary has hosted a science fair with many community members in attending and participating as judges. The scientific method has been essential in the teacher created curriculums and the FOSS curriculum used in the second through sixth grades since 2015. The FOSS curriculum follows the Next Generation Science Standards with physical, life, and earth sciences. Each investigation is led by the scientific method and, although investigations are planned ahead, the students are allowed to extend their knowledge and test their own hypotheses throughout the lessons. The investigations build upon each other in the units and have real-world applications that are relevant to the students. The annual science fair has been incorporated into the school's curriculum allowing all projects to be completed in the classroom under the supervision and guidance of the teachers. The students compile research, document each step in the scientific process into their journals, and present their findings in multiple formats. With such a rich agriculturally based community, the community supports the science curriculum by contributing materials for investigation and leading scientifically based presentations for classrooms.

Cascade Elementary has incorporated our social studies curriculum into our ELA curriculum. The teachers have developed their own curriculum based on the themes within the Wonders program, the Scott Foresman Social Studies curriculum, and the IEFA (Indian Education for All) Essential Understandings. With the First People's Buffalo Jump, Lewis and Clark's expedition, and remnants of missions and homesteads, the students at Cascade are able to immerse themselves in Montana's rich history. The students are able to learn firsthand about the diverse cultures of the twelve tribes in Montana and the processes and people that make up our state and local governments. The students are engaged in the stories of the past and their place in the present and future.

For each core subject, the teachers were trained to analyze the Montana Core Standards and identify the essential standards. The teachers developed a scope and sequence for each subject area making note of the concepts and skills that would be targeted based on the essential standards. Since implementing a four-day school week, the teachers have adjusted their curriculum to ensure students master the standards essential to their continued education. When developing or choosing assessment tools, the teachers consider the depth of knowledge needed to show proficiency of the standard. Students are then given the activities or assessments

based on their level of knowledge.

In order to differentiate instruction, the teachers use the MTSS process to develop strategies and interventions to aid in student learning. The Title I department provides tiered instruction with pre-teaching, fluid, targeted support during lessons based on immediate feedback from formative assessments, and extension activities to increase the learning of higher achieving students. In the kindergarten through third grades, the Title I staff provide additional intense phonics instruction to students in the lower 20% on benchmark assessments. Periodic data reviews of progress monitoring and formative and summative class assessments allow interventions and strategies to change based on current results. The teachers at Cascade Elementary believe learning is fluid, and they strive to provide an environment that adapts and adjusts to student needs.

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:

Cascade Elementary provides visual and performing arts, physical education, technology/library/media, and socials skills to all grade levels. Each of these curriculum areas are taught separately by specialists in those fields. Once a week for an hour the grade levels participate in art. The teacher has developed a curriculum based on the Montana Content Standards and is rich in vocabulary, genre, and creativity. The students experiment with diverse medias while learning about artists and cultures that are known for certain styles of art. Writing has been threaded through the art lessons as create stories about their artwork or write informative pieces about important people, periods, and styles.

Music classes for the kindergarten through sixth grades are held twice a week for thirty minutes. During this time, students learn rhythm, sight singing, and experience diverse genres of music. Students in the kindergarten through fourth grades perform for the community each year during the winter holidays. Each fifth and sixth grade student participates in band and performs twice per year. The music teacher enjoys providing entertainment for the community and has organized an evening of folk-dancing for families. During this event, the students teach their families traditional dances they learned during P.E.

Students at Cascade Elementary are able to enjoy physical education every day for thirty minutes. The curriculum provides guidance for students with making healthy decisions about nutrition, exercise, and even social skills. Each class begins with warm-up activities that cause the students to think and adapt as they are moving. The focus lessons develop teamwork, sportsmanship, and coordination while providing a structured and supportive structure for inevitable mistakes and transferring them into improvements.

The technology/library/media curriculum has been developed by the librarian and is constantly improved as technological advancements and programs change. Every elementary student attends a library class once a week for one hour. The Montana Content Standards based curriculum allows students to acquire coding and word processing skills, practice research and digital citizenship skills, as well as learn a greater appreciation of literature and its many genres. Cooperative activities and assignments create a hands-on environment and further reinforces a love for learning.

With the school remaining open throughout the 2020-2021 school year, limited changes to the curriculum in other areas needed to be made. Students were given the opportunity to attend classes online through Google Meets for library and music. P.E. and art provided alternate activities when students could not participate online.

3. Academic Supports:

As a Title I school, all students at Cascade can receive Title I supports. A rigorous intervention has been developed for reading and math over the years that aids the students in achieving academic success. With the use of the MTSS process, the staff analyzes data acquired from benchmark and classroom assessments to develop interventions for struggling students. Students are placed into fluid intervention groups based on their areas of greatest need.

Reading interventions begin in kindergarten with the implementation of the Read Well program. Students focus on phonics, pre-reading skills, decoding strategies, and fluency practice. Read Well interventions and groups continue through first and second grade focusing on comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and phonics. Each week, progress monitoring takes place to ensure student growth. If growth does not occur for two weeks, the student's placement in the program is reassessed.

Third through sixth graders also participate in data driven reading interventions. Students participate in FastBridge screenings three times per year. The screenings are computer adaptive and identify skills as mastered, developing, or future. Using the MTSS process, teachers and Title I staff establish learning groups according to the weakest domains identified through data. For reading, those groups are Reading for Information, Reading Literature, Vocabulary, and two levels for Comprehension. The teachers use passages and literature that provide a wide variety of questions and scaffolding. The students are taught to think while reading using explicit instruction and modeling from the teacher. Formative assessments and progress monitoring guide movement within groups and allows for targeted instruction within the regular classroom when large groups of students are struggling with specific skills and concepts.

The math interventions for first grade through sixth are also developed using the MTSS process. FastBridge assessments provide data to group students according to their weakest area using the five mathematical domains: Number and Operations in Base Ten, Number and Operations Fractions, Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Measurement and Data, and Geometry. The teachers develop small group and individualized lessons and activities to fill the gaps in learning. Formative assessments are used to track progress through the standards within the identified domain.

Students with diverse academic and behavioral needs also participate in intensive instruction through the data-driven development of goals. The experienced special education department at Cascade and the assistance of the specialized NCLRC (North Central Learning Resource Center) staff allow the special education students to gain the assistance, accommodations, and modifications needed for learning at high levels. Students requiring additional behavioral support receive aid through Check-In/Check-Out forms, comprehensive behavioral plans, and AWARE, a non-profit organization that provides therapy and support for qualifying children. The ELL (English Language Learners) students are given the support needed to build their language acquisition skills through assistive technology, creative word banks, and social interactions with their peers.

Allowing all students support to focus on their areas of weakness provides the needed instruction for continued growth. Whether the student is lower achieving, advanced, or has a special need, all are taught the importance of improvement and continued learning.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Building relationships with the students and families has been fundamental to providing a positive climate and culture at Cascade Elementary. The teachers devote time during the first few weeks of the school year to talk with students independently, in small groups, and in whole class settings. They learn the students' likes and interests and find ways to include them in lessons. The teachers purposefully allow themselves to be seen making mistakes during math talks or when reading. They use the mistakes as teachable moments and allow the students to see mistakes as learning opportunities.

Throughout the year, teachers are reviewing expectations and are rewarding students with P.A.W.S. tickets. P.A.W.S. stands for the behavioral expectations: Positive attitude, Act responsibly, Work ethic, and Show respect. The tickets are then placed in a basket for a chance to be drawn for incentives. Many of the teachers also use the CHAMPS acronym, from Safe and Civil Schools, to set expectations for activities within the classroom. CHAMPS represents Conversation (voice level), Help (how to ask for help), Activity (task or objective), Movement (what movement is involved if any), Participation (what is expected to show participation), and Successful students. When implemented fully, CHAMPS allows the teacher the ability to change expectations for specific situations with little instruction.

In 2019, Cascade fully implemented a “No Missing Assignment” policy. Every assignment given by teachers will be turned in and will show proficiency. The goal of the policy is to motivate the upper elementary students to be responsible for their work. If assignments are not turned in by the due date, the third through sixth grade students must develop a plan for completing the missing work. The students receive assistance from teachers after school at Homework Club, on Fridays at Homework Help, and during recess. They are also given the incentive of less work for assignments turned in on time and done well, or more work if the assignment is late or below standard. Since implementation, 99% of assignments have been completed by the end of the school year.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Cascade Elementary has worked diligently to provide family engagement activities to improve student success. The family engagement activities are each an hour long and begin with a math night in the first quarter, a social studies night during the second quarter, a science night in the third quarter, and a reading night in the fourth quarter. The math night provides families with simple math games centered on essential math skills. The teachers prepare and practice the games with their students and present them in engaging ways allowing the students to act as teachers for their families. The teachers assist families as needed but allow the students to take the lead. The social studies night focuses on diverse cultures and offers students and families the ability to participate in games and activities played around the world. The high school faculty and students provide the activities and instructions and create an entertaining evening for all involved. The science night involves STEM activities that are supplied by XCell and the high school science department. The students and their families program Ozbots, small robots, and participate in engaging investigations. The final academic night provides the closure to One School, One Book, a literature-based family engagement activity that spans several weeks. Each student receives a copy of a book that is chosen for a school-wide reading activity. The students read the book with their families and receive incentives for participation. On the final night, the students and families are invited to come to the school and read by flashlight or while drinking hot chocolate and eating cookies.

Cascade Elementary receives the support of many local organizations seeking to help the students. Since COVID-19 and the economic stress that has affected so many in our community, the organizations have increased their support. The community center and its donors provide school supplies for the students across the district. The local food bank works with the school counselor putting together food backpacks for students and families in need. The food backpacks are essential in providing nutritious snacks and meals for students while they are away from school over the three-day weekends or holidays.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The four-day school week at Cascade Elementary was implemented to provide the teachers with ample professional development focusing on improving student learning. Every other Friday, the teachers attend professional development for four hours. The Fridays are dedicated to addressing the needs of the teachers and students. The elementary teachers direct the majority of the trainings and topics covered. The teachers' main objectives are to use the time analyzing academic and behavioral data, plan activities and lessons, receive training on providing instruction to remote learners, and most importantly, celebrate accomplishments. While teachers are encouraged to share something positive, whether professionally or personally, they are also asked to share a struggle they have encountered. The wealth of experience and support within the teaching unit leads to viable solutions or action plans to address the area of concern. The teachers and staff do not hesitate to help one another and have built a culture of community that goes beyond the walls of their classroom. Surveys given to the staff have shown high levels of comradery and trust between themselves and with the administration.

As the number of remote learners fluctuates, the stress on the teachers rises as they strive to meet the needs of all of their students. To help alleviate some of the stress, extra support staff has been hired to assist with the online learners. The support staff is a vital part of reducing burnout with the teachers as they contend with technical difficulties, addressing students' academic and social/emotional needs, and accommodating social distancing requirements while still allowing students to collaborate and socialize. The support staff assist the teachers with implementing interventions, help serve lunch in the classroom due to social distancing, and work with remote learners during instruction.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of Cascade Elementary is focused on creating a culture of community and trust within the school that nurtures the academic growth of the students and staff. The leadership within the school functions as a team that is student centered.

The role of the administration team is to lead by example and to be visible and approachable members of the school community. Both the principal and the superintendent can be seen in the elementary hallways and classrooms engaging with the students and staff and helping out where needs arise. The principal knows each student by name and strives to make him or her feel like an important part of the school community.

The administration believes in nurturing a culture of trust and has an open-door policy with all of the stakeholders. Open lines of communication are integral parts to maintaining the confidence of the community, and the principal welcomes honest feedback and suggestions for improvement. Parents are encouraged to participate in school decision making. Parent advisory meetings are held at the end of each school year to allow parents to participate in providing feedback on implementations that are working within the elementary and the areas that need improvement.

The administrative team bases its decisions and the objectives on data acquired throughout the year. The My Voice Survey by the Quaglia Institute is used to gather valuable data from students, parents, and teachers. The administration also reviews academic data acquired from FastBridge and SBAC to make decisions about needed staff development or changes to programs.

During COVID-19, the administration has been influential in making sure the safety of the students and staff was of the utmost importance. The superintendent researched the many informative articles and addresses released by the CDC and the state of Montana to help guide the school toward the least restrictive reopening for the community. The policies created concerning masks, social distancing, disinfecting, and sporting events proved to be effective in keeping Cascade Elementary open throughout the school year.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Montana is a culturally diverse region that has developed legislation that addresses cultural awareness. IEFA (Indian Education for All) has been instrumental in providing curriculum and

lessons that focus on the importance of cultural diversity and awareness, respecting diverse perspectives, and celebrating the uniqueness of all individuals. Within all content area standards, Montana has developed standards that focus on using Native American literature, culture, and history to not only teach the standards but also to address the cultural stereotypes or bias that may exist. The IEFA Essential Understandings provide a deeper understanding of the importance of allowing diverse populations to be able to see themselves within the information and content they are learning.

At Cascade Elementary, the teachers develop strong classroom management skills that assist in developing a culture of acceptance within the classroom. Students explore differing perspectives and are taught to respect opinions and experiences that are different than their own. The key component to achieving open-mindedness and acceptance is through modeling behaviors by teachers and staff. Avenues for modeling behaviors of respect can occur within something as common as math talks. The teacher can model acceptance of differing problem-solving strategies by communicating how the diverse strategies work, but it is our experiences that cause us to prefer one strategy over another. Establishing respect of perspectives in all areas is essential to developing a classroom that foster cultural awareness, equity, and respect.

When ensuring equity, cultural awareness, and respect within the school, the principal models an appreciation of diversity and bases decisions on facts and understanding rather than judgements. Students are always asked to give their perspective of an incident or event. Once all perspectives are related, the principal meets with all involved to help each individual understand the actions or choices made.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Cooperation is the one practice that has been instrumental in successfully educating the students of Cascade since the school closures. It took the cooperation of the administration team, school board, and teachers to quickly develop a plan that would continue to educate the students. The administration considered the internal and external resources that could be used to ensure students received needed materials while staying safe. The school board evaluated the input from the administration on the possible routes to continue learning. The teachers provided their input to the administration and the school board and developed individual plans of what standards still needed to be taught and what tools they possessed that could benefit not only themselves but also the other teachers and students. In the weeks to come, parents provided feedback on what programs were a success and what needed improvement. Teachers met with parents via phone or video conferencing helping them navigate facilitating a curriculum they were not trained to deliver.

Through it all, the cooperation of the parents, teachers, administration, school board, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, technology support staff, and custodial staff provided a system which allowed the students to continue learning and provided them with meals and needed supplies to get through the weeks that followed.

From the school closures in March to the end of the 2019-2020 school year, much was learned that would be adjusted or completely abandoned. Again, the administration, school board, teachers and staff, and families cooperated by giving input into the plan to reopen. The 2020-2021 school year allowed families to choose in-person or online learning. The collaboration between the teachers increased and teachers with basic technological abilities became proficient creating lessons on Google Classroom, creating Google Meets, and teaching students to use Kami for editing pdfs. The cafeteria and custodial staff cooperated efforts to reduce workloads throughout the day as students began being served lunch in the classroom. As one problem was solved, another was created, but with the efforts of all involved the students were not only educated but learned at high levels.