

**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) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

Official School Name Pinedale Elementary School - 11  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4901 West Chicago Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Rapid City State SD Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 57702-2313

County Pennington County

Telephone (605) 394-1805 Fax (605) 394-5830

Web site/URL https://pinedale.rcas.org/ E-mail chip.franke@k12.sd.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\* Dr. Lori Simon E-mail lori.simon@k12.sd.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Rapid City Area School District 51-4 Tel. (605) 394-4031

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. Curt Pochardt  
(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):
- 13 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 3 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 21 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	29	32	61
1	17	29	46
2	39	25	64
3	27	34	61
4	28	32	60
5	34	29	63
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>	174	181	355

\*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):
- 5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1.7 % Asian
  - 2.5 % Black or African American
  - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 85 % White
  - 4.8 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 9%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	22
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	34
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	397
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Arabic, Igbo

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %

Total number students who qualify: 41

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %  
41 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>4</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
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.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
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 19:1

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	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
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.

Enter to Discover the World; Depart to Lead the World.

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.

Pinedale Elementary opened the 2020-2021 school year with a hybrid model based upon students' last names. On Monday and Tuesday, students with last names beginning in A through K attended on-campus school; while students with last names beginning in L through Z stayed home for E-Learning (remote learning). On Wednesday and Thursday, students with last names beginning in L through Z attended on campus school; and students with last names beginning in A through K stayed home for E-Learning (remote learning). This took place from August through October of the 2020-2021 school year. Rapid City Area Schools switched from the hybrid model to a more conventional 4-day week model with all students on campus 4 days/week in November. Fridays was designated an E-Learning day for all students. This is the way Pinedale Elementary will close out the 2020-2021 school year.

17. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Pinedale Elementary School is tucked into the small neighborhoods at the base of Nemo Road and the Black Hills forest. Because of its unique location, it is a bit of a hidden gem in the Rapid City School System. The families that live nearby are invested in the school, the grounds, and the staff. The students who attend Pinedale have a drive to succeed and grow. The first thing visitors see when entering the building is the mission statement, “Enter to Discover the World- Depart to Lead the World.” Pinedale inspires students to develop a love of learning and creates lifelong learners. Families and teachers have a strong bond and work as partners to support each child’s success. Our families value education and are willing to put in the time at home to support the learning that happens in the classroom.

Teachers at Pinedale focus on the student as a whole and encourage individual goal setting and employ differentiated instruction to reach each learner. The staff delves deep into what makes each child unique and searches for strengths that can be nurtured and developed. Our staff has very high expectations for our student body and encourages each individual to take responsibility for his/her learning and success. One shift we have made is to utilize Student-Led Conferences. This style of conferencing allows students to take ownership of their academic progress and provides students with a clear understanding of year-long expectations. Students have an awareness of their individual strengths and needs and are allowed to create personal goals, so that learning is self-directed and student-centered.

One thing that is unique to Pinedale is that we have the freedom to set our schedule in a way that is conducive to social learning and innovative experiences. We have the ability to prioritize time for authentic learning opportunities that go above and beyond the curriculum, such as Morning Meetings, Art, and instruction that is related to current events and holidays. We know that supplementing our core curriculum with a variety of instruction helps renew interest in learning and rejuvenates students by giving them a chance to think outside the box and be creative. The focus of education at Pinedale is not just drill and practice. The staff models enthusiasm for learning and prioritizes opportunities for hands-on experiences that utilize all the senses to create new knowledge. By doing and creating, students are more motivated to pay attention and engage in the coursework because they do not see it as just a chore to be completed. Pinedale brings joy and fun into educational experiences.

Pinedale has also implemented Project Based Learning (PBL) which involves student led investigations into real-world topics. PBL marries the fundamental skills of reading, writing and math with 21st Century skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and research gathering. In PBL, the teacher takes on a facilitator role, as opposed to the expert role, and encourages students to investigate and discover, create their own meaning, and think critically. By engaging in PBL practices, we have been able to increase our use of technology and community resources. For example, a Kindergarten inquiry into ‘How to Catch a Leprechaun’ would benefit from inviting a member of the Outdoor Campus to teach about trap types. Or a first-grade class studying, ‘How to Take Care of a Pet’ would benefit from having a member of the Humane Society come in to talk about the needs of different animals. In PBL, students build positive relationships with their peers through collaboration and can flourish independently while working with a team. PBL is integral in building a classroom culture that promotes perseverance, a growth mindset, and curiosity.

Pinedale has also been working hard to educate the whole child by implementing Growth Mindset Mantras and by incorporating the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Our staff took it upon themselves to study the book “The Growth Mindset Coach” by Annie Brock and Heather Hundley. After reading the book, the staff came together to discuss how to teach these concepts and created Monthly Mantras to instill the mindset in our student body. The mantras were also built into our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) by awarding students who displayed proficiency within the focus, or mantra, for each month and demonstrated a Growth Mindset overall. We felt assured that we were on the right track, in the following year, when the District announced their desire to focus on Growth Mindset instruction for all schools. By implementing a Growth Mindset culture, our students are able to embrace failure, seek out challenges, and go beyond their perceived limitations. Students are also encouraged to ask for and receive feedback with grace because they know that is how the most growth is accomplished. Recently, our staff has also taken it upon themselves to study and implement the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The Habits were also built

into our PBIS and we have worked hard to make a clear link between Growth Mindset and The 7 Habits. For example, 'receiving feedback' ties in nicely to Habit 5 which is "seek first to understand, then to be understood." These two concepts complement each other and work toward a common goal, which is to help each student become the best version of themselves.

As you walk through Pinedale, you can see and feel the positive school culture the staff has created by focusing on the whole child, while also setting high academic expectations.



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

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

Staff and students at Pinedale enjoy numerous experiences offered by a strong core of instruction in Reading, Writing, Math, Science and Social Studies. The Office of Teaching, Learning and Innovation along with several teacher/committee members selected the core curricula and assessments for all elementary buildings in the district. Committee members designed pacing guides, instructional strategies, and data models to assist with scope and sequence. In recent months, professional development has been constructed to ensure fidelity of core curriculum, its strategies, and assessment. We have chosen to utilize Moser and Boushey’s Workshop Model approach in each curricular area: Reader’s Workshop, Writer’s Workshop, and Math Workshop.

For Reading, we utilize the McGraw-Hill Wonders Curriculum for Balanced Literacy as our core curriculum. This workshop model allows students a 90-minute block of time for a hands-on approach as well as many digital opportunities within reading, writing, phonics, and grammar. During this time, we utilize a whole-group mini lesson as well as guided-reading instruction and individualized conferences. The Wonders Units of Study include beginning and end-of-unit assessments, sample running records, integrated materials for writing and social sciences, digital tools, and a host of teacher-resource materials. These materials help staff gather, analyze, and interpret data, as well as differentiate instruction, to best meet the needs of each student. We are enthusiastic learners of life, and we attempt to instill this into their students’ minds each day!

Starting in kindergarten, students are introduced to narrative, information, and opinion writing using the Lucy Calkins Writing Units of Study. These three writing genres are built upon and strengthened throughout each grade level within a 45-60-minute block of time for Writer’s Workshop. This workshop includes a whole-group, focused mini lesson, independent writing time, individual and small group conferencing, and a class debrief/writing share. Teachers exercise the autonomy to supplement this curriculum with written response opportunities within the Wonders curriculum.

Math instruction at the elementary level is delivered using “Investigations” by Savvas (formerly known as Pearson Math). This inquiry-based curriculum assists teachers and staff in delivering a hands-on approach. Using manipulatives and other mathematical tools, students often work in teams to investigate and practice a variety of math concepts. Students at Pinedale Elementary discover, create, and think critically to develop their own understanding as they are presented with real-world problems. Within a 90-minute block, a mini lesson is used to launch the daily learning targets, followed by small-group and individual practice. Dreambox Learning is an adaptive, digital tool that aids in our differentiated instruction by meeting the needs of each student.

Along with the core curriculum, teachers and staff provide opportunities for applying 21st Century skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and research gathering. Technology plays an important role with this. Each room is equipped with Promethean Boards as well as a document camera. This makes the learning more interactive and genuine. Each student Kindergarten through 5th grade has his/her own laptop computer. Teachers have been trained to utilize this technology and integrate project-based learning strategies throughout the year.

In addition, staff utilizes Mystery Science to enhance inquiry-based approaches in Science.

Mystery Science engages students with hands-on, investigative discovery of a variety of Science topics. Units range from “Force Olympics” in Kindergarten, to “Animal Biodiversity” in Second Grade, to “Chemical Magic” in Fifth Grade, just to name a few. All Mystery Science lessons also connect across other disciplines, like Literacy and Math. Students are consistently applying grade-specific scientific knowledge by designing, creating, testing, and refining different models and devices. In addition, students are asking questions, carrying out investigations, and constructing explanations on core scientific concepts.

An example of one of the lessons is in 3rd grade where students investigate the question, “How could you

make the biggest fruit in the world?” Here, students engage in civil discourse from evidence about which plants and fruits are related to one another. They sort, analyze, and compare and contrast the traits of different plants as a pattern. In a lesson in 4th grade, students explore the question, “Why is the first hill of a roller coaster always the highest?” This particular lesson concentrates on potential and kinetic energy by having students build a model of a roller coaster, carry out an investigation with marbles, and analyze data to explain the connection between height, energy, and motion. These lessons help teachers at Pinedale support Rapid City Area School’s STEAM2 initiative.

To best meet our Social Studies standards, teachers often utilize a variety of resources including: literary and leveled texts, magazines, community volunteers through Junior Achievement, digital tools, and text books. Teachers often integrate Social Studies Standards during reading and writing blocks. For example, fifth-grade students research topics related to the Revolutionary War and create a final informational essay. In fourth grade, students research well-known South Dakotans by studying the South Dakota Hall of Fame website as well as other digital resources. As a final product, they create Microsoft Sways to showcase their historical biographies.

Pinedale Elementary teachers analyze and report data using a variety of formative and summative assessments. Based on these assessments, our staff creates School Improvement goals for each core curricular area. We have focused on using growth/progress goals in order to meet all students at their zone of proximal development. Data is derived from multiple sources including: Acadience Data Management, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarking, running records, Lucy Calkins On-Demand Writing Assessments, Rapid City Area Schools Math Screener, and Investigations quizzes and end-of-unit assessments. Progress is monitored throughout the year and drives daily instructional decisions and goal-setting. All of these sources are used to address learning gaps and develop intervention groups.

Pinedale Elementary has been fortunate this year to have had the majority of students on campus with a modified 4-day school week and Friday as an E-Learning day. With the use of digital platforms such as Seesaw and Google Classroom distance learning has been implemented with fidelity and encompassed about 50 Pinedale students K-5. Instructional strategies may have varied; however, the curriculum and standards were taught with fidelity and made the transition between in-person and distance learning easier.

**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:**

Pinedale Elementary offers three special curriculum classes to its students. All students, Kindergarten through 5th grade, receive Physical Education (PE), Music and Information/Media Specialist instruction (IMS). Due to a hybrid learning schedule this year which involves the students only being on campus four days per week, each class receives PE, Music and IMS instruction for 25 minutes, twice per week. We also have created online content for each of the three special areas so that students can maintain their learning when they are at home during school closures and our E-Learning Fridays. This is a change from previous years where students would get instruction for 60-90 minutes per week. While the change has impacted the frequency in which students receive instruction, it has not diminished the quality.

The instruction in PE is based upon setting up students for lifelong healthy habits. The curriculum aligns with state and national standards and progresses in difficulty and rigor as the students advance from grade level to grade level. It begins in Kindergarten where the focus is building foundational skills, such as movement patterns, balance and coordination and continues through 5th grade where students learn how to use their skills tactfully and incorporate the mental side of athletics. There is also a big focus on fitness throughout the curriculum. This provides students with the opportunity to learn why fitness is important and

how to take care of their bodies as they continue to grow and develop. All instruction aligns with the district pacing guide, designed by PE teachers, which follows state and national standards.

There are also many musical opportunities for our students at Pinedale Elementary. All students have a general music education class twice a week. During music, students explore the elements of music, sing, and read rhythms and notes on the staff. They also play ukulele and various percussion instruments, including xylophones and drums. Yearly, students perform a Veterans Day Program, a Christmas Program, and compete in a district wide Music Memory Competition. Students in fourth grade go on a field trip to watch the Black Hills Symphony and instrumental and vocal chamber groups visit the school to perform for fifth grade students. Students at Pinedale can participate in two after school clubs for ukulele and chorus. In addition to the general music class, students can choose to be in orchestra (for fourth and fifth grades) and band in fifth grade. Both groups perform in the Christmas program and a city-wide concert in the spring.

The Pinedale library, where students receive Instructional Media Services (IMS) instruction, doubles as a media center where students are taught library standards, as well as technology standards. In IMS all students are able to spend one session per week browsing and checking out from our extensive inventory of books. Along with fostering the love of reading, IMS also offers students opportunities to master computer skills. Students learn to code and type during their time in IMS and even have an opportunity to design objects for our 3D printer. In addition, our school district has provided our libraries with STEAM materials, which have been used for project-based learning.

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

Every child's needs are at the forefront of all decisions made by the staff at Pinedale Elementary School. Pinedale is dedicated to helping all students succeed regardless of their ability, skill level, ethnic background, or socioeconomic status. Diligent efforts are made by staff to ensure students who require additional support in the areas of math, reading, writing, and behavior, as well as English Language Learners receive interventions as needed.

Three times per year, staff assess all students in the areas of math and reading using a universal screener. Once data is collected, teachers collaborate and analyze results. Based on the results, all students are placed into groups to work on specific skills and address individual student needs. Student progress is closely monitored using progress monitoring probes on a weekly or biweekly basis. Teachers differentiate their instruction based on student progress and build on skills that have been mastered by students. Research-based intervention programs such as Wonders Tier 2 Intervention, 95 Percent Group materials, Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Library Intervention, and Advantage Math Recovery are used with fidelity by trained staff.

If a student does not consistently show adequate progress, a meeting is held to discuss how to further support the student. The meeting is conducted by a team which often includes the student's parents, classroom teacher, the Intervention Specialist, Literacy Specialist, Principal, School Psychologist, School Counselor, Behavior Strategist, Special Education teacher, and any other teacher who works with the student regularly. If it is suspected that the student may have a learning disability, the Special Education team works to assess the student using Special Education assessment tools.

Students in Special Education receive the most intensive level of support by highly-qualified Special Education teachers. The Special Educators focus on meeting students' individual reading, writing and math goals. They also provide individualized accommodations in order for students to be successful in the academic setting. Students who are on an Individualized Education Plan receive support services in and out of the classroom setting. The teachers use 95 Percent Group in order to target specific phonological awareness and phonics needs of each student. They also address any behavioral or social needs. Special Educators focus on meeting needs of the whole

child in order to close academic and social gaps. Progress is regularly communicated with parents in order to foster positive relationships.

Pinedale's Behavior Strategist supports teachers in both individualized and small group instruction. In addition, teachers administer trauma-informed practices and collaborate with outside agencies to assist in the Whole Child Initiative. During individualized behavior sessions, Conscious Discipline language and techniques are utilized. Teachers continuously reflect and adjust their practices to meet students where they are, while also challenging them to move forward.

English Language Learners are immersed into classrooms and provided support services as needed. For example, one English Language student had difficulty with the literacy curriculum. The Intervention Specialist provided the student with additional literacy support until she was able to be successful in the classroom setting. Other students require further support. In these cases, the school district provides an English Language teacher for each student. The classroom teacher works closely with the English Language teacher to ensure the student's education requirements are met.

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

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

Pinedale engages and motivates students in a variety of different ways. Students' academics are supported through room transformations. We have been inspired by professional development learning opportunities where we learned to transform our classrooms in order to enhance the concepts we are studying. For example, in the fall our classrooms became a football stadium complete with football-themed activities that supported our current math unit. Science is taken to a whole new level when our students participate in our annual science fair. Students study the scientific method, conduct an experiment, and share their findings with community members. In addition, our older students participate in a variety of different STEAM activities that are offered as elective courses. In the past, students could choose between building bridges, coding, cake decorating, and geometrocity. Our younger students can participate in project-based learning. For example, students in the past built leprechaun traps, created inventions, and studied extreme weather.

In order to support students in the area of social and emotional growth, we have participated in several book studies on the topics of growth mindset and habits of leaders. After we became knowledgeable on each topic, we came up with a plan to share that knowledge with our students. Our plan for habits of leaders included a monthly focus, classroom lessons and activities, and school recognitions. We made updates to our school's environment by displaying the seven habits of highly effective people. Staff members created several murals throughout the building, and posters were hung in the restrooms as a constant reminder to our students that they all possess the habits of a leader. A similar process was used to introduce students to the growth mindset. It has since become an integral part of being a Pinedale Panther.

College and Career Readiness is promoted through classroom lessons facilitated by our guidance counselor. In addition, we coordinated a career fair where students interacted with community members who showcased their careers. A diverse career field was represented, and students were encouraged to ask questions and learn about the opportunities that await them post high school.

Even with 2020's ups and downs, we found ways to engage our students despite school closures and remote learning. Classroom teachers used Zoom to conduct morning meetings to support kids' social and emotional growth. This helped teachers stay connected to their students and students stay connected to their classmates. Students also had opportunities to participate in zoom music classes and hear books read aloud from our librarian. A highlight during our school closure was a car parade through Pinedale's neighborhood. Teachers decorated their cars and drove through the streets honking and waving at students and their families. Students lined the streets eager to catch a glimpse of their teacher's face. Seeing all their faces made us realize how much we missed being with them every day.

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

Pinedale strives to engage families and community members in a variety of ways. Our school is a traditional neighborhood school where family and community are integral to who we are. We invite parents to engage in student learning by volunteering in the classroom as reinforcement rangers, room parents, and even as substitute teachers. Pinedale's PTA engages families with activities such as Bingo Night, School Carnival, Reflections Competition, St. Patrick's Day dance, movie nights, and fun nights out as a family. Parents run our school's basketball program for third through fifth grade. Many parents also participate in Runner's Club with their children. Community members are involved in Pinedale with Junior Achievement, Rush Hockey players and Post 320 baseball players read books to our classes, and Outdoor Campus and 4H/SDSU Extensions provide outdoor experiences. Our school gets involved in the community by hosting an annual blood drive, a Veteran's Day event, and a Career Fair. Our PTA continues to build community and raise funds for school improvement and students' success through our annual craft and pie bazaar. This is a huge community event that enables us to provide programs and equipment to enrich our school.

We are fortunate to have great relationships with businesses in our community. For example, Thrivent Financial donated canvas book bags for our kindergarten through second grade students to build the home-

school connection, which is crucial for growing lifelong readers. Campbell Lending Group has supported our purchase of Dreambox, which helps us differentiate math lessons for students. Pinedale partners with McDonald's for a McTeacher night. The teachers join the staff to serve families at the local restaurant. Our PTA also hosts a fundraiser night at Culver's, where families work to raise money for Pinedale.

Covid-19 could have been detrimental to our learning environment, but our families and community members have stepped up to help our teachers continue to reach our students. Last spring our school held a teacher parade through our neighborhood to say "goodbye and we miss you" before the end of the school year. Our school utilizes ClassDojo to keep parents engaged and informed about student learning. Teachers post pictures of what students are learning in the classroom and celebrations. Parents and teachers can communicate individually about their student. Our PTA continues to involve families through fun Facebook events. Families participate at home and upload pictures to share their creations or show participation. Some activities have included ornament making, family game night, pumpkin carving, Lego building, etc. This spring the PTA got creative with a new fundraiser. Our students are participating in a Read-a-Rama to encourage reading and raise money for our school, since most of our normal fundraisers were cancelled this year.

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

The true magic that we have at Pinedale Elementary is found in the professional culture we have as a staff. Our staff strives for support, growth, and continued learning. It is because of that teamwork that we were all able to make it through one of the most intense years ever seen in education.

We as educators found ourselves transitioning to virtual teaching, it was with the support of our teams that we were able to learn new tools and techniques to educate our students. Staff members worked together to learn new platforms, tools, and strategies to engage students in an online environment. We found unique ways to support each other, such as turning our lounge into the "Zen Zone," with calming music and relaxing activities to help us take a breath and recollect when necessary. Although things were not always perfect, it was because of our teams that we were able to get through this tumultuous time.

Professional growth also looked different in the last year. Many of our staff members participated in a book study through Zoom this year. We studied *When Students Lead*. This book study was a continuation of the work we have done as a staff to learn and implement the lessons of Stephen Covey in our building. In previous years, we have studied *The Leader in Me* and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. We then worked together as a staff to develop a plan to teach the seven habits to our students and implement leadership lessons and opportunities for students.

Educational trainings have also transitioned to virtual opportunities in the past year, which gave many staff members an opportunity to participate in a training from Get Your Teach On. This company was created by the authors of *The Wild Card*. The engagement strategies taught in their trainings have helped to engage students both in the classroom and online. We are continuing our learning this spring with their Level Up virtual conferences.

There is nothing like being surrounded by people who are constant learners and strive to improve their practice daily. Our staff has 60% teachers with a master's degree. In the past five years, teachers in our building have completed trainings in Project-Based Learning, Growth Mindset, Positive Behavior Intervention Support, Conscious Discipline, and multiple book studies. When members of our staff have received professional development, they have come back to our building and shared their growth and learning with the rest of the staff, helping to make all of us better.

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

The leadership structure at Pinedale School, under the principal's guidance and participation, includes all staff members operating collaboratively to enrich the climate and culture of our learning community. For example, representatives from every grade level, as well as support staff, meet regularly on various committees to address the academic and social emotional needs of our student/staff population.

One role of the Professional Learning Committee at Pinedale (PLC) consists of collecting, analyzing, and distributing academic data to staff for the purpose of setting building goals and determining a collective and targeted action plan to improve student achievement across grade levels. Since all staff members contribute ideas, methodologies, and strategies to this process and communicate goals to their students on an on-going basis, every learner knows his/her next steps for success. We feel that our focus on frequent and timely feedback to students has been a critical piece in their overall achievement. Another task of the PLC is organizing continual professional development that focuses on best practices and building the capacity and energy of our staff and teams. Summer book studies are commonplace for our staff. Most recently we have concentrated on *Leader in Me*. Our building is now undertaking plans to intentionally design leadership opportunities for our students. This has been an exciting endeavor! In the upcoming year, we look forward to involving our Student Council representatives to a greater degree in the development and sustainability of leadership possibilities.

Another important committee at Pinedale is the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports team (PBIS). This group of teachers works collaboratively to promote positive social behavior and provide a structure of supports for staff and students. Currently, the PBIS team has been trained in Conscious Discipline and has been coaching the rest of the staff in the use of restorative practices to influence behaviors. The leadership of this dedicated team of teachers has significantly impacted our relationships with students and created a positive and healthy school climate.

In addition to these building level committees, several individuals on our staff lend their time and expertise to serve on district committees. For instance, Pinedale currently has representatives on the Writing and Math Committees, Report Card Committee, and Key Communicators Committee. We value the opportunity to join forces with other educators outside of our school to impact the curriculum, resources, and delivery systems to all the learners in the Rapid City Area School District.

Lastly, in the age of COVID, our building principal led our staff in the distribution and collection of computers to ensure all students had access to the necessary technology to maintain their learning throughout all phases of the district's COVID response plan. He also spearheaded the construction of our school re-entry plan that followed the district safety guidelines. As a staff, we tailored the district mandates to operate effectively in our unique environment. Adaptations were made to our schedules and surroundings to purposely distance students in the classroom, hallways, common areas, and entry and exit points. Additionally, each classroom teacher communicated expectations through an open house zoom prior to the start of the 2020-2021 school year, so all families were made aware of the safety protocols and could feel at ease moving forward. The school nurse and custodian have been the key staff members throughout the past two years. They have worked tirelessly to enact the protocols necessary to ensure the safety and health of all students and staff.

We are grateful to have such a positive school culture and be able to lean on one another during these challenging times! We will continue to strive for excellence year after year, no matter the circumstances.

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

One of the best ways to address our diverse cultural needs is to utilize our staff, families, and community members. For example, our school counselor is a published author and is a member of the Hunkpapa Lakota from the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. Her books carry strong messages of inclusion, building relationships, and kindness, while also incorporating Lakota language throughout each story. In addition, for the past several years as part of fourth grade's South Dakota history studies, we have held interviews and had guest speakers come in to talk to the students about personal connections to past historical events (through Zoom during the 2020-2021 school year). Some of these community participants include local tribal members and artists. In the past, we've also been fortunate to have park rangers from Mt. Rushmore come to present information on our rich Black Hills area. Another event that helps enhance our cultural awareness is the local Black Hills Pow Wow, which students in grades 3-5 attend each year.

Furthermore, we have been able to share experiences with our students recently that are rich in Japanese culture. A parent in our community, from Hiroshima, Japan, conducts a series of lessons in classrooms (or through Zoom during the 2020-2021 school year) on both origami and WWII history. Her message of worldwide peace and compassion has impacted many students at Pinedale.

In addition to our diverse cultural teaching and learning, Pinedale also participates in initiatives to help those in our community that are less fortunate. Each year, our school takes part in the “BackPack Program” through Feeding South Dakota, which helps meet the needs of children at risk of hunger by providing food during days when school is not in session. Additionally, Pinedale Elementary offers daily snacks to students in need.

Lastly, Pinedale is addressing the social and emotional needs of staff and students, particularly as the current pandemic adds to the typical stress and trauma of everyday life by implementing philosophies of Conscious Discipline. As part of our whole-child approach to learning, this additional support aims to integrate social-emotional learning along with self-regulating practices. Some practices include breathing techniques, safe spaces, and a focus on school family.



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

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The one practice that has been instrumental in our success with supporting students has been relationships. Building relationships is at the core and heart of what Pinedale Elementary is all about. We have an unwavering level of collaboration within our staff, and we share a deep desire to build authentic relationships with our students and families.

As a staff, the collaborative culture we share is invaluable. Without hesitation, teachers at Pinedale can lean on each other – as was evident in March 2020 when school suddenly closed without a chance to prepare ourselves or our students. Physically, teachers showed up. Our staff met at school the next day and immediately began envisioning the unimaginable. We delegated tasks, shared our knowledge of digital resources/online learning platforms, maintained positive attitudes, and problem solved. Mentally and emotionally, teachers showed up. Because we had a strong foundation of trust and teamwork, our attention and efforts could focus on what was best for kids in this new, unprecedented circumstance. One teacher said it best: “Our teamwork and relationship building are a way of operating that never changes. We rely on each other for resources and ways to problem solve in any challenging situation.” Our “Think Win-Win” approach allows us to utilize each other’s strengths and continue to hold high expectations for our students, while at the same time keeping our minds on the whole child. We share a drive for always doing what is best for our students, and this is the key to our success.

Both teachers and students were asked: “What has been the key to Pinedale’s success since school closures began last spring?” Below are some of the answers:

Teachers:

“Students know we care about them and the work they do.”

“Attitude. Our staff always seeks to do better, be better, and rise above.”

“The kids know we care and that we want and believe they can be successful.”

“Teamwork! We are all in this together.”

Students:

“My teachers keep me safe and happy.”

“Teachers make learning fun with enthusiasm.”

“Pinedale is a great community.”

“My teacher made me feel like everything was ok. She helped me keep trying.”