

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 52440 Eastern Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Drummond State WI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 54832-0000

County Bayfield County

Telephone (715) 739-6731 Fax (715) 739-6345

Web site/URL https://www.dasdk12.net/en-US E-mail dkaczor@dasd.k12.wi.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. Dennis Kaczor E-mail dkaczor@dasd.k12.wi.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Drummond Area School District Tel. (715) 739-6669

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

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Ms. Heather Ludzack  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The electronic signature on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

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

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

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

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

| Grade                 | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| PreK                  | 7          | 5            | 12          |
| K                     | 9          | 9            | 18          |
| 1                     | 11         | 8            | 19          |
| 2                     | 12         | 4            | 16          |
| 3                     | 18         | 9            | 27          |
| 4                     | 13         | 13           | 26          |
| 5                     | 12         | 7            | 19          |
| 6                     | 13         | 12           | 25          |
| 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> | 95         | 67           | 162         |

\*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):
- 2.5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0.6 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 4.3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 83.4 % White
  - 9.2 % 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: 11%

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   | 8             |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year | 10            |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]  | 18            |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019   | 162           |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)   | 0.11          |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100  | 11            |

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

Thai

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 46 %

Total number students who qualify: 75

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %  
19 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>4</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>1</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 25
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.  | 13                     |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.  | 3                      |
| 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. | 1                      |

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 13:1

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

| <b>Required Information</b> | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance    | 96%       | 95%       | 94%       | 94%       | 95%       |
| High school graduation rate | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        |

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

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

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

Drummond Area School District will provide a diversified, progressive, and safe environment for student success in an ever-changing 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.

Drummond Elementary began the year with three learning options to address individual and family needs during the pandemic. The options included a hybrid model (four days in-person and one day online), online-only with Drummond Elementary curriculum and teachers providing instruction, or online only using a purchased online curriculum. On November 23, after twelve weeks in this model, all hybrid model grade levels switched to online only with Drummond Elementary curriculum and teachers due to quarantine requirements for seven weeks. Drummond Elementary returned to the hybrid model of four days a week in-person on January 18 until March 1 at which time the school returned to five days a week of in-person learning.

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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Drummond Elementary School is part of a rural school district in northern Wisconsin. The elementary school, junior high, and high school are housed in one building with a total enrollment of 325 students with the elementary having 162 students. The district serves 11 towns and villages and is approximately 740 square miles in size. The Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest makes up almost half of the land in the district. Home to several popular lakes in northern Wisconsin including the Eau Claire Chain of Lakes, Lake Namekagon, and Lake Owen, the district has very high property values yet the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch district-wide is 54 percent and in the elementary school 46 percent. The majority of families with school-age children in the district are working class with modest incomes. The school is predominantly white with single-digit percentages of students of color. Most of the families live in rural settings.

The district's mission to provide a diversified, progressive, and safe environment for student success in an ever-changing world has been the guiding light in the elementary school since adopted. All efforts in the elementary school are aligned with the district's mission.

The district participates in the State of Wisconsin Achievement Gap Reduction Program. This program requires the school to create performance objectives in reading and math in grades K-3. This includes reducing the achievement gap in reading and math between low-income students in the school and students in the same grade and statewide. The program requires a school to choose one or a combination of three strategies: one-to-one tutoring provided by a licensed teacher, instructional coaching for teachers provided by a licensed teacher, or maintaining 18-1 or 30-2 classroom ratios and providing professional development on small group instruction. Drummond Elementary has chosen to pursue all three strategies.

Relationships have become a priority and the foundation to student success. Through collaborative processes utilizing teacher leaders, the school is continuously striving to improve student success and safety. Drummond Elementary is part of a district-wide process to becoming a Trauma-Sensitive School; the process was begun two years ago and is ongoing. The core values of safety, trust, choice, and collaboration are embedded in the school's Multi-level System of Support efforts. This came about due to the recognition of the increasing exposure to trauma and resulting toxic stress in children and the impacts on learning and social and emotional well-being. These efforts are changing the way the school approaches academics and social-emotional learning.

Professional learning communities have been established in grades K-2 and 3-6. Teacher-led, these groups annually identify student strengths and needs through multiple sources of student data. Teams recently adopted new English language arts and math resources across the elementary grades that are aligned with the Wisconsin Academic Standards. When reviewing resources, one of the major goals the teams had was identifying resources with high-quality research supporting effectiveness on What Works Clearinghouse. These teams also prioritized resources that had robust online components for students which became invaluable during the pandemic.

One challenge the school has faced due to the rural setting is limited community partnership opportunities. We have always made it a priority to involve the community in the school in creative and innovative ways. The school has partnered for many years with a local natural history museum that provides environmental learning programs to elementary students. These programs are very popular with students and help build an understanding and appreciation of the environment in which they live. We also maintain a relationship with the local public library by having every child get a library card and teaching children how to use the library resources.

Another partnership that has a long history of success in the district is the Pen Pal Program. A large percentage of the population of our school district is over the age of 65. Students in grades 1-5 are assigned as pen pals with one of these older adults. The program has two goals, to provide an opportunity for intergenerational relationships and to provide students the opportunity to apply writing skills in a real-life setting.

The statewide closure of schools in Wisconsin in March of 2020 due to COVID-19 fell on the Friday before spring break. Elementary teachers voluntarily came into work during spring break to transform in-person instruction to entirely virtual instruction and implemented virtual learning the following week. Drummond Elementary students already had Chromebooks through a one-to-one technology program, and we made arrangements to distribute Chromebooks to students. The district is unique in the fact that almost 100 percent of the homes in the district have high-speed internet access. Those few homes that did not were provided internet hotspots with the costs covered by the district.

Drummond Elementary School's success is based on professional commitment and development, shared mission and leadership, and recognizing relationships are the cornerstone.



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

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

Overview: This year, the elementary staff were able to identify priority standards areas and adapt instruction and assessment around the Wisconsin Priority Instructional Content in English Language Arts and Mathematics (2020-2021). This allowed targeted instruction to the most critical areas in English language arts and math.

Drummond Elementary uses the Wisconsin Multi-level System of Support model focused on ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities, high-quality instruction, and collaboration across grade levels and stakeholders to ensure systemic implementation, support shared leadership, promote a growth mindset, and use data to inform and implement instruction. Response to Intervention, a method of providing instructional interventions at increasing levels for struggling students, is used in reading and math.

A shift that has occurred this year due to COVID-19 is the increased use of technology and specifically web-based learning tools for students across the core curriculum. Supported by our one-to-one device program, these resources have been used extensively this year.

Reading/ELA: The elementary school adopted Houghton Mifflin’s Journeys (a comprehensive K-6 English language arts program) after review by a teacher-led team six years ago. This curriculum has a robust online component. Instructional practices include literacy circles, guided reading, close reading, choral reading, vocabulary instruction, fluency practice with familiar text, book buddies, and promoting student choice of reading materials. During times of virtual or hybrid instruction this year, these methods were implemented using Zoom video conferencing and virtual breakout rooms for small group instruction and collaboration. At the lower elementary level, additional strategies included audiobooks and phonological awareness. Blocks of 60 to 90 minutes at the upper elementary are devoted to reading and English language arts instruction. Assessments include grade-level curriculum-based measures as well as universal assessments including STAR Reading and the Forward Exam. Interventions include small group instruction and one-to-one instruction by classroom and reading intervention teachers. Resources used for interventions include Leveled Literacy Interventions, Barton Reading and Spelling System, and fluency and sight word instruction.

Writing instruction includes developing an understanding in students of audience, purpose, and task when writing. Modeling and practice in narrative, informational/explanatory writing, and argument/opinion writing begins in kindergarten. Additionally, we have a supplemental community correspondence writing program.

Mathematics: Eureka Math was evaluated and reviewed by a teacher-led team and recommended for implementation following the statewide closure of schools in Wisconsin in March 2020 due to COVID-19. With an online format and robust assessment tools, it has been very successful in supporting the continuity of learning this year during any disruptions. In the lower elementary grades, the focus is on developing an understanding of what mathematics is and how to do mathematics. Concepts include understanding patterns and measurement and understanding the numeration system. In the upper elementary the focus is on using knowledge to solve real-world problems. Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and the relationships between these processes are a primary focus. Students are taught multiple approaches to computation. Formative and summative assessments are critical to providing students with feedback and driving instructional practices. The elementary school has, for the last couple of years, emphasized number talks to build and reinforce student’s math vocabulary. All grade levels have this focus and there has been a measurable increase in math achievement across groups of students.

Science: Following the Wisconsin State Science Standards, the school takes a hands-on, real-world approach to instruction that actively engages students in making connections to the world around them. While we include science in English language arts instruction through the use of nonfiction reading materials, our emphasis is on an inquiry-based model of instruction and learning based on the scientific method. Activities include hatching chicks in kindergarten and grade 1, harvesting and making maple syrup in grade 4, and the NBRS 2021

study of the laws of motion in grade 6 by building cars out of recycled materials. The focus is on applying the scientific method to understanding the world around us. While formative and summative assessments are used to assess student learning and teacher effectiveness, we find more value in the experiences and discussions students have as a result of the approach we take.

Social Studies: The lower elementary grades focus on building an understanding of community, culture, and map skills. This is done by using the building connections for students to their local communities and cultures through student-led activities and discussions. Activities include both virtual and in-person field trips. Students are taught to understand and appreciate diversity. Wisconsin history, US history, and world history are covered in grades 4-6 respectively. In grade 4 there is an emphasis on Native American Tribes in our state and region. Connections to these tribes, local and state history are done through the use of artifacts from student's families and classroom visits from living history characters that include a fur trader, immigrant, and logger. In the study of US history, connections between the past and present are a focus with virtual field trips to places like the US Army Women's Museum. In grade 6, connections to the ancient world and the modern world are made as students explore the history of the world with online resources. Assessment is focused not on memorization but an understanding of connections between the past and present.

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

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

Our 4-year-old kindergarten program provides a variety of learning activities to meet the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. These standards are based on developmental continuums that go from early development through what would be considered typical for the end of kindergarten. Our curriculum includes math, language & literacy, social studies, and science, as well as social/emotional instruction and activities that aid in the development and use of fine and gross motor skills.

All learning at the preschool level is play-based and is structured to allow for meaningful assessment throughout the day. As students are engaged in learning activities, teachers work with individual students or small groups to informally assess student learning. Using the data collected through formative assessment, teachers are able to put students into learning groups to work on specific skills through songs, games, and other activities.

As a school, we have noticed the impact of early education on school readiness and success in the primary grades. While some students who have not had early education may come to kindergarten with content knowledge (letter names, numbers, etc.), they often do not have the skills or knowledge of how to be a student in a school setting (following directions, walking in line, sharing, etc.). Some indicators we have seen include greater reading readiness, stronger fine motor skills (pencil grip, cutting), and interaction with peers.

As a result of COVID, we have had to make extensive modifications to our daily routines and activities. Play-based learning activities were changed to allow for individual spacing requirements and other safety guidelines or to allow them to be done via Zoom for at-home learners. There is an increased focus on communication with families regarding the social/emotional development of their students with regard to COVID and its impacts.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Other curriculum areas play an important role in the education of our students. All Drummond Elementary students receive weekly instruction in art, music, and physical education, as well as library time/instruction.

Our visual art program is based on the philosophy that art balances the curriculum by encouraging self-expression, appreciation of aesthetics, individual creativity, and understanding past and present culture. All

elementary students receive art instruction in a wide variety of media such as crayon, paint, paper, textiles, and clay. Before COVID, this time varied from 20-45 minutes per session, based on grade level. Due to the scheduling changes that we had to adopt this year to accommodate new safety guidelines, each grade level now receives 30 minutes of art instruction, once a week.

Our music program is based largely around the Orff method, meaning that lessons are centered on experiencing musical concepts before defining them. This method also encourages students to connect a musical concept to their entire body through singing, movement, and expression. By using the Orff method, our students are prepared to learn music in a very hands-on approach, which also increases their comfort level with performances for the rest of their academic life. While COVID restrictions have required us to adapt the way we teach because of spacing issues and an increase in the cleaning and care of instruments, our students continue to enjoy the benefits of a rich music program through all grade levels. Students receive 90-135 minutes of music instruction per week, depending on grade level.

Our physical education program uses developmentally appropriate activities to help students develop and enhance both motor and social skills in three 45-minute sessions per week. Students experience a variety of physical activities, both individual and team-based. While working on physical skills is important, it is not the only focus of our program. Emphasis is placed on communication, teamwork, following directions, and cooperation. Students are often reminded that it is not about being “the best,” but rather always doing “your best.” Although the arrival of COVID has impacted the kinds of activities and/or equipment we can utilize, students work on important skills while maintaining physical distance and following other safety guidelines.

All grade levels in the elementary have a scheduled library time for 20-30 minutes per session. During this time, students may listen to a read-aloud, create artwork, do research for a class assignment, or find a book for enjoyment. Students are instructed on how to use the library computers to search for books and other materials. The library is also used as a study area for students who need extra time or a quiet place to work. The library is used by all K-12 students, which required additional planning for space and cleaning before school opened in the fall of this year. COVID restrictions have reduced the number of students allowed to be in the library at one time, as well as the procedures for checking out books.

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

To ensure all Drummond Elementary School students achieve at the highest level possible and to be at their best academically, socially, and behaviorally, we are using a multi-level support system for academics and behavior. We use Universal Assessment to identify achievement gaps and to develop strategies to address those gaps with ongoing instruction and small group instruction. Students who are determined to be “on watch” based on their universal assessment scores are placed in a Tier 1 Intervention Group with students with the same needs, with intervention delivered by the classroom teacher. Students who score in the “Intervention” and “Urgent Intervention” range receive Tier 2 or 3 Interventions from the Title I Interventionist. The settings, frequency, and student-to-teacher ratio for these interventions are based on the students’ need and their responses to the intervention. We use this support as needed schoolwide for our students. It is designed to help our students learn the skills necessary to be successful in the regular education curriculum. For students participating in the intervention, the staff is developing goals, choosing research-based interventions, and monitoring progress to determine the student’s response to intervention.

The disabled population is clearly not one-dimensional. Students with disabilities have unique and individual needs. The question to be answered is what level of support and specially designed instruction is needed to enable students to close the achievement gap. At Drummond Elementary we consider the student first and the disability second. We value the role that the families play in the student's education and involve them to the highest level possible. Early intervention is provided as soon as a student is identified as not meeting benchmarks, and if intervention is not successful special education support is considered. General education is emphasized whenever

possible. Effective general education instruction is focused on in the classroom, and supplemented with special education staff when needed. Additional time is used to pre-teach and reteach for better understanding. Content-strong staff provides interventions and support to students and staff in their areas of strength.

A large part of what we do well, not only in special education but in all areas of the Drummond Elementary School, is social-emotional support for our students. We build supportive relationships and help students learn how to manage their emotions. We strive to have a clearer understanding of the students' strengths and needs to better support them. Oftentimes this means understanding the familial background of the student. Many of our families face adversity in the way of poverty that may have lasting effects on the student. We understand that students are more likely to overcome adversity with a rigorous background in social-emotional learning. We approach students with an attitude of universal acceptance and inclusion.

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

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

One of the keys to success our school celebrates is the connections that we make with our students, in and out of the classroom. Because of our small community, we are more acutely aware of the challenges they face. This more readily allows us to pinpoint the individual needs of each student.

Our elementary school has made great strides in the implementation of calming areas, sensory pathways in school hallways to promote increased physical activity, and spaces for self-regulation. These additions play a large part in the comfort and connectivity of our students by allowing them to find a safe place when they may be feeling chaos in their lives. These enable students to be independent, understanding, regulate their own emotions, and encourages students to express them appropriately. This use of safe space creates trust between the students and how they feel about their school.

Another key component of strategies to engage students is the staff's participation in many professional development opportunities. We have participated in several peer training opportunities from our local Cooperative Educational Service Agency including, but not limited to, English-language arts training, supplemental math training, and technological advancement training. All of these courses have provided our team of teachers with creative, new ways to inspire our students to be more engaged in their education.

Like the rest of the world during this pandemic, our teachers were challenged with not only educating students while teaching online but keeping them engaged and motivated. This was, by all accounts, not an easy task. There were days when getting them in an upright position and in front of their computer was hard enough, let alone keeping them on track with state standards. We had to continually remind ourselves that their social-emotional health was as important as grades on a report card. Staff got creative with ensuring all students received an education, even if that meant an instruction packet was mailed to them because they couldn't or wouldn't engage online. We continued to offer our elementary enrichment activities including Battle of the Books, Global X, Writer's Workshop, Author Spotlight (live Zooms with Mary Amato, Kate Messner, Christine Soonvortiet), and other virtual experiences that allowed us to explore learning beyond the regular curriculum.

We succeeded in keeping our students as upbeat and positive as possible, then celebrated when we were reunited for in-person instruction this fall.

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

Activities that are aimed at involving families include an open house before the start of the fall term with teachers presenting informational sessions outlining expectations and ways parents and families can be involved. Student conferences are held to discuss student successes and needs. Communication with parents/guardians is ongoing with traditional methods of phone calls, notes, emails enhanced by the use of Google Classroom, and apps like Remind this year. Families are invited to attend concerts, Winter Carnival, Spring Track Meet, Awards Presentation, and Spelling Bee to name a few. During the challenges presented this year traditional in-person attendance has been replaced with Zoom and Google Meet use and still allows for involvement in all of the activities.

The school feels that all of the efforts to engage families are critical to the academic and emotional and social success of students. Making families aware of the academic and social expectations at each grade level provides the foundation for a partnership between families and the school. While parent/teacher conferences are part of the effort, the ongoing nature of regular communication and inclusion of families in activities in the school is critical to the success of all learners.

Rural school districts like ours are challenged in creating community partnerships due to limited opportunities. Within the district, partnerships have been developed including an ongoing educational partnership with the Cable Natural History Museum. This partnership brings a wide variety of high-quality

environmental education programming to our students each year. This year, the partnership has been creative and used Zoom and Google Meet tools to deliver the same programming. While the hands-on nature of the activities is missing, the quality of the opportunities remains.

The local public library partners with the district to provide programming and teaches children how to use their facilities. Students are invited to get a library card and check out books and other library resources.

The four-year-old kindergarten partners with the Cable Area Homemakers in the Wisconsin Bookworm Program. The program provides early reading experiences to children and free books. Each month volunteers read books to children and engage in activities that develop a love of books in children. Conditions this year have required volunteers to use Zoom to read and work with children.

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

Professional culture is an area where we shine as an elementary school. While this team is years in the making, we feel that we are more successful than ever. We instituted Professional Learning Communities many years ago. We choose topics of importance based on student data and needs. One example is Fluency Without Fear: Research Evidence on the Best Ways to Learn Math Facts, an article from YouCubed.org that focused on strategies for teaching math fluency as it relates to learning facts. Many of our weekly meetings focus on how to successfully introduce new concepts into the classroom, sharing our successes so they could be implemented by other teachers.

Two years ago, a team made up of staff was selected to plan in-service training for our district professionals. Our Mathematics Best Practices Team developed in-service training for the elementary staff. The team created goals for improving math education in our schools. Then our elementary teachers designed mini-training sessions to present to our district staff. Part of our success was realizing that our most experienced teachers, with valuable wisdom, were within our building. Utilizing their knowledge was helpful to the entire staff. We have had Adverse Childhood Experiences Training, Trauma Sensitive Training, and even had teacher-led professional development on John Hattie's factors influencing student achievement. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

When the pandemic hit, we met with our elementary team to discuss expectations for learning in a virtual classroom. We Zoomed in bi-weekly to share new skills as we discovered them. Then as the summer of 2020 grew to a close, we realized the ties we developed with our team got even stronger. During our time together in the last several months, we understood how invaluable our weekly discussions were, both on a professional and personal level. This year we utilized a messaging site where we can ask questions, share information, successes, and fears.

This year, our Trauma-Sensitive Team led the implementation of an initiative to identify relationships teachers have with every student in our school, leading to identifying those who may slip through the cracks. There has also been a focus on self-care. Each month we have a challenge that allows us to focus on taking care of ourselves during the stress of in-home and in-person learning.

Finally, we have an administrator who focuses on encouraging teachers to be leaders and spends his time trying to provide whatever we need, whether it be resources or time to be the best educators we can be.

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

One person serves as the District Administrator, Elementary Principal, and Director of Pupil Services. He believes in "Shared Leadership" in the elementary school and has supported the development of teacher leaders through the lens of professional learning communities across all grade levels of the elementary school. He has empowered teachers to choose curriculum, design instruction, develop building-wide expectations, and facilitate relationships with families in the community. This shared leadership model is founded on a shared vision, collaborative participation in focused learning communities, data-driven decision making, reflective practices, and focus on student well-being and achievement.

The immense honor of being nominated for the National Blue Ribbon School Award would not be possible

without his leadership. He guides our staff by empowering us to make decisions to best educate our students. Being an encouraging leader, he assists the staff when asked, and proves he has confidence in us to do our part in making the school run effectively and efficiently. All of this is accomplished with emotional energy not very often exemplified by the head of an elementary school. He is not simply a leader of his school, but the heart of it. He knows every student and their families, which under the circumstances we have found ourselves in, has proven invaluable.

Our community was hit extremely hard due to the number of families already suffering from poverty. First and foremost was the health and well-being of the students in our care. Just because they were not physically with us, did not mean they should feel alone and scared. With guidance from our administrator the school set to work getting every student fed, and online to see their teachers the first day after spring break. Unlike most schools in our nation, there was no time lost whatsoever; within a couple of days, the school was running like clockwork.

Throughout the summer, our principal worked relentlessly to adapt to the ever-changing tides of the epidemic. He has shown us that the health and welfare of the staff are paramount in the education of the students in our care. Protocols were put into place to ensure both students and staff were as safe as possible under the circumstances. Like every school, we encountered a community extremely divided in its response to COVID-19. Our principal saw to it that each of the needs was addressed to the best of his abilities, ranging from students in school all of the time, to those who were virtual learners, and hybrid in between.

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

The Drummond Elementary School in itself does not have a diverse student population with less than 10% identifying as a minority. We do, however, have extremely high income-inequity which lends itself to specific challenges. Forty-six percent of our students are living in families of poverty. This goes hand in hand with a great many single-parent homes, and children being raised by grandparents. Drummond prides itself on meeting the needs of these families with a great number of resources and supportive practices.

First of all, the staff must work as a team. Having clear collaboration with each other as well as the school's counselor and administration is necessary for getting services to students. It all starts with a positive and inclusive classroom environment. Early relationship building and having deep empathy are paramount in building the trust necessary to reach this population. Each teacher makes it a priority to get to know their students, and the families as well. This ensures that when a family needs assistance, they are not afraid to approach us.

The staff also makes certain to have the highest level of expectations for all our students. Often lives at home can disrupt the best intentions when it comes to homework, and staff has an eye on those who struggle with these ongoing problems. Sometimes it is important to focus on social-emotional well-being and less on completed work. We offer culturally responsive practices to those who are at risk. We watch out for those who need necessities including food, snacks, and clothing, and discreetly provide it for them. Our programs such as Writer's Workshop, Battle of the Books, and the Spelling Bee, are encouraged to give every learner high exposure to many activities.

When COVID-19 struck the nation, Drummond was in action immediately ensuring all children had food and access to technology for virtual learning. Many of our families did not have internet access. We made certain access was provided to every family and where it wasn't possible, hot spots were offered free of charge. Vehicles made rounds daily to deliver meals as well as books and supplies to every student in our district. Some students with special needs continued coming into school to receive services.

In a small school, with a tight-knit community, we watch out for each other. This is never exemplified more than in Drummond School.



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

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Research has shown that the building of positive relationships is one of the most important factors in student success. Students who feel safe and supported are more likely to remain in school and take more responsibility for their own learning. As a school in a high-poverty area, we know that our students have the best chance at success if we connect with them and keep them engaged.

Like educators everywhere, we were caught by surprise when we were told that we were going into virtual learning in March 2020. That last “normal” afternoon, we put the students on the buses, waved goodbye, and told them that we would see them after Spring Break. That evening, when we got the email informing us that our governor had issued an order temporarily closing schools, we had no idea of the journey we were about to take together.

As a small faculty, we rely on one another for both professional and emotional support and enjoy a camaraderie that develops through the experiences we share each school year. These professional relationships were vital in the spring of 2020 when we were forced to educate our students remotely. We turned to one another for emotional support as we struggled with learning how to provide a virtual education with no training or experience, while simultaneously processing everything that was lost when the school year ended so abruptly. We spent many hours sharing ideas, giving and receiving advice, and developing a plan for finishing the school year. We agreed very early on that our most important job throughout the duration of remote learning had to be maintaining the relationships we had built with our students up to that point. The important learning that still needed to be done would only happen if we stayed connected with our students and if they knew that we cared for every one of them. This continued to be our focus as we moved into the 2020-21 school year.

Building positive relationships with our students means focusing on more than academics. It may mean taking extra time each day with a student whose only safe place is within the walls of our school. Forming and nurturing strong and positive relationships is the thing that makes our school what it is.