

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 210 North Linden Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Coloma State WI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 54930-9616

County Waushara County

Telephone (715) 228-2851 Fax (715) 228-2860

Web site/URL https://www.westfield.k12.wi.us/ E-mail chase.gildenzoph@westfieldpioneers.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Bob Meicher E-mail bob.meicher@westfieldpioneers.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Westfield School District Tel. (608) 296-2141

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. Mark McCartney
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

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

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

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

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	6	4	10
K	4	6	10
1	7	10	17
2	10	7	17
3	5	6	11
4	9	12	21
5	5	14	19
6	9	4	13
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	55	63	118

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 92.5 % White
 - 2.5 % 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: 21%

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

There is a migrant farming camp located in the Westfield School District. Student from these families attend Coloma Elementary and when their farming season is over they move to different portions of the United States.

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	101
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.21
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	21

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41 %

Total number students who qualify: 48

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
9 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>7</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: 5
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	8
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.	1
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 14:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

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

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

Coloma Elementary is dedicated to developing their students into responsible citizens, preparing them to reach their full potential and to become lifelong learners.

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.

Coloma Elementary has continued to operate in an open as usual environment. When necessary our school has had to transition to virtually learning when certain classrooms have had to quarantine due to COVID-19. The Westfield School District does offer a synchronous remote learning option for students. These students are taught by one grade level teacher within the Westfield School District.

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

What is now named Coloma Elementary School was originally established in 1920 as the Coloma Union Free High School District servicing Coloma area students in first through twelfth grade. In 1957, the villages of Coloma, Westfield, Oxford, unified to form what is now the school district of Westfield. The current Coloma Elementary building was built in 1962 and is one of three elementary schools in the school district of Westfield, Wisconsin - home of the Pioneers!

With a population of 418, Coloma is a small rural community in central Wisconsin. Coloma Elementary services 118 students in grades four-year old kindergarten through sixth grade. We have students attend from not only in town, but also its surrounding townships. We have a strong working-class community where the effort and quality of work is highly valued. These values are passed on to the students who attend Coloma Elementary, and it shows in their everyday schoolwork. There is a unique dynamic within Coloma due to the history that is embedded within the school. Historically the majority of students were from small, family-owned dairy farms. Today, fewer and much larger farms prevail, but the historic work ethic remains strong. There are many veteran teachers that are now teaching the children of former students, creating a deeper connection with family and staff.

A key strategy used at Coloma Elementary to help students to develop to their full potential is to maintain the strong connection our school has with our families. This all begins with the morning greeting that our students receive as they board the bus or arrive at school by other means. Students are routinely greeted by their teachers, school secretary, school cook, and the principal. Prior to COVID-19, students and parents could enter the building together and again be greeted by classroom teachers. This allowed the students and families to create a greater bond and build an understanding of what was to be expected on both ends. This year, with COVID-19, our warm greetings are now expressed through winks and waves as families approach the building. By diversifying our communication methods through phone calls, texting, emails and video conferences, we have continued to maintain the high level of academic and behavior support we have come to expect. The strong bonds that were created prior to COVID-19 have helped with this transition and dependability on both sides.

COVID-19 has reinforced our school's focus on building strong relationships with our students and their families. As a district we chose to have in person learning five days a week from the start of the year with a synchronous virtual learning option for families that were not ready to return. We are focusing on helping to provide the necessary support and resources families need in order to be successful during a physical closure due to a COVID-19 exposure. The staff at Coloma Elementary has taken great pride in continuing to meet the social emotional needs of our students first, all while providing a strong virtual learning environment. COVID-19 has made us all appreciate our in-person time with our students even more than before.

Recognizing student accomplishments is another key component of Coloma Elementary. The students pride themselves on their success and efforts within the classroom, academically and socially. Students are recognized through honor roll, quarterly attendance awards, and most recently, positive office referrals. The referrals encourage teachers to showcase a positive behavior displayed by a student and share it with the principal and the student's family. This engagement strengthens the relationship between students, staff, and families.

At Coloma Elementary, we continue to use a variety of student assessment data and weekly team meetings to help meet the needs of our students. During the team meetings, the Title I teacher and the classroom teachers meet to review student progress, as well as past and current interventions. The team is then able to build on successful modes of instruction and whether adjustments may need to be made. These conversations allow the staff at Coloma Elementary to continue to grow and develop professionally while continuing to close achievement gaps.

A unique attribute of Coloma Elementary is that we are the home to the school district of Westfield School Forest. Obtained from a community member in 1954, the 40-acre forest contains over 30,000 pine trees hand planted by students. The sixth grade students are avid users of the school forest, using this resource in all

areas of their curriculum, specifically heightening their real life understanding of the area of science. The school forest has not only been used as a resource for educational purposes, but also for community-building activities. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) has recently begun their Fall Fest activities utilizing the school forest and its amenities for a fun family bonding experience.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

At Coloma Elementary we have been in-person five days a week since the start of the school year, only transitioning to a remote learning environment when a COVID-19 exposure has occurred. To prepare for this we spent a considerable amount of time this school year teaching our students how to utilize their Chromebooks. This was also vital for our virtual students that were learning synchronously. As a district, this is our first year with a one-to-one technology initiative. All students in the district have a Chromebook and have access to their teacher's Google Classroom. All teachers in the district now have a Google Classroom and the ability to access all digital resources for each curriculum and materials they would need in the event of a closure. Students had to be taught how to access their Google Classroom and also proper online etiquette in a virtual meeting. Spending the time teaching students how to utilize their devices has been a key component of our success during a closure. All materials are posted in an editable form or can be turned into an editable assignment. This has been a vital component for our online teaching to allow students to continue to work on assessments without the need to send papers back and forth. One of the biggest changes we have had to make in order to be successful with online learning is adjusting the pacing of our lessons. To keep students engaged during remote instruction we have had to take an even more tiered approach to exposing students to new content in order to keep students actively engaged. Students also have access to a wide variety of books online to help supplement their reading in case of a closure.

As a district we utilize a common curriculum across all grade levels and subject areas to provide a consistent sequence of instruction that is taught with fidelity. The curriculums include: Journeys, Raz-Kids, Springboard ELA, Math Expressions, and Science Fusion. Our reading and math curriculum are aligned to address Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and our science and social Studies curriculums are aligned to address the Wisconsin Academic Standards. Guided reading is also an added portion outside of our reading block to further help students with their oral reading fluency and comprehension skills. Teachers are able to refine their questioning and discussion techniques instead of having to find multiple resources to address the CCSS and Wisconsin Academic Standards.

We use a variety of informal and formal assessments to make adjustments to our in class instruction to best meet the needs of our students and adjust our instruction during our intervention block. The summative assessments we use are: Star Early Literacy assessment, Star Reading assessment, Star Math assessment, Fountas and Pinnell benchmarking, and our unit tests for all subjects. After giving these assessments, the data are reviewed to pinpoint what standards our students may be struggling with. These standards will then be retaught to students by the classroom teacher or possibly the Title I teacher. The standards are then reinforced by our personalized learning tool, MobyMax, which is adaptive for each student. This program also allows us to provide enrichment for students also. Weekly team meetings allow staff to review assessment data with one another to offer suggestions on student programming also.

Our reading block is built upon direct instruction through discussion and in class activities. The curriculum is differentiated throughout each lesson to help meet the needs of our students. Essential standards are taught to the class and reinforced throughout the weekly lesson.

Our math block is built upon inquiry-based learning. Students are exposed to building strong number sense, algebraic thinking, geometry concepts, and problem solving techniques. Each lesson begins with an essential question that is taught and assessed through our homework or quick quizzes. The teacher is able to review the assessments and adjust their instruction accordingly to meet the needs of our students.

As a district we chose to vertically align our science curriculum from kindergarten to twelfth grade. This allowed us to pull select units from each grade level in order to study standards more in depth. Students explore these units through in class discussion and exploration based learning. Students are assessed with their unit tests and analyzed by the classroom teacher.

In our social studies block, students are exposed to a variety of topics with digital support embedded in the online portion of the curriculum. Students are able to write and annotate directly on the articles to continue

to support the teaching of comprehension reading skills. Students engage in meaningful and friendly discussions while also being exposed to primary sources. Students are assessed through the online assessment portal each week and the data is analyzed by each classroom teacher to inform instruction.

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

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

The four-year old kindergarten (4K) program focuses heavily on kindergarten readiness. Using the Big Day for PreK curriculum by Houghton Mifflin, the materials included encourage emergent reading skills, number sense, and self-help skills to prepare the students for their upcoming years in school. This curriculum is aligned with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) in efforts to foster developmentally appropriate instruction for the students in the 4K program. Students are presented with resources and activities to strengthen phonics knowledge, providing them the tools and essential skills they will need for their future journey in K-12. As the expectations for literacy knowledge rises for kindergarten students and beyond, the academic rigor within the 4K program has increased to ensure students are readily prepared for the transition to kindergarten.

Our 4K program has met in person since the start of the school year. Due to the challenges posed by COVID-19, the students have developed an increased sense of independence within their learning communities. Previously, the 4K students worked closely in groups, using classmates to assist and motivate each other to succeed in games and activities. Currently, the students work more independently than ever, focusing on 1:1 activities with a teacher or aide. As a result of the restrictions, the students' contact with their classmates has been limited, but that has not hindered the interactions or the quality of these connections. The students continue to form relationships with their peers in the form of drawing pictures, writing letters, and displaying their achievements within the classroom. With the COVID-19 restrictions in place, we have altered our instruction to allow our students to independently succeed on their coursework, while still keeping the students connected. This has consisted of integrating more at-home engagement for parents and students, including providing online learning games and individual academic games and activities for students to use in their home.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students in grades kindergarten through sixth grade rotate through physical education, art, music, and library media studies spending forty-five minutes of each school day with one of these specialist teachers. To adapt to COVID-19, five minutes of passing time was put in between each class period to allow teachers to sanitize surfaces and to eliminate hallway congestion between grade levels.

In art, art history is used as a jumping off point for creative prompts to expose students to a variety of different cultures, historical perspectives, and creative practices from around the world. Students practice critical thinking to describe and analyze historical and contemporary artworks from a variety of sources, in order to make interpretations that inform their practice and decision-making processes when creating and writing about their art. Additionally, students apply practical math skills and algebraic thinking working with measurement, shape, form, and pattern in art. To adapt to COVID-19 cleaning regimens were used to clean all art supplies and supplies were not shared between students.

Students in music are working toward an appreciation of all music. By sampling many different kinds of music from different genres, time periods, and parts of the world, students are gaining a diverse knowledge of not only music, but different cultures. In music class, students work on listening skills and how to be a good audience member. Students are developing confidence that they can carry over into many other life aspects. Finally, students are working on perseverance, because every expert was once a beginner! Music has had to adapt to be successful during COVID-19. Instead of teaching in the music classroom, students are spaced out in the bleachers in the gymnasium. Students do not get to play as many instruments this year due to the harshness of the chemicals on the expensive equipment. Even games and dancing have been modified

to allow for physical distancing.

Our library curriculum exposes students to a wide variety of texts and genres through a read-aloud. Through the read-aloud students are asked comprehension and prediction questions to help keep the students engaged and also reinforce the reading strategies they are learning in their classrooms. Students are allowed to explore the library in groups and pick out a book that best suits their interests and ability level. We have had to make adjustments due to COVID-19. Students are more spaced out within the library, returned books are held for a longer period of time before being put back into circulation, and the librarian has had to pull more books options for students to eliminate more surfacing having to be cleaned.

Physical education students are provided weekly opportunities to challenge themselves physically, as well as mentally and socially. Character education and development are a large part of the curriculum. Students participate in a variety of activities that require problem solving, strategic planning, and multiple forms of communication. Another part of the physical education curriculum introduces life skills to students; these are activities students can participate in throughout their lifetime and without an entire group of classmates and/or specialized physical education equipment. Some activities, such as hockey and rollerblading, were not a part of the regular curriculum this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. There have been many adjustments made due to these restrictions, including increased spacing during warm-up and group discussion time, as well as limiting equipment usage and additional cleaning and sanitizing before and after each physical education class.

3. Academic Supports:

At Coloma Elementary, teachers begin the school year assessing every child in early literacy, phonemic awareness, phonics, reading skills, and math skills, which allows us to tailor our instruction to meet the needs and strengths of our students. We utilize the Star Early Literacy, Star Reading, and Star Math assessments to plan individualized and group instruction to meet the needs of our diverse learners. Classroom teachers also administer the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System and assess students on their knowledge of high frequency words to identify students' instructional and independent reading levels. Our Title I teacher will administer further assessments to students who test below benchmark, utilizing the Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites (PRESS) assessment to further identify learning needs.

Teachers hold students to high academic expectations while differentiating instruction based on student needs. Our approach to instruction begins with whole group teacher modeling and support, and transitions through a gradual release of responsibility to the students. Small group classroom instruction is used for daily intervention and extension. Regardless of whether a student is learning in person or remotely they receive the same services through our coordination of our intervention blocks and synchronous instruction. This has been key to our success with students learning remotely.

Students performing above and below grade level in math and reading receive extra support from the classroom teacher, the school paraprofessional, and the personalized learning tool MobyMax during our intervention block, the program helps identify and close learning gaps for students performing below grade level and provides further enrichment for students performing above grade level. Classroom teachers modify curriculum and instruction while our paraprofessional uses research-based strategies to help students master standards and extend learning opportunities. Teachers also meet with small groups of students to enhance learning or perform tier 1 interventions and students in need of tier 2 and 3 interventions work with our Title I teacher or paraprofessional.

All interventions are research-based and are discussed at our team meetings, where we collaborate and plan instruction. Team meetings focus on discussing the whole child by reviewing their

formative assessment data, social/emotional wellness, and home life. The staff work together to ensure the students have access to all the materials they need to be successful, whether it be books at their reading level or food on the weekend. We never stop working to provide for our students.

If a student is not making sufficient progress to close their achievement gap from a specific intervention, teachers will collaborate and make adjustments. Kindergarten through second teachers are trained in Early Reading Empowerment (ERE) and use the practices of Marie Clay to develop confident, independent, and strategic readers. Teachers have been trained by a Houghton Mifflin math expert to understand the framework of mathematical knowledge. We now go back to previous foundational skills and build upon the student's understanding from that point.

Special education services for students in speech and language, occupational therapy, and physical therapy are provided at Coloma Elementary. The working relationship between classroom teachers and specialists allows for targeted services that are most beneficial to the child.

We are fortunate to have a migrant population which adds culture to our school. We have English Language Learning support to help these students transition to our school and aid in school-to-home communication. Once beginning of the year assessments are completed, if migrant students' show they are in need of additional support, they are grouped with other students who need the same skill-based intervention. While these students are here for approximately six weeks, we strive to help them grow just as we would students who are with us for the entire academic year.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Coloma Elementary utilizes a wide variety of strategies to engage, motivate, and provide students with a positive environment that supports the whole child. As students arrive at school, they are greeted by their staff members with a heart-warming welcome. As they are addressed by name, students feel connected to their teachers and welcomed before starting their day. During the school day, students' correct behavior is rewarded by receiving positive referrals issued by teachers, resulting in students being routed to the principal for personal affirmation. The principal is a common presence within the classroom, becoming a familiar and encouraging face for the students each day. Teachers also take the time to write students positive postcards that are mailed home to the students and their families further strengthening their relationship.

We have established a strong learning culture within our building. This began by universally implementing Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, Success (CHAMPS), a behavior management system. CHAMPS provides students a clear set of expectations, a consistent learning environment, and the tools necessary to be engaged during every lesson. A lesson learned from COVID-19 was the need to teach our students how to properly use technology in the event of a closure. In order to ease the stress of the virtual classroom on students and their families, students needed to be prepared to adjust to our ever-changing environment. Our technology integration specialist created a website that educated our families on the programs our students would use virtually, and our families have complimented us on how much this has helped when a transition to virtual learning was necessary.

As a district, we chose five day in-person learning along with an asynchronous virtual learning option for our families. When weighing the emotional, social, and academic needs of our students, we knew that having a safe in-person learning environment would be vital to our success. To make this possible, the staff and students have committed to taking the proper precautions such as: social distancing, hand washing, sanitizing, and enhanced cleaning. We have received compliments from families, community members, and substitute teachers about our commitment to meeting the needs of our students during the pandemic, and these compliments are shared with our students so they can feel the same pride and support our staff has felt all school year.

When remote learning became necessary due to a closure, we focused on the less is more when creating our virtual lessons. Materials were broken down into smaller learning targets and small group instruction as to not overwhelm all the students and staff. This helped to keep students engaged and their workload manageable.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

By involving families, community members and educational partners in school functions and activities throughout the year, we have created a learning culture in which students are inspired and self-motivated. Our students feel a sense of belonging and family, and take ownership of their school, community and subsequently, their academic success. Involved families and educational partners link school and community, ultimately promoting the health, social emotional, and intellectual development of our children.

Recognizing the lack of children's academic progress and the link to hunger, our local food pantry has worked diligently to support the nutritional needs of our students both in and out of school. Each week, selected families are supplied with supplemental food pantry items. This program continued through school closures with no-contact drop off, and pick up services where families received pantry, produce, and frozen food items when they picked up weekly meals provided by the school. Many of these items were donated by local farms and businesses including: Brakebush Foods, Dollar General, and Flyte's Family Farm.

Our annual PTO events, including a back-to-school barbeque, Fall Fest, and the Spring Carnival, provide food, fun, and games for students, staff, and families. These events promote social interaction between staff

and families allowing them to continue to build relationships outside the classroom setting. Generous donations from local families and businesses make these events possible. Throughout the school year, students interact with community members during special events like Veteran's Day, May Day, and Valentine's Day by creating unique keepsakes to give.

During the COVID shutdown, staff made several hilarious, but impactful videos to share with families to reassure they were not struggling alone. Weekly check-ins were held with families to offer support to parents and students struggling with the pandemic-forced shutdown, and teachers made contactless deliveries of school supplies as they continued to maintain and build upon established rapport with families. The Coloma Public Library provided contactless pick-up of books and resources to families throughout the pandemic. This was exceptionally helpful during the spring and summer months when families expressed concerns of feeling restricted and vulnerable.

A very unique opportunity was embraced by our district administration when staff members were allowed a bus trip to culminate the school year to stop at the home or daycare of every Coloma Elementary student. Real tears and virtual hugs were shared as students and their families said goodbye to the 2019-2020 school year!

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Well before COVID-19, many teachers were already working hard to deepen our knowledge of technological developments in education. This included attending events like Google summit, and other professional development training sessions in our district. From these events, teachers became resources for other educators, assisting each other with incorporating this new technology into their own classrooms. This included a professional development day where staff had the opportunity to deepen their skills on various technology applications. We were using Google Classroom and other Google apps before it became necessary.

A few years ago we hired a technology integration coach to assist us with this journey. Miraculously, our district recognized the need for one-to-one Chromebooks for our student body, and they purchased these as well, even before the pandemic hit and need for distance learning arose. Our technology department saw the need and direction we were going and took us to the next level.

COVID-19 was a devastating surprise, but thanks to our technological advancements and our previous professional development, we were prepared. Immediately after in-person school closure, students were sent their Chromebooks and school supplies. Conversations amongst staff members during this time continued seamlessly via virtual means. Our school board recognized the needs of our students and community. Administrators took these needs to our technology department and we all worked together to solve internet issues our families across the district were having.

During this school year, as we experience the prolonged effects of this pandemic, we have continued to grow as professionals via virtual meetings. Our students are both in-person and virtual, but we work simultaneously as one collective school and learning unit. Neither in-person nor virtual students are behind the other; instead of losing resources, we have gained a virtual campus. Teachers have continuously improved their Google Classrooms skills as well, getting comfortable with the programs.

Technology aside, the true heart of our school is the compassion and caring this community of educators has for one another. There is no hierarchy within how we treat one another; the principal works with first year teachers as if they were tenured professionals. Educators share ideas with each other about life inside and outside of the classroom while eating lunch together. Collaboration and communication occurs via in-person conversations, text, email, phone call, virtual conference, and more. At Coloma Elementary, all staff members are valued for who they are, inside and outside of the classroom.

4. School Leadership:

The principal at Coloma Elementary believes that students and staff will rise to the level of expectations of their leaders. The Westfield School District has always prided itself on setting the highest standards for all our staff and students academically, professionally, and behaviorally. This begins by our commitment to helping students meet grade level standards and if they are unable to do so, finding the ways to help them continue to learn and grow academically. Staff are held to high standards just as much as our students. The principal continues to model and research best practices to help ensure that staff is properly trained and capable of helping students.

The principal believes in recognizing hard work and positive behavior. Staff members can receive “Pioneer Awards” that recognize their various efforts going above and beyond to help our building. Students have the opportunity to receive positive office referrals that allow them to be recognized by the principal for their behaviors, academics, or for fostering grit. All of these practices continued even during COVID-19 closures.

At Coloma Elementary, the leadership roles are shared between the building principal and lead teacher. The principal is half time between another elementary school in the district and the lead teacher serves in an administrative role when the principal is not present. Committees are formed to plan various events throughout the school year and also to work with different groups of students. The principal works with all committees, serving on some directly. Staff members are a part of different committees and have direct input into the structure of how our school is run. It is through this shared leadership and responsibility that our school continues to grow not only academically but also professionally.

During COVID-19, the administrative team has worked together to keep our schools safe and functioning by utilizing a variety of safety methods and precautions. Over the summer, we formed a district-wide committee of teachers and administrators to help plan for the upcoming school year. This committee helped to address common questions and concerns before staff returned at in-service. The administrative team has reassigned staff and adjusted schedules to help limit crossover amongst staff members. The principal works directly with teachers that have been teaching remotely to help problem solve technology or curriculum issues as they arise. Strict cleaning regimes have been implemented within our building in order to combat the spread of COVID-19, resulting in a safe learning environment for our students.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At Coloma Elementary we look to provide an inclusive learning environment for all students. Diversity is promoted not only within our curriculums but also celebrated by our school. Different cultures and beliefs are discussed in all classrooms in an open and comforting manner. The staff are conscientious of supporting our diverse learners in order for them to be successful throughout their educational career.

As a district, we are able to help our students that come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds through our Pioneer Pantry. Established by our district in 2015 to help support the needs of our students, the Pioneer Pantry has become a resource for all students in our district. The Pioneer Pantry helps to provide food, toiletries, and clothing to our students in need. This has become an invaluable resource across our district to combat the inability for some of our students to have access to these necessities.

Coloma Elementary is home to a seasonal migrant population. Each year, students and their families arrive in the summer to work, and stay through the beginning of October. Coloma Elementary staff take great care to ensure that these students are welcomed back each year and equipped to begin the academic year. To welcome these students, our district social worker travels to their homes each summer to deliver school supplies, complete paperwork, and ensure that they are aware of important dates and other information. Our social worker speaks Spanish, so she is able to welcome and assist these parents in their home language. Additionally, the school social worker works with each child’s teacher to make them aware of the communication needs of the family. Staff are strongly encouraged to send notes home in Spanish or contact the social worker

in order to communicate needs verbally.

Recent national events have caused some Hispanic families concerns regarding xenophobia, citizenship status, and safety and security. Thanks to a relationship with families that spans over a decade, our school social worker was able to address their concerns candidly and reassure worried families that our school's focus is on their well-being and education. The school social works to provide that all basic needs are met before our families start school which include: proper registration, providing clothing, language translations, and providing all necessary school supplies. A trusting relationship is critical during challenging times. The small Coloma Elementary community atmosphere has been able to nurture that trust with caring staff who knows each family very well. Most of our teachers have served the same families for years.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At Coloma Elementary the one practice that has been most instrumental to continually and successfully educate our students is the relationships that have been formed between the staff, students, and families. Regardless of the grade level, each staff member is able to discuss any student in the building. This begins with our teachers forming a community within their classroom throughout the school year. Staff know the progress that each student has made both academically and socially. Teachers are also able to offer suggestions on what they feel will help each child be successful. Each staff member has confidence in one another to continue to build upon the growth made by each student with the previous teacher. During the closure, these relationships became stronger through discussions on how we could best meet the needs of our families while we were not physically present at school.

The staff at Coloma Elementary have always prided themselves on caring for their students and families, even when they are not in the building. When the school closures began, the first thing our administrators decided to do was have teachers reach out to their students' families to see how they were doing mentally and emotionally. In order to bring school to our families, we needed to make sure their basic needs were being met first. Our families were able to be honest with our staff because of the trust that has been established over many years. Only by meeting our students' basic needs were we able to be successful.

As a staff we have had to remain flexible when working with our families remotely. Weekly communication with families helped to keep an open dialogue between our staff and families. Staff reached out to families to ask them what was working and where we could improve. Adjustments we have made include: sending home paper products when online materials could not be accessed, researching new technology tools that could help students, and working with smaller groups of students when a large group became overwhelming virtually. Staff taking the time to adjust their schedules almost daily in order to meet the needs of their students was truly outstanding. At Coloma Elementary, we pride ourselves on meeting students where they are at in order to help them reach their full potential.