

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

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

School Mailing Address 1351 Dayton Street P.O. Box 849  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Ranchester State WY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 82839-0000

County Sheridan

Telephone (307) 655-2206 Fax (307) 655-2447

Web site/URL https://www.sheridan.k12.wy.us/6/Home E-mail agriffin@sheridan.k12.wy.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. Pete Kilbride E-mail pkilbride@sheridan.k12.wy.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Sheridan County School District #1 Tel. (307) 655-9541

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

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

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

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

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	22	25	47
1	23	15	38
2	17	11	28
3	20	19	39
4	23	21	44
5	22	21	43
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	127	112	239

\*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):
- 6 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 0.1 % Black or African American
  - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 91.8 % White
  - 0 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 6%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	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	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	14
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	235
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Native American, Spanish, Filipino, Chinese

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 32 %

Total number students who qualify: 76

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %

36 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>2</u> Autism                  | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>16</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4

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.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	96%	96%	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.

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

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

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

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

Our mission is to "Teach, Reach and Enrich, All." We believe in educating the whole child and live the Professional Learning Community model.

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.

We offered a virtual option but have been fully open for the 2020-21 school year. Classroom teachers monitored online students on the Acellus program while also teaching the remainder of the students in person. We followed our District Smart Start Plan, increased sanitation and cleanliness protocols, practiced social distancing and followed the mask mandate. Students who were quarantined at various points throughout the year were brought in for lessons via Zoom or Google Meet in order to maintain learning and relationships. Ten students chose the virtual option at the beginning of the year but following spring break, all but one returned to in person instruction. Teachers were not penalized in terms of leave days if they were quarantined and often taught virtually with a substitute in the classroom. We have maintained in person instruction the entire school year.

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

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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We consider ourselves “One Big Family” at Tongue River Elementary School (TRE) and live our vision which is ‘to be known for both our academics and our kindness.’ Each Thursday we stand and sing our TRE song as a whole school in celebration of each member of our TRE Family. At TRE, we build relationships in so many ways and have a strong belief in our mission to ‘Teach, Reach and Enrich, ALL!’ Every child deserves the very best education and support. We pride ourselves in the culture that has been created by students, staff, and our community partnerships. Our students come from a variety of backgrounds, and we have a mixture of both high and low socioeconomic status. We are a rural, agricultural community and hover near 35% free and reduced lunch each year. Due to the makeup of our community, we are a Title I school and provide extra interventions to meet the needs of each unique child. We have a four day school week and utilize our Fridays to create professional development that meets the needs of our students. We live by the PLC (Professional Learning Community) Model and all staff members are involved in a variety of ways to ensure student needs are met. We have collaborative time built into the schedule and are intentional about scheduling time for both intervention and enrichment throughout all grade levels. School wide, teachers hold mini classroom celebrations after meeting academic goals. Both in and out of our building, we have built a community of kindness and acceptance and work tirelessly to educate the whole child.

We build very strong, intentional, relationships in a variety of ways and firmly believe in the Love and Logic Model. We show support for students by doing things like having each staff member take the time to sign a personal birthday card for each student. They receive this in the mail the month of their birthday. What we call Family Time is built into the schedule so all students get access to our social emotional curriculum and teachers can tailor the lesson to what they see as student needs. Our counselor and social worker teach lessons in every classroom at least once a month using the Second Step curriculum, K-5, as well as Sources of Strength for our children in grades 3-5. When students arrive at TRE they are greeted with a smiling, friendly face and experience the same thing at the end of the day. We have common announcements each morning and various classes sign up to share what is happening in their classrooms through “Your Turn Tuesday” class presentations.

We are a school community that promotes literacy. The principal reads and then ‘gifts’ a book a month to our KinderBoost students and our local preschool children, through Project GIFT, a literacy program which she started and gained grant funds for. Incoming kindergarten students already know the principal and have a connection because she read and presented them with books the entire year they were in preschool. The partnerships built with local foundations has allowed this literacy project to take hold in the community. Upon entry to kindergarten, the principal presents them with their final three books in a backpack with the Project GIFT logo on the back. The principal is seen reading the books to students on the Tongue River Elementary Page under the Project GIFT tab. In addition, TRE ensures students under the age of five are signed up with parent permission to the Imagination Library. Our incoming students feel welcome into the TRE Family from the very beginning.

We encourage positive relationships between our students through monthly kindness challenges, cross-grade interactions like Reading Buddies, by celebrating cultural diversity representative of our student body, having a strong TRE Student Council, a TRE Recycling Club, and taking Adventure Club trips on Fridays to local sites. We believe in the importance of building strong community partnerships. We build relationships with our community by bringing in Sheridan County Therapy Dog handlers, hosting Early Childhood Nights, by supporting and promoting Friday activities through our local community center, through the One Book, One School Program, Title I Nights, yearly music and art programs, the Annual Heart Challenge, yearly participation in the food drive, and organization of a giving tree for students at Christmas. Our principal also reads monthly bedtime stories on Facebook Live on our Tongue River Eagles Facebook Page. We also demonstrate our support of our community by bringing in community helpers, classroom volunteers and local engineers, by distributing Kindness Pull Tab Posters to local businesses, by promoting and hosting community service projects, and summer partnerships in our garden each year. We have partnered with Big Brothers, Big Sisters to be sure our students have connections within our community. We believe that a school should live the values they have set forth, we believe at TRE we do just that!





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

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

We believe wholeheartedly in our mission to Teach, Reach and Enrich all of the students at Tongue River Elementary. We were able to live this mission with in-person learning throughout the entire year. Twelve years ago our district worked with the Curriculum Leadership Institute to create a comprehensive curriculum and assessment system that aligned to the Common Core State Standards in every content area. We use this curriculum to drive our instruction in all subject areas. Every subject area committee had representation from teachers k-12, who then wrote a scope and sequence, pacing guides, district assessments, as well as proficiency scales. These components, as well as frequent formative checks, are implemented regularly to drive differentiated instruction.

Based on the research of Solution Tree and Marzano, our philosophy at TRE is that teachers are the most valuable resource, and we entrust our teachers to use the resources available to provide effective instruction. You will not see common resources for all subjects because teachers, as a grade level team, choose from a variety of resources in the building as well as seek resources through the principal as needed to teach in all areas.

We rely heavily on our collaborative PLC process to plan robust instruction and to set SMART goals based on essential learnings in language arts and math. These essential learnings are also shared with parents. The SMART Goals are tracked as a whole class and celebrated when they are met. PLC is built into our schedule as well as daily Intervention/Enrichment (I/E) time to meet individual needs. In Tiers I, II and III, Kagan structures, Reciprocal Teaching Techniques, the gradual release model, and the researched strategies of Marzano are present in all instruction. This collaboration and commitment to instructional practice ensures that our teachers know exactly where students are, in terms of reaching proficiency, and what needs to be done to get students there. Our Title I teachers are working in combination with classroom teachers to ensure the success of all students with the use of Orton Gillingham, Heggerty, Foundations, Geodes and Read Naturally. Students that are identified as needing extra support in reading are given instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics and comprehension strategies based on what the AIMS, Heggerty, Kilpatrick, and district assessments have indicated. They spend time twice a day with Title I teachers based on their specific needs. Our instruction at TRE focuses on research based practice, explicit teaching, and tiered instruction.

This year we have been studying the Science of Reading, which is based on scientific research, to refine our teaching practice. We are currently working to improve and guarantee systematic, explicit instruction in both phonemic awareness and phonics. In addition to their core reading and writing time, every child at TRE gets a daily 40 minute small group reading session that is flexible and differentiated, and encompasses word work instruction, short text reading, and writing about text. Heggerty, Foundations, Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) texts, and decodable texts are utilized. Our reading PLC consists of a team of classroom teachers, Title I teachers, and paraprofessionals who collaborate about reading instruction and appropriate student movement. We target Oral Reading Fluency and have set benchmarks, based on extensive research. At these monthly reading meetings we look at each child and analyze their AIMS graphs. When a student does not show growth, we discuss which assessments to implement and use the results to determine our next course of action. For example, if a child is not proficient in phonemic awareness, we will find additional time to give them instruction using Heggerty and Foundations (Wilson) materials. This flexible grouping, as well as the team approach, allows us to be preventative as well as have a plan if intervention is needed. For writing, Step up to Writing materials are utilized. SRA is used for spelling instruction at all levels. For math, we rely on collaborative PLC meetings, data, district assessments, and formative checks to help us determine the differentiated needs of our students. Eureka Math, Ready Math, and Everyday Math materials, Singapore Math, and online sources like i-Ready Math, and Khan Academy, are used as supplemental planning resources.

During the spring of 2020 closure, we were able to use the online programs already in place and one-to-one devices for 4-5 and instructional packets for K-3. Teachers were able to get online with students through Canvas, Google Meets, and Zoom to remain in contact. Assessments were given for the year, so online

teaching was about solidifying the outcomes in all subjects and keeping a relationship with our families.

Science and social studies along with all areas are taught following our district curriculum. Student success and progress toward these outcomes and components is measured through the district assessment system as well as frequent formative checks for understanding. Science is taught independently in the classroom using Full Option Science Systems (FOSS), Mystery Science, Brain Pop, and various short texts during reading. Students also get exposure to Ag in the Classroom, a Wyoming State program which is taught in the TRE Science Lab room, once a week for all K-5 students. Our expansive garden located on school grounds is also a tremendous teaching tool which is planted and harvested during this science time. Social Studies is taught using specific high interest nonfiction materials and field trips along with texts in reading class. Local field trips and speakers facilitate teaching of the outcomes and components. We have adopted standards referenced grading as a school district. In living this philosophy, we believe students who do not grasp the material should be intervened with until mastery. This takes place in all subject areas.

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

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

We highlight a leadership trait each month and they are presented school wide through announcements as well as through character trait books which are specific to the monthly trait for teachers to read aloud in classrooms. When students are “caught” demonstrating these traits, staff write personalized postcards, which are signed by the teacher and the principal, and then mailed home. Students who receive postcards, have their pictures posted in the hallway.

Kindness challenges at the school also benefit the entire community. Examples include kindness rocks that were designed and decorated in art class and then distributed throughout the community, friendly letters written to veterans and to those that were quarantined, and a special evening for kindergarteners and their families to build birdhouses and foster healthy relationships. The school also dedicates a twenty minute period each day to educate on social/emotional skills which supports students’ acquisition of essential skills and knowledge and develops academic achievement as well as helps manage stress.

Students K-5 engage in technology/library class once a week for forty minutes. In addition, students are exposed to different coding and STEM activities through the technology and science curriculum. Students interact with different coding activities. Teaching academic honesty through digital citizenship and literature is another strong component during library instruction. These interactive and innovative activities motivate students to solve real world challenges in a safe and positive environment.

In the fine arts classroom, students are exposed to visual and performing arts for 120 minutes each week. The week is typically broken up into three forty minute chunks, with one being art and the other two music. However, flexibility has been a true accomplishment of students and staff this year. Due to COVID-19 protocols and uncertainty about the safety of various components in music, students studied primarily art for the first portion of the year. Students showed their resiliency by exhibiting their artwork, using various mediums in a virtual art show that was broadcast to family and friends. We also regularly attend events at our local WYO Theatre to be sure our students have access to additional cultural experiences.

The music program remains strong at TRE, despite the adversity of the pandemic. Students performed a virtual Christmas program showcasing their technique and musicianship. Students are exposed to a variety of instruments from all four instrument groups. Kindergarten students start with non-pitched percussion and move onto the more complicated Orff instruments as their sense of rhythm and beat grows. Students move to woodwind instruments by learning recorder and competing in the Recorder Karate curriculum, followed

by string and brass instruments. The spring music program is another testament to the adaptability of the staff and students, which will be held outside on the front lawn. Students will finally get to showcase their talents live, while providing a safe environment for their parents to enjoy their abilities.

Every student in our school, K - 5, receives 120 minutes of physical education/health instruction every week. The physical education/health program supports the development of students to improve and maintain a healthy lifestyle and to prepare them for the middle and high school settings. Activities are designed to improve psychomotor skills while supporting affective learning and promoting lifelong learning of movement and health. Students have the opportunity to participate in many lifetime activities they may participate in outside of a school setting, such as cross country skiing on the front lawn!

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

Tongue River Elementary tailors instruction, interventions and assessments to meet the diverse and individual needs of our students in many ways. In every grade, we use the PLC model to discuss student achievement, interventions, and enrichments. Classroom teachers, administrators, and special education teachers meet weekly during a PLC session to discuss student progress in all academic and behavioral areas. Once a month this PLC session focuses on small group reading instruction and student progress. Teachers share anecdotal notes, AIMSweb progress, and comprehension achievement, which allows the team to fluidly move kids to groups that meet their individual needs. Through district wide common assessments and formative checks, TRE analyzes student results and provides small group instruction during daily, scheduled, intervention and enrichment time. All teachers are a part of this process, from Special Education and Title I teachers to classroom teachers and paras. In addition to our core reading time, we provide small group reading instruction daily, for each student in the school, based on the data collected throughout instructional time. This ensures that students performing below, at, and above grade level are getting their academic needs met. TRE continues to use research based practices to ensure students are receiving their education based on best practices. Students who are not showing sufficient progress, are appropriately placed in our Title I Reading Program. This guarantees that those students will get the extra support they need to close the achievement gap. Students placed in Title I get a second dose of reading instruction, using small groups, skill based instruction, and Read Naturally depending on their needs.

Tongue River Elementary tailors instruction, interventions and assessments to meet the diverse and individual needs of our special education population in various ways. Our special education team is a viable part of our PLC team. There is constant collaboration between classroom teachers and special education personnel. Tongue River Elementary believes in inclusion whenever possible. Special education professionals co-teach with classroom teachers to ensure that special education students are receiving adequate instruction with support as needed. Special education teachers also pull students on their caseload into small groups, or one-on-one, to front load or remediate based on assessments and formative checks.

Although Tongue River Elementary doesn't have a big population of ELL students, we assess that demographic yearly. Our district has an ELL coordinator who assesses and collects data to ensure those students are successful. Tongue River Elementary doesn't have a big population of migrant or homeless families however we have a liaison in the district to contact if there is a concern. The liaison will direct them to proper resources based on the McKinney-Vento Act. The needs of all students are addressed because we want to live our mission to "Teach, Reach, and Enrich, All!"

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

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

At TRE we educate not only for academic success, but the whole child. In order for the academic successes to be achieved, basic needs must be met first. As a school, every teacher incorporates the Love and Logic classroom management approach with support and training from the principal and fellow staff members. Teachers have high expectations for students both academically and behaviorally, and by using a nurturing approach, they are able to meet those expectations. This ties directly into our school wide Recovery Model. All teachers understand that students need to gain self-control before their behavior becomes escalated. Four years ago we implemented school wide expectations and a discipline plan. We have seen a steep decline in the amount of students sent out of the classroom missing important academic time.

All are welcome each day at TRE. Upon entering the building, students are met daily by the principal as well as various teachers greeting each child and making sure they feel welcome. Every student has the opportunity to have a nutritious breakfast each morning as well as a healthy snack, mid morning, through the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant. Every day starts with sacred Family Time which is built into our schedule for social emotional teaching. Second Step and Sources or Strength are utilized as well as activities which reinforce the monthly character trait. The positive traits that are taught to the students become second nature and are evident in the school and community.

After the student's basic needs have been met, we acknowledge that students have the need to grow. We individualize instruction for our students through strong use and implementation PLC process, district standards, and common assessments. Students are always getting instruction that is perfect for them. They track their own data as well as celebrate their successes with their peers, and families through an online communication tool that is student led.

We offer a variety of opportunities that students can be part of. For example, the recycling club is sponsored by our science teacher as well as other volunteers. Each classroom has a recycling tub present in their rooms and students and staff alike are educated on what is recyclable as well as how to prepare an item to be recycled. Student council and classroom representatives are another way we offer leadership opportunities for students.

The combination of academic support, educating the whole child, and our commitment to our vision, which is 'to be known for our kindness and our academics,' is evident in all we do at TRE.

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

At TRE our relationship with families and the community is a priority. There are several strategies that TRE has implemented to ensure student success and school improvement. We have increased and enhanced our community partnerships, we have added a school social worker position, we have continued to work with families and have offered several ways families can continue to be a part of the school community during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we consistently communicate necessary and important information with families and our community partners.

Community partnerships and the addition of a school social worker is one way TRE has been able to enhance family engagement. Our school social worker serves as a liaison between our school, families and community this gives TRE the opportunity to successfully maintain and strengthen family relationships and community partnerships. TRE families have easy access to our community partnerships which include Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Advocacy and Resource Center, Compass Center for families, Food Group, Child's Place, Community Churches, TRVCC, and the Child Development Center. These partnerships enhance the health and well-being of our families by providing needed resources throughout the fiscal year.

TRE has a powerful partnership with both of our local early childhood and preschool programs (Tongue River Child's Place (TRCP) and the Preschool Co-op). This partnership involves collaboration for early

childhood nights framed around early literacy, the use of a common screening tool which allows for conversations related to the placement of students well before entering kindergarten or KinderBoost as well as a combined effort for Kindergarten Screening. Our community has an early childhood liaison to bridge the gap and make the transition from the early childhood programs to the elementary school seamless. All three programs hold the same school wide expectations to Keep Yourself Safe (Respect for Self), Keep Your Friends Safe (Respect for Others) and Keep Your Things Safe (Respect for Property). The Pyramid Model, which supports social emotional development, is utilized to help children with self-regulation and independent problem solving skills, which in turn supports their transition to TRE.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, TRE has remained committed to family and community involvement. TRE safely offered several in-person and online events for families including, an outdoor Title I Night, a 6-week free Love and Logic Parenting course, virtual music and art shows, parent-teacher conferences, and our One book One School program. We have found creative ways to stay connected with our families. All of these partnerships allow us to serve our students at the highest level.

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

During the shutdown last spring due to COVID-19, the staff was able to adjust to changes quickly and efficiently. Administration had an efficient plan in place and staff responded with an “all hands on deck” attitude and pulled together materials and created learning plans to accommodate each student no matter their circumstances (ie, no access to internet or technology, etc.). Even though we weren’t able to meet in person, we held weekly staff meetings via Zoom, which really kept morale up, and we were able to problem solve with each other in order to determine the best way to meet our students’ needs. When we were able to come back to school in the fall, we had a plan in place to utilize an LMS (Canvas) and professional development was provided accordingly. We made sure that this platform would be common amongst all the schools in the district, to create ease of use for families with multiple children in various grade levels.

Our district provides staff with regularly scheduled professional development opportunities throughout the year. During a normal school year, we typically have professional development days at least once a month on a Friday, as we have a four day school week. Professional development can include training from our math and reading coaches, who come in to support staff by reinforcing best practices based on research and helping teachers with meeting district outcomes. Professional development and any necessary training are provided for any program adopted by the district and/or building.

Our school is committed to improving teacher and administrator capacity through collaboration at PLC meetings. These weekly PLC meetings allow teachers to communicate with their grade level cohort, as well as other specialists within the school about students’ strengths and weaknesses. These meetings are valuable as we are able to brainstorm different approaches and teaching strategies together as a team. Teachers are also able to collaborate across grade levels and across schools through our district cohorts. These cohort times include discussions about curriculum, resources, teaching strategies, and best practice based on research.

Other ways in which our staff feels valued and supported is through the many celebrations we have throughout the school year. We come together and celebrate each and every staff member through various appreciation days. Our sunshine committee heads this, as well as organizing meals/gas cards for any family that may be in need in our community. We are also able to take the time at the beginning of every staff meeting to share our celebrations that we’ve had throughout the week. TRE’s commitment to professional development and supporting teachers has led to improved teacher and administrator capacity, which ultimately leads to improved student learning.

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

The leadership philosophy at Tongue River Elementary is to purposely nurture success and to be known for our academics and our kindness. Our philosophy is brought forth by our principal, counselors, teaching staff, special education, and support staff, as well as specialists. Our school reflects and teaches kindness by incorporating Love and Logic skills taught to staff, students, and families. This philosophy is modeled in all

we do at TRE.

The principal models leadership traits that encompass what is best for kids, teachers, families, and the community, in a way that is encouraging, straight forward, empathetic, kind and has the best interest for all in mind. This is demonstrated through Professional Learning Communities (PLC) that are differentiated between grade levels and based on assessments, smart goals, and teacher instruction. Tongue River Elementary has a leadership team that attends PLC conferences once a month to ensure we are on the right track and applying best practices. As we strive to be a model PLC school, we continue to learn and evaluate our PLC process to ensure we are teaching to the whole child and meeting each child's individual development.

Teachers school wide are continuously seeking professional development. This past year, the staff has been actively involved in The Science of Reading through attendance of the Embracing Literacy Conference, LETRS Training, Orton Gillingham, and Wilson Training. The staff meets twice a week for 30 minutes to strengthen their understanding of the Science of Reading through LETRS and all the components that weave together for skilled reading. The staff works together as a team with title teachers and the principal to ensure our professional development always reflects what is best for our students.

Tongue River Elementary has implemented many new policies and procedures to keep our building functioning during COVID-19. Administrators have ensured that custodians, teachers, support staff, students and parents understand the new procedures and importance of keeping Tongue River Elementary students and staff safe. The school purchased O3 machines so that each teacher has a safe way to clean between groups. The mask mandate was taken seriously and the administration required masks as well as spacing of desks to ensure safety for each child. Seating charts were required during all classes and lunch to help make contact tracing easier and more efficient. The principal limited volunteers in the building and incorporated Zoom programs and conferences as much as possible to keep families involved. The school leadership helped navigate a difficult year to ensure success for all.

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

TRE celebrates differences by bringing awareness of the diverse cultures through school wide gatherings and educational events. We honor the various backgrounds of students by inviting the community and families to our school for Title One Night, One Book One School, and Learning with Littles. These nights address the needs of all families by building a connection between school and home. Families feel welcome when they come into TRE.

The school holds Pastries with Parents so the children and their families can share a positive experience in the school's setting while talking to friends, teachers and members of the community. These events help build a relationship and help parents feel welcome at our school.

We ensure equity by highlighting TRE as a family. Every month TRE chooses a character trait to emphasize for character development. Lessons on the monthly leadership trait are taught school wide daily during our "Family Time" to teach social emotional lessons. Additionally, our counselor visits each classroom monthly to teach a social skills lesson based on the trait of the month. We send home Eagle Postcards to families to celebrate students that show the character trait of the month. Classes contribute weekly to "Your Turn Tuesday." On these days students share current learning targets or special messages that address current events with their peers, world, and community. Every Thursday, as a whole school, we sing the TRE song that features leadership traits of our unique school. We sing about being kind, working hard, having fun, and being one big family. Classes take a turn leading the TRE Song for the school over the intercom.

An annual talent show is shared so students can showcase their talents with their peers. This day is shared with students, staff, parents and community members. On our last day of school, the

students gather in the gym and watch our school wide slide show. These pictures showcase special events and memories throughout the year. Our talent show and slide show have become an end of the year tradition.

In November, local Tribes share their culture school wide through dance, storytelling, and food. In addition, art styles and techniques are shared from local artists. Global celebrations such as Chinese New Year and recognition of holiday traditions celebrates differences amongst students as well as teaches acceptance of diversity.

All year students have enthusiastically participated in a school wide secret kindness challenges. On these occasions, students disguise themselves into secret kindness agents who spread kindness through the school. During these challenges students share random acts of kindness with fellow students, classrooms and staff members. This may include sponsoring a classroom during the state assessment for encouragement or sending thank you notes to support staff. These events and activities are woven throughout the year at TRE.

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

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We believe strongly that the social emotional health of students must exist for academic success to take place. We believe in educating the whole child. In our Mission, Vision and Values document, “we commit to building relationships within our school family and the TR community to encourage kindness, motivation and success.” We commit to “celebrating academic and social emotional achievements for staff, students and the community.” We live these values in all we do and because of it, we have a true culture of kindness and acceptance. It is what makes our TRE Family exceptional and facilitates learning and relationships. The staff supports one another and encourages each other to be positive and do their best everyday because it is ‘about the students.’ They greet each other by name and do kind things for their fellow staff members. Our Sunshine Committee takes every opportunity to recognize staff members so everyone feels appreciated. We are always signing a card or bringing in a few extra dollars to support a struggling family or a staff member.

With the addition of a full time social worker and counselor we have been able to ensure every child has their needs met and can be successful. We have ‘Family Time’ built in the first 20 minutes each day to ensure social emotional teaching, modeling, and practice is taking place in every classroom. When a student is having an off day, staff members reach out to the counselor or the principal to be sure that child has the extra support they need. During the pandemic we have been able to modify our Third Thursday Monthly Kindness Challenges to a Zoom version. The Secret Kindness Agents (from the work of Ferial Pearson) was established. Each month the principal, Mission Commander Bee Kind, leads a Zoom meeting highlighting kind deeds, then directs agents to the envelope “placed in the teacher’s top middle desk drawer” which contains their secret kindness challenge. This might be making a bulletin board with pictures of students showing kindness, or making thank you cards for the bus drivers or custodial staff, it may be reading a poem about kindness with their faces hidden so they can remain unknown, or it may be a special treat from the mission commander to let her agents know they are appreciated! Students have taken this so much further than we ever dreamed and have started taking on their own 'missions' in and out of school. The principal gets regular notes from secret agents and parents report that the children are doing kind things at home ‘in secret. Our school is beaming with examples of kindness, from the newspaper articles about social emotional health, to the banner hung in the cafeteria each year created and signed by every member of the TRE Family. The feeling when you walk into our school is contagious and something all schools should embrace.