

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 2659 Nister Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Delta Junction State AK Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 99737-9800

County Southeast Fairbanks Census Area

Telephone (907) 895-4696 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL  
<http://deltagreely.cyberschool.com/District/Department/16-Delta-Elementary-School> E-mail mhooton@dgsd.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.

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Shaun Streyle E-mail sstreyle@dgsd.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Delta/Greely School District Tel. (907) 895-4657

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.

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mrs. Eileen Williams  
(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.

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

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 signatures 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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	13	9	22
K	33	13	46
1	32	24	56
2	26	22	48
3	23	27	50
4	20	33	53
5	28	31	59
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>	175	159	334

\*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):
- 3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0.5 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 15 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 70 % White
  - 9.5 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 21%

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

During the 2020-2021 school year, our enrollment fell considerably due to Covid-19 and the fact that our district has a K-12 Homeschool in it that many parents considered a safer option. At one time it dropped below 270. This year it rebounded to over 350 at one point. It currently sits at 334 which is very close to the 350-390 student enrollment numbers Delta Elementary School (DES) consistently had before the 2020-2021 school year. We expect full enrollment recovery for 2022-2023.

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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	39
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	17
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	56
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	271
(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, Russian, and Ukrainian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 11 %  
38 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 16 %

Total number students who qualify: 52

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 22 %  
72 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 with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>5</u> Autism                  | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>16</u> Developmental Delay    | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>28</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: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
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 18:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	93%	92%	91%	91%	93%
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 2021.

<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. 2007

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

To ensure that each student has the opportunity to engage in high quality education which includes social, emotional, and academic pursuits. Our Vision: Preparing ALL Students for success, no exceptions! Our Motto: Delta Elementary, where everything is "Pawsible". (Our mascot is the husky pup)

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school's nondiscrimination policy.

[http://deltagreely.cyberschool.com/files/page/916/DES\\_2021\\_2022\\_Student\\_Handbook.docx.pdf](http://deltagreely.cyberschool.com/files/page/916/DES_2021_2022_Student_Handbook.docx.pdf)

(Page 12)

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Delta Junction, Alaska is a small community of approximately 1500 located 50 miles North of the Alaska Range at the confluence of the Delta and Tanana rivers. We have beautiful summers and cold, windy winters. Delta Elementary School (DES) not only services Delta Junction but also Fort Greely, a missile defense base located about eight miles from the school. Much of the security force on this base is from the Puerto Rican National Guard; so in addition to the normal diversity that comes from military communities, we have a very high population of Spanish speaking students. Delta Junction has a very high Ukrainian and Russian population as well. This makes our little prek-5 school of 360 students quite diverse, which we love! There staff is comprised of 24 certified teachers and 23 paraprofessionals and support personnel. Many are Russian or Spanish speaking to aid in servicing our English Language Learners (ELL) population. There preschool is a special needs preschool. Children must qualify to attend or be chosen from a lottery of “model” students. It has a staff of one special education-certified teacher and two paraprofessionals that run two sessions with approximately 12-14 students per session. To meet the needs of our rather large population of special needs students, we have two certified special education (SPED) teachers and nine paraprofessionals to provide services and inclusion. These students are an important part of our school culture and are loved and respected by the entire population. They are integrated into the classroom whenever possible, and the entire school is educated on the importance of inclusion and respect for all students regardless of disability.

Delta Elementary is well known for its positive climate and high standards. To meet the needs of our wide range of academic abilities and social-emotional levels, we have adopted the MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) framework. Each student is evaluated early in the year and placed in one of three tiers depending on their academic performance and social emotional or behavioral health. We administer MAP test three times per year, use the DIBELS assessment with year round progress monitoring, and use formative and summative classroom assessments and observations. Teachers and support staff use all of these assessment tools to collaborate weekly, monitor progress, and populate the framework. Students receive interventions based on the tier they are placed in. Students receive more interventions in tier two than one, and more still in tier three than two. When identified as a tier three student, an I-Team meeting is scheduled with the teacher, support personnel, and the parents to plan and implement interventions as soon as they are placed. Interventions are documented, monitored, and adjusted throughout the duration of the year. Our school has also made a commitment to differentiate instruction in the classroom. Our teachers are implementing rotational grouping and personalized instructional techniques to not only give targeted instruction to students who struggle, but to students who are advanced as well. We have chosen a high rigor math and English language arts (ELA) curriculum with a personalized component to aid our teachers in facilitating differentiation. Our intervention team consists of a certified reading specialist and five support staff (two of which are retired, certified teachers) that meet the needs of all of our tier three students as well as many of our tier two learners according to the needs of each individual student’s I-team intervention documentation.

Last year, recognizing that there is more to education than the three R’s, our school became more focused on educating the “whole child.” The school has found creative ways to offer music and art instruction to each class through utilizing the community and our limited resources. In addition, the school has an amazing physical education teacher who sees each class twice a week. There half-time school counselor services all of our tier three social emotional learning (SEL) students, and partners with a child/family development coordinator to teach social/emotional lessons once a week to each class as well as handle our MTSS documentation and I-team scheduling. The school has a non-certified librarian who sees the students once a week and has them participate in a variety of activities based on local events and Alaskan themes as well as seasonal happenings. She also runs a school-wide reading program/contest that lasts the whole year and is extremely popular. If reading goals are met, the principal has had to participate in some very undesirable activities at monthly assemblies. such as eat dog food, kiss a pig, sit in jail, and get pried in the face to name a few. The library hosts two book fairs per year and the annual Battle of the Books contest as well. At DES staff are committed to offering as many activities as they can schedule. The school reaches out to the staff and community for people who are willing to share their talents and time for the betterment of Delta’s children. DES hosts a Nordic ski club, rocketry club, Robotics team, Lego league club, yearbook team, Ididamovie club, Little Dribblers basketball league, youth wrestling, Jump Rope for Heart, a science



fair, and other activities which include all learners exploring their abilities.

Community involvement is a priority. DES has a website, Facebook page, and digital highway sign that are updated daily. Each teacher has a class media page that they use and weekly newsletters. Information is also sent to the paper and local websites weekly. DES hosts parent/teacher conferences twice a year. A goal for at least 90% attendance is either reached or are very close to reaching each time. The school hosts a variety of community events as well, such as a Trunk or Treat event, Christmas Art Gala and concert, STEM night, literacy night, a spring concert, Husky Hustle 3K race, rocket launch day, field day, and an end-of- year picnic.

During COVID in 2020-2021, DES enrollment dropped from 360 to around 260. Due to the unknown nature of the virus, the district decided to social distance the schools. This lasted until October, 2020 when Delta had its first real outbreak. We then went to distance delivery. After Christmas, DES went back to full time, as a non-socially distanced school. Since then, the mitigation measures have been to deep clean the school nightly, make sure the ventilation system is performing well, and making sure any student or staff member, who is sick, either stays home or is sent home. In 2021-2022, the enrollment has increased to 340 and the effect of the loss of in-school education for nearly one third of our students has been profound. In addition, DES is dealing with a rather large increase in absenteeism due to quarantining and illness. At the district level, we believe that we are seeing a shift in what constitutes an “absence,, and that an online delivery component is an essential part of our curriculum moving forward. DES set a goal this year to overcome these obstacles. So far DES is right on track because every single grade level met its MAP growth goal on our winter test. This goes to show that when this staff sets a goal, nothing will stop them from reaching it. Staff are passionate, driven, and demand excellence for themselves and each other. Staff are using all of these tools to fill holes in learning, keep students who are on track progressing, and making sure all social emotional issues created by the pandemic are addressed. As you can see, Delta Elementary really is a place where “Everything is Pawsible” (our motto).

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

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

#### **1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:**

The overarching theme of Delta Elementary’s curricular approach is rigor. We want the students challenged. We want each curriculum to have a personalized component as well. DES is in the process of implementing differentiated instruction in every classroom. Having a personalized component is an invaluable tool in accomplishing that. We also are Alaska standards-based. We use the standards to guide instruction, not the curriculum. We choose curriculum that best meets our standards, is research based, rigorous, and has a good technology component that students can work on at their own pace and level. Teachers also have the freedom to adjust lessons to cover standards missing in the curriculum and to allow for research-based instructional techniques, such as use of manipulatives, cross-curricular integration, literature units, movement, peer resources, seasonal events, technology, etc. so long as the concepts are being covered. Differentiated instruction is how DES best meets the needs of all learners along with intervention, which either occurs out of the classroom or in it. Our intervention team is in close contact with classroom teachers to best meet the needs of every student who requires intervention according to our MTSS framework. Summative assessments in reading and math vary from subject to subject but are consistent at each grade level. Social studies, science, and writing are more varied from teacher to teacher. All forms of assessments are used to guide instruction and intervention, but grades are based mostly on weekly and unit assessments. It is important that students’ grades are an accurate representation of each student’s ability, and the criteria is consistent at each grade level. Last year, DES adopted the same A-F grade scale as the high school for grades 2-5. This not only allowed us to post an honor roll each trimester, but it also exposes students (and their parents) to the same grade scale they will use for the rest of their educational life much earlier. Our students are given the DIBELS assessment each trimester and progress monitored throughout the year. In addition, we take the MAP test three times. The results of these assessments are analyzed and added to other forms of classroom formative and summative data to guide instructional practices.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

We are in the process of choosing a new English/Language Arts curriculum this year. This will be the last year for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) Journeys, which we have used with great success for eight years. As of now, the committee is working hard to choose a curriculum that is: rigorous, and aligns with the science of reading; has a good technology component; is based on the “BIG 5” elements of reading acquisition (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary/sight words, fluency, and comprehension); has a personalized learning component; has a good writing and grammar component; and meets the Alaska standards. With Journeys, we assess using the weekly lesson assessments, the unit assessment, Journey’s sight word assessments, spelling assessments, and what they call “Cold Reads” which are end-of-unit fluency/accuracy/comprehension assessments. These assessments are collaborated on at grade level professional learning communities (PLCs) and used to guide intervention. This curriculum is very rigorous and has a good assortment of leveled materials for differentiation. Teachers are able to use centers to meet the needs of all learners effortlessly. The personalized component is not very good in this curriculum for DES, however, as it is very difficult to get lessons to students who are absent. This requires parents having to come in and pick up prepared materials. It is also difficult to adapt to distance learning. Since the pandemic started, we have learned that a good technological lesson delivery component is crucial. Teachers supplement the writing and grammar component with writer’s workshop, Six Traits, Daily Oral Language, Mountain Language, IXL, etc. Handwriting for grades K-1 is taught using Zaner/Bloser Handwriting. We also use MAP and DIBELS to assess Language Arts skills. Both are administered three times a year to the entire student population. DIBELS progress monitoring is then used throughout the year to assess struggling students. The data is analyzed to guide and adjust interventions. Delta Elementary also has a very active library that encourages children to become lifelong readers. We use the Accelerated Reader program so that students can take quizzes to assess comprehension. Through the points earned, the children win prizes as well as participate in school wide challenges. Over the years these challenges have led to the principal

kissing a pig, getting pied in the face, dying his hair green, and eating ‘dog food.’ Since adopting Journeys, our MAP data has been very consistent with approximately 65-70% of the students above the 50th percentile each year. This year we are really hoping to see numbers above that due to it being the first full year of MTSS implementation.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

SY 2021-2022 is the second year of Zearn Math for DES. Before Zearn, we used Saxon math for about 10 years. This “new math” has been a real challenge, especially with the COVID issues. Our goal in choosing it was simply to raise the bar. Our students have always performed consistently well with Saxon, but we felt that we needed something to take us to the next level. Our MAP proficiency was always 60-65% above the 50th percentile. It seemed that nothing we supplemented ever made it any better. Enter Zearn!. Parents have a hard time with it and teachers have had to spend a lot of time learning it themselves. It has its own vocabulary, is very “Algebraic” in nature, uses multiple algorithms to solve the same problem, and forces students to learn the “why” of math. We are now in the second year and things are beginning to smooth out. We are learning that the students understand it. They like the vocabulary and enjoy being able to use different methods to solve problems. The technological component includes students having two different online activities with each lesson, and they can move at their own pace. It is designed for small group instruction and can easily be differentiated. Our teachers are learning to supplement with research-based instructional techniques (manipulatives, movement, relevance activities, etc.), to further enhance learning and meet the needs of struggling learners. This Spring we hope to see some real growth even with the COVID issues we are dealing with. The Zearn assessments give teachers plenty of data to guide how they differentiate and instruct. Professional development has been a big part of this process. We have a Zearn team consisting of three teachers who attend all of the in-services. They then share with the staff. In addition, there are a number of Zearn math Facebook groups that our teachers belong to that constantly share information. The technological component of Zearn Math is extremely helpful for teachers when students are absent. All they have to do is send parents and students the link and they can do 2/3 of the entire lesson online. It isn’t the same as in-house instruction, but it is much more relevant than what we offered with Saxon and takes a ton of pressure off of the teacher. As difficult as the transition has been, our teachers have risen to the challenge and are proud to say that they are right on the cutting edge of modern math instruction. Teachers are supplementing fact practice using various fun games to start each lesson. There are a variety of ways that this is done, and all are effective. In addition, we have a full-time math interventionist on staff who services all tier three students and some of the more at-risk tier two kids. She is a retired teacher who is passionate about math, and we are already seeing growth in the students she services.

### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

We use a variety of science materials here at DES. Our adopted curriculum is HMH Dimensions, which we are in our fourth year of. In addition to this, our school has purchased Generation Genius and mystery science. Why three curriculums? Because Generation Genius and Mystery Science are amazing, but they can not stand alone to meet the requirements of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) which we adopted four year ago. All of our grade levels have mapped out the entire year using NGSS, and each standard is covered using some part of the three curriculums. I believe that this year we will see some real improvement in our science scores, which have been historically poor. However, since we have had a very spotty history with our state tests the last five years due to changing from the SBA to Peaks, Covid, then from the Peaks to Ak Star, this year will be all about establishing a baseline for not only science but reading and math as well. Generation Genius and Mystery Science both are online platforms, whereas HMH Dimensions’ online component is very outdated and difficult to navigate. By having Generation Genius and Mystery Science available, teachers are able to totally personalize their student’s science instruction and easily make it available for absent students. For science assessment, teachers usually use the HMH unit assessments. They also assess projects and activities the kids do. They assess effort, participation, and ability to understand the science involved in each project. These really show how well the students are learning the standards. Delta Junction is a scientist’s dream location. We have incredible geology, biology, and botany right in our backyard. Our district has small busses and vans available to teachers whenever they want them, and we encourage teachers to take their kids on field trips often. Our number one priority where science is concerned is to foster student enjoyment of it. We also have a STEM night that includes a science fair every

March. The community and military base volunteer to judge and local businesses donate prizes. In the future, we plan to expand our Coding instruction. We have had some professional development on it that was really popular but finding the extra time for this is challenging since we are trying to cover the NGSS, which Coding is not a part of. We may try to revisit our curriculum maps and see where coding can fit or if there is something we can replace with it.

**1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Elementary social studies is taught in every classroom at DES. It varies quite a bit by grade level however, and we really try to focus on integrating social studies into other subjects. K-3 focuses mainly on citizenship in the classroom and school. Each teacher gets the Scholastic News and has access to Brainpop Junior and IXL. They use a thematic approach. One kindergarten teacher says, "I use the Scholastic Let's Find Out magazines/videos/activities, and BrainPop Jr. to supplement the units/lessons I teach. I have created a lot of the social studies units and lessons. I teach based on holidays, traditions, special events, safety, community, etc. Social studies for us is kind of broken into two parts: more typical social studies content like Community Helpers or Our Country, and then kindergarten social skills like sharing and being a good friend. We teach social skills every single day. The other units are dependent on the time of the year and how much time we have in our days/week. I try to cover 2-3 social studies topics each month." This is very typical of what our K-3 teachers do, and their assessment is usually based on activities and projects. Grades 4-5 use HMH Social Studies, and most teachers integrate the social studies textbook into their reading program (HMH Journeys). In the past, middle school teachers have complained that students don't know how to use a textbook proficiently, so our teachers discuss the table of contents, headings, graphic features, index, glossary, and reading to find information from the social studies textbook. Some use the HMH Social Studies vocabulary words as spelling and reading vocabulary words. Our Journeys reading curriculum works very well with the social studies curriculum, which makes content integration more effective. Another example of it is that the Journeys fifth grade curriculum has a lesson section on people in the Revolutionary War and the causes leading up to the war. HMH gives a lot of information while the Journeys shows the war through personal perspectives. This curriculum is up for review soon and we would like to get something that is much better suited for all elementary students that focuses on school, local, state, and national citizenship as well as history. It will need a good personalization and technological component, but most importantly, the text must be leveled so struggling readers can learn from it.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Delta Elementary School provides a preschool program to service special needs students ages three- to five. The core curriculum areas center on student needs as identified by their individualized educational plans. The focus is on behavioral expectations for school readiness, gross motor and fine motor skills, daily living skills, social and emotional skills, as well as pre-academic readiness to include pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills. Nearly all of the students are also receiving speech services as part of our program. As the goal of the preschool program is to prepare students for mainstream kindergarten, the program is aligned to the expectations and focus of Kindergarten. The preschool program focuses on acclimating students to the routines and expectations of school. We practice school readiness skills in a variety of ways. We engage in whole group time, small group learning, and one-on-one learning. We integrate skills with art, music, movement, games, guided play and practice. In addition, students are exposed to meaningful play that prepares them for the expectations of Kindergarten such as the fine motor skills necessary for drawing and writing. Throughout the day, students practice their gross motor skills as well enabling them to be self-sufficient in such regular tasks as the putting on and taking off of winter clothes, a necessity in Alaska. Depending on their age at identification, some students spend one or two years in the program. At this time, 100% of the students in the Delta Elementary preschool program move on successfully to the mainstream Kindergarten classrooms. This program is crucial to the success our special needs youngsters are able to have entering kindergarten. It makes it possible for our kindergarten teachers to teach much more rigorous

content than they would be able to if they had to condition these kids to be students without preschool skills having been taught.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

At Delta Elementary, we educate the whole child. Each week, all students get two 40-minute physical education (PE) sessions, and one 40-minute session of music, social/emotional studies, and library. Every two weeks, they get one 45-minute session of art from a staff member with a degree in art therapy. We are fortunate to have an outstanding, certified PE teacher on staff. She takes student physical health very seriously and is committed to making sure each of our students has the tools necessary for a healthy lifestyle that lasts long after elementary school. She uses rubrics to grade, uses standards to guide instruction, collaborates with classroom teachers, and integrates their concepts into her PE lessons. She participates in national activities, such as Presidential Fitness and Jump Rope For Heart. She also has organized a very popular yearlong contest called Walking Club. Students tally laps walked around our playground path and win prizes. Staff are involved as well! Our library program has always been incredible. Our librarian runs the biannual book fair, our Reading Counts program, and the Battle of the Books. She makes reading more relevant to students by using themes. They learn about Alaskan topics, like the Iditarod, the aurora, Alaska's animals, etc., and national holidays. They also learn about school and community topics. Books are chosen for each theme that students can select from. For music this year, we have gotten creative and found a very talented community member who has been willing to work part time to teach music to each classroom weekly. She put on an amazing music performance at our Christmas Gala and is getting prepared for the Spring performance. Social emotional learning (SEL) has always been important to us at Delta Elementary, but the last two years we have really stepped it up to match the need caused by students not being able to be in school. Adoption of the MTSS program has allowed us to use the tier system for social/emotional and behavioral issues. All of our students get 40 minutes per week of SEL instruction from our child/family development coordinator. "Tier two" students receive small group and individual SEL in addition to the weekly lessons, and "Tier three" students receive weekly time with our district counselor and I-Team meeting with parents to discuss interventions. We also got creative with art. One of our staff members has a degree in art therapy, so we rearranged her schedule to teach art in each classroom biweekly for 45 minutes. This has been very successful because we have many students who are amazing at art and have really fallen in love with it. All of these programs are vital to the success that our school has enjoyed through the years and administrative support for them has made it possible to keep them going.

At DES we also have made the decision to purchase several online, supplementary curriculums. The purpose of this was to add a personalized component to our adopted curriculum, have a way to more easily facilitate students working from home when sick, to allow for enrichment, and make our curriculum more engaging. We have IXL which allows us to personalize completely based on MAP data, Mystery Science, which is an engaging program based on the NGSS standards that we have adopted. Generation Genius is one of the most popular delivery systems we have for science with the students because of the singing and dancing involved. Starfall is very popular with our K-1 students and a way to get them familiar with navigating devices and using them for learning. Scholastic Reading counts and news are also extremely useful in the classroom and reading counts is our school-wide reading for fun and competition program and there are many others that are used by grade level and individual teachers.

## **3. Academic Supports**

### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

In order to better meet the needs of Delta Junction/Fort Greely's struggling students, Delta Elementary has adopted a program called MTSS (Multi Tiered System of Support). This is a framework where we can provide specific intervention to students academically and social/emotionally based on their individual need. Three times a year, each student at Delta Elementary School is given two screening assessments (MAP and DIBELS) to determine his/her reading and math performance in addition to daily classroom assessment. We use this data (along with classroom assessment data) to determine if a child is at or above grade level academically (Tier 1), needs some additional intervention to be on grade level (Tier 2), or if significant intervention is warranted (Tier 3). We also monitor all children for social/emotional issues (behavior with

peers, depression, anger, adherence to school rules, etc.) and do the same thing. Students who show no or minimal SEL issues are Tier 1, students who have more but manageable SEL issues are Tier 2, and students who have a difficult time controlling their emotions and/or impulses are Tier 3. Students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for academics are exempt from this process because they already have an intervention plan.

All DES students receive the following interventions (Tier 1):

A. Use adopted curriculums. B. Why-Try SEL Curriculum. C. Progress Monitoring. D. Differentiated instruction. E. Parent/teacher communication through classroom and school media at least weekly. F. Positive behavior supports (School wide/Classroom). G. Classroom/school-wide formative assessment. H. DIBELS Assessment. I. MAP Assessment.

Students identified as “Tier 2” receive all of the interventions in tier 1, plus the following:

A. Level one I-Team meeting. B. (SEL) Why-Try SEL Curriculum with individual and small group support. C. Classroom level interventions from I-Team meeting and progress monitoring. D. Intervention room instruction. E. Parent/Teacher meetings to discuss intervention progress. F. Small Group instruction.

Finally, “Tier 3” students receive all of the Tier 1 and 2 interventions plus:

A. Additional Intervention room instruction. B. Classroom/School-Wide level interventions from I-Team Meeting and progress monitoring. C. Level Two I-Team Meeting with parents to discuss new intervention/possible other ideas. D. (SEL) Weekly meetings with counselor.

DES has an outstanding intervention team with years of experience who are a key part of the tier 2 and 3 student's system of support as the table shows. Continued progress monitoring is also a big part of the framework and students are moved from tier to tier as their needs change.

This is a district wide program so all DES students are under this umbrella of support (unless they have an IEP) and we feel that it is going to make a big difference in the educational lives of our struggling students.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

DES set a goal at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year for our teachers to expand differentiating instruction in the classroom. We actually wrote it into the district's strategic plan because we thought it was so important. This came about because of the previous year's Spring MAP data. One of the biggest takeaways was that many of our students, who were at the “Advanced” level in the Winter, dropped to proficient in the Spring. We put so much effort into trying to get students caught up who were behind due to our COVID issues that we really didn't give enough credence to our students who were above proficient. Our first step was to challenge teachers to begin using some sort of rotational grouping in math. This was a good place to start because our new math program recommends it and is set up for it. This kind of grouping allows the teacher to level their groups, challenge the more capable students, and remediate for the struggling ones. Once we set that goal and teachers bought in, they embraced they began experimenting, collaborating, and making it happen. Because of this, our winter data did not show the same pattern as last spring's data where our “Advanced” learners were concerned. They didn't fall to proficient nearly as bad. As more professional development time is devoted to differentiation and teachers see the success that comes from it, they will begin to do it more often across the curriculum. Many teachers already are and have been a great resource for the ones who are having a more difficult time breaking from more traditional styles of teaching.

DES also has some after-school programs that are geared more toward enrichment. We have Robotics, Lego League, Yearbook, and Ididamovie. All of these students are chosen by committee and are usually our more capable students.

We also have a system in place where (in extreme cases) we can move more advanced students up a grade in

math and reading. We also work with parents to decide whether or not it would be beneficial to advance them to the next grade and if it is, we are willing to do it.

### **3c. Special education:**

Delta Elementary strives to provide a well-rounded education for ALL of our students because we believe that ALL students are able to learn. Our special education program services students in different settings according to the needs of those who qualify for an Individualized Education Program (IEP). They are supported through our two resource rooms or are placed in their regular classroom with support from a paraprofessional. Two special education teachers and one speech and language pathologist service our special education students, one of which is our district SPED coordinator with over twenty years of experience. We have several instructional aides to reinforce and accommodate learning with our students who qualify as intensive needs. Special education students receive instruction in academics, social skills, behavioral supports, fine and gross motor training, and communication. Currently, over 20% of our student population have an IEP and are receiving services through the special education department. Whenever possible, our students are placed among their peers. At DES, we realize the importance of inclusion. It is the best practice not for only the special needs student, but the other students as well. They learn to be tolerant, empathetic, helpful and kind; and they serve as models for how students behave and perform. In the main hallway, we have a sensory walkway for students who struggle with motor skills. Our non-disabled students are always cheering them on as they use it, or use it themselves if no one else is. At DES, students with special needs are not tucked away from the rest of the school. They are always visible!

### **3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

The community of Delta Junction has a large Slavic population, and neighboring Fort Greely has a large population of soldiers from Puerto Rico. This creates a diverse group of students at Delta Elementary School. There have been years when we have had more than a third of our students with a second language in the home. Through our Title I funding, we are fortunate to be able to employ a full-time Reading Specialist and two full time classroom aides. In this way we are able to support our English Language Learners in a myriad of ways. Primarily we are able to pull students for small group interventions. We work closely with classroom teachers to support our bilingual students with their classwork. Classroom teachers also explicitly teach academic language to support our students. As needed, we are able to push into classrooms as well, to work with small groups of students during center time. Teachers strive to have classroom libraries that reflect our diverse learners. Technological supports are used as needed. One of our aides is a Dominant Language Tutor fluent in Spanish. We have another aide in our Special Education Department who is Slavic. Both serve as a translator for students as well as parents. Outside of the school day we work to honor the heritage of our students. Delta Elementary hosts an annual Family Literacy Night in which we incorporate stories and traditions of our local community. Our district is currently working under a Title III grant. Under this grant we are working to provide professional development for regular classroom teachers to give tools to support English Learners across the curriculum. The grant also allows us to purchase a curriculum specifically for ELL students. The district is continually looking to the future to find ways to continue to support our English Language Learners.

### **3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:**

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

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

Our staff has put a lot of time and effort into finding ways to make Delta Elementary “The place to be.” A school’s climate is easy to gauge as soon as a person enters the building, so our students are met with smiles and cheerful “good mornings” from the bus duty and drop off/pick up lane staff. The custodian and PE teacher always station themselves at the front entrance and greet everyone, the secretaries are busy meeting the needs of students and are always happy and cheerful, the teachers are standing outside their doors greeting the kids as they come in. Every morning, a fifth grade student announces the birthdays, date, temperature, lunch menu, and leads the school in the Pledge of Allegiance. Our teachers understand and are well educated on the value of engagement in the classroom. We also have many positive behavior supports in place, such as our monthly super citizen program (teachers choose one or two students who have done a great job being respectful, helpful, kind, and always do their best get recognized at the assembly, in the paper, and get to have ice cream with the principal). Students, caught being good (students are sent to the principal’s office who have done something notable for an “Atta boy or girl” and a prize from his prize box. The school has a rocket club (where each teacher chooses one student who does their very best most often to spend three sessions with me learning about rocketry). Students build and fly their own rocket in our end-of-the-year rocket launch which the whole community can attend. All teachers have some form of classroom level positive behavior system in place, like Dojo points, marble jars, etc. We also have reading challenges throughout the year. When a schoolwide goal is met, the principal has to do some crazy activity, like kiss a pig, eat dog food, etc. We hold monthly assemblies where students are recognized for a variety of accomplishments. We have extracurricular clubs available as well. Student can participate in Ididamovie (a statewide movie making contest that our school dominates year after year), little dribblers, the yearbook club, Lego league, Robotics, Nordic ski club, and more. We also support our students’ participation in our local youth hockey and wrestling leagues. We also encourage teachers to take their kids on field trips often. They have easy access to vans, so they can transport classes to the many learning opportunities interior Alaska has to offer outside of the school. We invite groups to come to our school and put on shows as well, such as the Far North Jumpers and Lathrop Ballroom Dancers. Classroom teachers understand the value of having a fun, vibrant classroom where management is concerned. Their students don't want to miss out on the fun so they behave!

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

Here at DES, communication with stakeholders is a priority. We have a very comprehensive webpage, a Facebook page that is extremely popular, and parent/community meetings every month. We send out weekly emails to parents and all upcoming events, our honor roll, notable happenings and recognition is sent to the local paper and news webpage. Also, all teachers have a media page of some sort that they use daily to keep parents informed.

Because educating children “takes a village,” Delta Elementary enjoys many valuable partnerships throughout not only the community, but the state as well. The most important is that with the 49th Missile Defense division at Fort Greely. The military presence at our school is a source of pride for our students and staff. Soldiers are there to greet kids the first and last day of school, judge our science fair, read to students regularly in the classroom, serve food at our Christmas program, etc. Our students can use the base swimming pool for third grade swimming lessons and the base community center for bowling trips, movies, etc. The community also donates prizes for our science fair. Nearly \$1000 dollars is awarded to participants each year from various businesses and entities. We have a great relationship with the local fish and game department. They take students on field trips, do presentations in classrooms, and have set up a full body adult bison skeleton in our foyer. The local farm bureau works with the soil and water conservation district to organize field trips to local farms every Spring, and they donate soil to all of the teachers for planting projects. The Gulkana Hatchery invites classes to come to field trips every spring and fall and they present in classrooms as well. The Fort Greely fire and our Delta fire department come each year during fire prevention week to do classroom presentations and to take the students through their portable “burning trailer.” Our local dentist comes in and teaches our students about good dental hygiene. We also share many



events and resources with our community library. The local Alaska State Trooper post comes in often and talks to the students.

Delta Elementary puts on regular community events every year that are usually attended by over 500 people. The first is our Halloween Trunk or Treat event. A pulled pork dinner is served, the fire department sets up a big bon fire, different groups set up games, and trunks are decorated from members of the staff and community. It's cold, but hundreds show up and have a ball. We put on a Christmas art gala/music performance. The school is decorated inside and out, student Christmas crafts and projects are displayed, and each grade level performs Christmas song and dance sets. The community brings in Christmas goodies to graze on, and Santa comes! We do a STEM night/science fair each March. The community donates prizes and staff and community entities set up science activities for the students. A dinner is served as well. We have a Literacy Night where students can participate in a variety of literacy-based games and activities. This is one of our most popular events. The STEM and LIT night's purpose is to show the importance of, and to get community members excited about math, science, and reading.

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

Making sure all of my staff members feel valued and supported has been the principal's number one challenge as the new DES principal. COVID has made it that much more difficult. Luckily, our district was only social distancing and distance learning for the last two months of 2019-2020, and the first half of the 2020-2021 year. After Christmas, we were back to business as usual much to the relief of the majority of our staff members and the community. During that time, teachers really struggled. Social distancing was very difficult. We simply had too many students and not enough staff or rooms to manage them and keep them apart. Teachers were teaching everything twice. We treated it like rotational grouping where one group was always in an overflow room. It worked, but it was a high stress situation for everyone involved, especially the students. We supported staff members by doubling our recess time, giving them an extra prep period per day, and being much more lenient with leave. We also added some extra planning time during professional development (PD) days and collaboration time, and gave them an extra hour per week with no students. During distance delivered instruction, teachers were carefully trained in the best way to deliver instruction, and then given the freedom to choose what method they liked best. Teachers were able to work from home and were given access 24/7 to our technical team for assistance. We also decided that we would not force teachers to do classroom instruction and distance delivered instruction simultaneously. This not only puts ridiculous amounts of undo stress on teachers, it isn't good practice. When teachers try to do both at the same time, both suffer. We also listened to our teachers during COVID. Teachers participated in the planning sessions, and whenever they had an idea to lighten their load or improve what we were doing, we listened. We treated the whole process like action research and used the data gathered to make changes on the fly.

During the current school year, absenteeism for students and staff members has been the biggest challenge, followed closely by the students who returned from homeschool or did not attend school at all the previous year. COVID-19 infections and quarantines have caused student attendance to drop from the lower 90 percent range to the mid 80's, and teachers have been forced to get those students work to do at home, and then catch them up when they return. We have let parents know that absent students will not receive instruction; they will receive work that must be completed. If they do not complete the work, they will have to do it when they return. It isn't optional. Administration has supported teachers in this endeavor by making parents aware of this policy and making students accountable for their work. We are also purchasing non-adopted, online curriculum resources to assist teachers in assigning work that is relevant so they don't have to gather so many resources and copy. IXL, BrainPOP, Mystery Science, Generation Genius, Starfall and More Starfall, are some of the more popular ones we have made available. To help teachers with students who this year came in far below grade level, we have hired extra interventionists to work with our tier 3 students. We have a total of five, non-special education staff members whose responsibility it is to fill holes in student's learning. Teachers use assessment data and their professional judgment to direct interventionists; and, all are given plenty of collaboration time. In addition, we have made it so teachers get five hours per week of planning time during student hours. Most of our PD time is directed by our own teachers and our staff members are recognized for what they do in a biweekly spotlight. In addition, we had a masseuse come in and give massages to all of our staff this year!

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

Delta Elementary has one principal who is assisted when needed by the special education director/teacher who is on staff. The goal of leadership at this school is for it to run effortlessly in leadership's absence. Leadership is shared here. Decisions are made with the input of staff whenever possible; and, when not possible, staff criticism is sought and listened to. Nothing is more frustrating for stakeholders than a directive given with no input allowed that could be tweaked to work much more effectively. Here, staff is heard. Mistakes made by administration are expected to be called to their attention so they can be learned from and fixed. The goal of DES is to improve student achievement and teachers, administrators, custodians, paraprofessionals, secretaries, maintenance workers, interventionists, and parents/guardians all have valuable input in the process. The principal is also the instructional leader. He/she works with teachers to find ways to improve the progress of all students. They collaborate, set goals, and then the principal gives teachers the tools and training they need to make those goals a reality. In the last two years, the vision of an MTSS protocol and differentiated instruction was brought to the staff. Even during the COVID issues, teacher could see the importance of both and collaboration began. The MTSS system is in full swing now and about 70 percent of the teachers do some kind of differentiated instruction each day. The work ethic here is incredible and contagious. Teachers are passionate about seeing every one of their students grow to their potential. Administration recognizes this, gives them what they need to succeed, and keeps them moving in the right direction. Administration at DES also makes sure staff members do not have to deal with any unpleasant behavior from parents. All disgruntled guardian issues are to be directed to the principal. Parents are well-aware of this policy and usually respect it. Instances where they do confront staff members are dealt with as soon as the principal is made aware. DES staff is expected to always treat parents with the utmost respect and that respect needs to be returned. If parents have issues that may cause them to be the slightest bit aggressive, they understand that they are to take them up directly with the principal.

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

DES serves a community of approximately 1500 people in Delta Junction plus around 700 from Fort Greely. Our 350-member student body is incredibly diverse considering our small size and isolated geography. Delta is about 40% Russian/Ukrainian, and most of our Slavic students are ELL. Fort Greely's security forces are mostly from Puerto Rico, so we also have many Spanish speaking students. We also have the normal diversity that a military base brings along with some native Alaskan students. We embrace that diversity at DES and celebrate it. We have Spanish and Russian speaking people on our staff that assist in translating and assisting with language issues. Our intervention team doubles as an ELL program and all students who struggle are given interventions. The MTSS system allows for tailoring interventions according to the needs of each individual student, so ELL intervention is a big part of our program. This year, our family literacy night is also doubling as a cultural event by having a "Reading around the World" theme. Visitors will get a "passport" with four spaces - one for each room where a different culture is represented. Members of the community or staff representing that culture will read, tell stories, play games, etc. that represent their people. Every year from now on, one of our community events will be a cultural event.

At DES, we also encourage all cultures to mix. Students are encouraged to play with kids outside of their cultural group. Teachers use seating and grouping strategies to encourage this and when class lists are created, the mixing of cultures is a priority. Students are educated through our social/emotional instructor and counselor about the value of including all social groups and how to prevent non-inclusive behavior. Parents are aware of the value of this as well along with our policies about bullying and discrimination which we have zero tolerance for.

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

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Without a doubt, the factor that has had the most impact on the success of Delta Elementary School has been the practice of finding and supporting strong teachers. When a new teacher enters this school for the first time, they are overwhelmed simply by what they see on the bulletin boards outside of the classrooms. They see rich writing, beautiful art, and incredible science and social studies projects. Then they meet their new colleagues and their anxiety goes even higher when they collaborate. They witness the passion the seasoned teachers have for student improvement and the incredible knowledge they possess about instructional strategies, assessment, and classroom management. When the new teachers see the students move in the halls and interact with their teachers, the stress level goes up a bit more. The students are well behaved, respectful, and the teachers are enjoying interacting with them. The strong relationship that has been built between the students and their teacher is obvious. New teachers wonder how they will ever be able to fit in. Then they get to know their new coworkers and their anxiety begins to wane. They quickly learn that the seasoned teachers are excited about mentoring their new colleague and trying to make them feel like they are one of the team. They are quick to share resources and advise. They are willing to allow the new teacher to observe them in the classroom. They also make the new teacher feel useful and important by picking their brain about some of the cutting edge new things they have learned from college and student teaching, or their last position. Slowly their confidence builds as the relationship with the rest of their team grows stronger. The new teacher wants to reach for the high bar that has been set. They want to be great. This pattern has repeated itself over and over to create the culture of excellence in teaching that exists at DES. Turnover is very low, especially when you factor in the military lifestyle and the insanely harsh and long winters. Administrators support teachers. Leadership is shared and teachers have a voice. They are evaluated fairly, honestly, often, and given feedback. They are asked how they are doing and if there is anything they need. Teachers are supported by administration, sheltered from disgruntled parents, and assisted with unruly students. There is no better place to teach and because of that, there is no better place to learn.