

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 12000 Lorraine Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Anchorage State AK Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 99516-2160

County Anchorage Municipality

Telephone (907) 742-5650 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL https://www.asdk12.org/huffman E-mail hickox\_molly@asdk12.org

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

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

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Jharrett Bryantt E-mail bryantt\_jharrett@asdk12.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Anchorage School District Tel. (907) 742-4000

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 Margo Bellamy  
(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 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):
- 64 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 11 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 15 High schools
  - 7 K-12 schools
- 97 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                  | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| K                     | 17         | 19           | 36          |
| 1                     | 19         | 29           | 48          |
| 2                     | 24         | 23           | 47          |
| 3                     | 31         | 31           | 62          |
| 4                     | 19         | 26           | 45          |
| 5                     | 33         | 32           | 65          |
| 6                     | 25         | 26           | 51          |
| 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> | 168        | 186          | 354         |

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 % Asian
  - 3 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 69 % White
  - 13 % 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: 17%

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

As a district, we started the 2020-21 school year fully online with no return date identified. We returned to in person learning in January 2021 with a mask mandate. The majority of our students transferring in or out were related to the pandemic and issues with online learning and health concerns when we returned in person.

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   | 29            |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year | 25            |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]  | 54            |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020   | 326           |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)   | 0.17          |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100  | 17            |

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

Korean, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Yupik, Creole, Filipino, Hmong, Samoan

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 19 %

Total number students who qualify: 66

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 10 %  
37 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>2</u> Autism                  | <u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</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: 1
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.  | 15                     |
| 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.   | 8                      |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 1                      |

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 24:1

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    | 97%       | 96%       | 94%       | 94%       | 95%       |
| High school graduation rate | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        |

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

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

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

The Huffman Commitment: We will support every student, staff member, and family to develop and maintain a safe, welcoming and inclusive learning community. We are committed to continuously improving our professional practices and take responsibility for the academic, social, and emotional growth of our diverse learners. We believe all people can grow in a positive direction.

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

The School Board is committed to equal opportunity for all individuals in education. District programs and activities shall be free from discrimination based on sex, race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, physical or mental disability, Vietnam era veteran status, genetic information, good faith reporting to the board on a matter of public concern, or any other unlawful consideration. The Board shall promote programs which ensure that discriminatory practices are eliminated in all District activities.

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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Huffman is a K-6 elementary school located in the south end of the foothills in Anchorage, Alaska. We are a community-centered school that was first opened in 1973. Our neighborhood consists of established homesteads with families who have lived in the area for a long time, combined with newer subdivisions. Our families have diverse backgrounds and maintain their livelihoods in industries ranging from traditional working class backgrounds, such as construction and public works to high level professionals in areas including oil and gas development and the financial services sector. One common bond our families share is their commitment to our school community and coming together to provide opportunities for our students. This is evident in the family atmosphere that exists at Huffman. We have many parents in our community who attended Huffman as children, and now we are proud to serve the next generation of students. We have very low teacher turnover, and a majority of our teachers live in our attendance area and their children have attended Huffman. These community connections allow our staff to connect with students not only in the school and in the classroom, but in the larger community as well. Teachers, students, and staff are on an educational journey together here at Huffman. Students know that each and every staff member in the building is there to support their needs and they have no fear of talking to an adult they don't recognize. The sentiment at Huffman is that we are all in this together to support everyone.

As a school, we use our Huffman Commitment to drive our work. We will support every student, staff member, and family to develop and maintain a safe, welcoming and inclusive learning community. We are committed to continuously improving our professional practices and take responsibility for the academic, social, and emotional growth of our diverse learners. We believe all people can grow in a positive direction. In recent years, this commitment has driven our work to improve our literacy instruction using current research in the Science of Reading (SOR). Through extensive professional development and support from our Instructional Coach (IC), we have transformed the way we teach reading, particularly in the primary grades. Our teaching and support staff work together collaboratively to improve student achievement and outcomes, and we understand that we all have a responsibility to all of our students, regardless of job title. By sharing the workload and the responsibility for achievement, we create the collective efficacy necessary to improve student outcomes.

One of the innovative ways we engage with our students is through our natural environment and the shared value of outdoor recreation. We are fortunate to have a city park adjacent to our school, and we utilize the park and local volunteers to get our students outside and moving, both during and outside the school day. Our Physical Education (PE) program introduces students to popular winter sports, such as ice skating, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) helps maintain an ice rink, trail grooming in the park, and sponsors teachers to run after-school clubs to foster their outdoor recreational pursuits. We have a tradition of successful family engagement events, such as Family Skate Night, Winter Sports Day, and a Jog-a-Thon which students and families look forward to each year. Attendance at these events is strong. By engaging our students in our local outdoor environment, we are able to deepen their connection to our school and local community, which creates a sense of trust helping to foster academic connection and achievement.

During the past two years of the pandemic, Huffman was able to adapt our instruction to meet the needs of students and keep them engaged in our community, even as they were attending school remotely. Our district was able to deploy Chromebooks to all students, and we worked with local internet companies to provide service to families who didn't have sufficient connectivity. Classroom teachers developed explicit lessons that included slide decks aligned with our curriculum and kept student learning targets visible. Teachers offered open office hours to connect with families to address individual needs. They also sent materials home including work packets, books, and art projects. Our specialists hosted their own Zoom classes in their content areas, created additional online content for students to access on their own, and taught small group sessions for students who needed additional support. The principal engaged families with proactive communication about online learning and expectations and was a community leader in preparing the school for the return to in-person learning in January 2021. When we did return to in-person learning, our model of community had totally changed as classrooms were not able to mingle within the school, and we did not hold any schoolwide events. Our focus moving forward is to slowly reintegrate these schoolwide

and community events back into our program, as we know our community is at the heart of what we do at our school.

## **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:**

Huffman is committed to helping all students achieve growth and success. We embrace explicit and systematic instruction using evidence-based materials. Grade level instructional teams work collaboratively to design and plan instruction; and, this sharing of the workload allows our teams to benefit from each teacher's strengths. Our master schedule gives dedicated and protected time for core content areas and allows us to incorporate all of our staff, including specialists, to assist in academic instruction. Grade levels teams have common subject area times to provide for support from special education and other building specialists. All staff support all students, not solely the ones within their home classroom.

Our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework helps to ensure we are monitoring both academic and behavioral progress and are ready to make adjustments and interventions when needed. Our Tier 1 core instruction is intended to meet the needs of 80% of our students, while some students may need the targeted support of Tier 2 instruction, and a few may need individualized or intensified Tier 3 instruction. Student learning and behavioral data is reviewed constantly, and all decision making is done with a focus on students first.

To help meet our intervention needs, our master schedule includes What I Need (WIN) time. WIN is a daily intervention block for every classroom and grade level at Huffman. Students are grouped based on specific academic areas of need initially determined by benchmark assessments. WIN can look different across grade levels, from specific intervention curriculum to teacher directed support activities. The small groups can fluctuate and are determined from a variety of assessment data points and anecdotal data taken throughout the year. We routinely change these groups whenever new data is presented so that we can actively respond to student needs.

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

Huffman uses the Cengage Reach for Reading curriculum in grades K-5 for our Tier 1 core language arts instruction to address the foundations of literacy. This program was chosen to address Common Core State Standards (CCSS) with an emphasis on using science and social studies content, in addition to narrative text, to reach literacy goals. Our district has modified the curriculum by creating Priority Plans in grades K-5, to further focus instruction on priority standards and align with research-based teaching practices. Teachers use the Priority Plans with fidelity to ensure all students are receiving rigorous core instruction. Sixth grade utilizes the SpringBoard language arts program which intentionally aligns our instruction with the rigor required as students move to middle school. Across the grade levels, Alaska State Language Arts Standards are addressed with prioritized weekly reading and writing standards that are made visible to students.

In kindergarten through second grade, a purposeful emphasis on phonics instruction is the foundation. Skills are taught in an explicit, systematic manner with the use of decodables for students to practice learned skills and achieve mastery. Phonics skills are taught with consistent routines across grade levels and are evidence-based for effectiveness. Teachers incorporate the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness curriculum daily to solidify student skills. All phonics instruction is grounded in current research related to the SOR. Formative assessments, such as clipboard checks and exit tickets, are analyzed weekly during Professional Learning Community (PLC) time, and this data analysis is used to drive instruction.

In grades three through six, core reading instruction focuses on the comprehension of complex texts. A variety of text types provides students with an opportunity to apply standards across both fiction and non-fiction texts in a variety of genres. Students also receive continued phonics and morphology instruction when indicated. Vocabulary development is practiced daily and is aligned with the variety of text from the student anthologies. Writing instruction pairs with reading instruction, with a focus on text-dependent

questions and the various forms of writing. Exit tickets are used weekly and aligned to priority standards to inform instruction.

Students take benchmark assessments three times a year, utilizing FastBridge for early reading skills and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) for comprehension for older students. If we do not have 80% of students meeting the benchmark, we intensify our Tier 1 core instruction at that grade level. For individual students scoring below the benchmark, phonics and decoding screeners are used to identify gaps so students can receive targeted support during intervention groups. FastBridge is also used as a progress monitoring tool for early reading skills for students receiving these reading interventions. In addition, students in grades three and above participate in our state summative assessment each spring. Huffman also uses the i-Ready program for reading and math, which utilizes diagnostics that determine a student's instructional pathway. Student growth is monitored by teachers within the program to support student progress.

As students demonstrate a need for reading intervention, our intervention groups target specific skills using Phonics for Reading, Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS), Equipped for Reading Success, Reading Mastery, or Corrective Reading. Students are grouped based on needs identified through multiple points of data and fluently change as needed. Student groups address both those students who need Tier 2 or 3 interventions, as well as those ready for enrichment.

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

Ready Classroom Mathematics is our district-adopted math program. It was chosen for the comprehensive resources available and with the goal of developing strong, independent mathematical thinkers. Alaska State Math Standards and Standards for Mathematical Practice are addressed through a variety of structures and routines. "I Can" statements are made visible to students for each lesson. We utilize the Try-Discuss-Connect model to encourage deep thinking and discussion about mathematical concepts. Students first try a problem on their own, and then have the opportunity to discuss their thinking in partners or small groups. Through this practice, they learn to evaluate other's thinking and explore different methods for solving problems. In the Connect portion, teachers can guide student thinking to apply their learning to solving new problems. This supports students to think critically and utilize past knowledge when approaching a problem, not just applying what they learned during that particular lesson. Students are encouraged to use a variety of visual models and manipulatives to solve problems which helps meet the students where they are in their learning. This critical thinking strategy is supported by all teachers, who put a heavy emphasis on the fluency of math vocabulary.

In addition to explicit classroom instruction, our program utilizes a digital component to support learning. At the beginning of the year, students take an online math diagnostic test through i-Ready, which is an adaptive test to determine student learning targets. This program creates an individualized instructional pathway unique to each student's needs. Students spend a minimum of 40 minutes per week using the online program, which supplements their math learning goals. Teachers monitor student progress on these virtual lessons and can assign or deliver specific skill-based lessons to meet individual needs.

Math assessment takes on many different forms in our program. Within the classroom program, lesson quizzes provide immediate formative feedback to teachers on individual skills, while unit assessments provide summative data on all of the standards addressed within a particular unit. As we are in an implementation phase with this program, all student learning data is evaluated at the school level and also at the district level. The data is used to identify any gaps in student learning that may be due to implementation, unfinished learning, or other factors. We facilitate discussions during our quarterly data meetings to identify trends we may be seeing schoolwide and identify strategies to overcome any gaps we might see. In addition to the assessments within the program, our students take benchmark universal assessments three times per year using FastBridge for early math skills, and MAP for older students. This benchmark data is used to assess student needs and adjustments are made to the student's learning to support in-class instruction. If we determine that a student needs intensified support with the online learning program, teachers provide that support directly with the student, and the teacher uses the tools and reports within the program to monitor progress. Summative assessment data is reviewed at both the building and

district level to look for trends and as a way to evaluate the effectiveness of individuals, teams, and materials.

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

Huffman utilizes a science kit approach to science instruction, where hands-on learning activities are standardized and packaged together by district instructional leaders and provided to each classroom teacher. Each semester, kits are delivered to classrooms that align instruction to Alaska State Science Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. These kits include all of the materials needed for the lesson with both supplemental and enrichment activities to enhance and maximize learning. Utilizing these kits and outside resources, teachers create customized lessons and learning plans which engage every student in their classroom. The goal of our elementary science instruction is to provide students with opportunities focused on inquiry and engineering design, and to build student capacity to solve real world problems. Instruction builds from the study of patterns in kindergarten, to forces and motion, animals, earth science, physical science, space science, energy, and computer science, as students grow in their learning. In addition to our district science kits, classroom teachers also utilize Place Based Learning to anchor activities into our local environment and community. Using this approach, we currently have classrooms growing their own food using hydroponic tower gardens as a way to bring their learning alive.

The science kit program has allowed Huffman teachers to customize their classroom learning targets regarding science, as we work to recover some of the unfinished learning due to COVID mitigation and online learning. Our reading program includes a wide variety of science texts within the core curriculum in the student anthology, which allows teachers to also address science literacy through language arts instruction. The science kits contain non-fiction science texts, which provides additional opportunities to engage in science content through literacy. In addition to embedded assessments within each unit of the science kits, students are formally assessed in science using the Alaska Science Assessment in 5th grade.

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

Our Huffman social studies curriculum begins with an emphasis on learning about our immediate environment in kindergarten, and builds through an understanding of our city, state, country, and world. A focus on history and civics promotes the foundation of working towards a common good. In the primary grades, a large focus of instruction includes the history of our great state, the city of Anchorage, and the Alaska Native cultures that provide a unique perspective and richness to our community. In the intermediate grades, early civilizations and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas are introduced and lead to studies of America's history, geography, economics, and civics. Sixth graders delve deeply into studies of immigration, human rights, and conflicts. When appropriate, students are given the opportunity to participate in field trips that give them hands-on experience within their community to reinforce and create discussion on topics covered in the classroom. For example, third graders may go to the Alaska Native Heritage Center where they will explore and learn about the ways different Alaska Native groups lived in the past and how they used natural resources to survive. This experience allows them to see how their own life has been shaped by those who came before them.

Teachers at Huffman share the goal of helping students build their critical thinking skills about the world around them and their place in it, to promote a cohesive community. The practice of mutual respect and consideration remains a strong foundation and principle in discussions and discovery. Representatives from various Alaska Native and American Indian groups have been invited to our classrooms, to ensure our representation of Native American culture is accurately reflected in our classrooms. Assessment in social studies is mainly formative in nature and aligns with the Alaska Content Standards for Social Studies. Formative assessments are utilized to tailor instruction to meet the needs of all students, by further developing instructional strategies to maximize individual student learning.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

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

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

Huffman students have two hours of art instruction per month where they learn foundational skills in drawing, painting, collage, clay and paper sculpture, printing, and fibers. They also learn about artists, art movements, and traditional arts from Alaska and around the world. Every project from kindergarten to 6th grade allows for significant creative decision making on the part of the student-artist. By 5th and 6th grade, students have 5-8 weeks of Open Studio in art class, meaning they have access to multiple media to design and create their own project from their own ideas.

K-6 students have one hour of music instruction each week where they engage in meaningful, culturally relevant experiences in listening, instrumental music, vocal music, and dance. Our music teacher employs Orff techniques allowing students of all ages and abilities to have ensemble experiences combining dance, singing and instruments playing together. We strive to create empathy through cultural barriers by making connections with music and the students' own culture in an environment where creativity is valued and rewarded. We are proud our classroom experiences and skill development are informed by real world professional musician knowledge. Our 6th grade students also have the opportunity to join a beginning band or orchestra class, where they receive over 90 minutes of instruction each week.

The Huffman School Library is a unique and essential part of our learning community. It provides learners with access to a wide variety of information resources which support and enhance academic needs and personal interests and connects classroom learning to real-world events. Students can visit the library before school each day, and they have 30 minutes of library class each week. The mission of the Huffman Elementary School Library is to ensure students and staff are effective users of ideas and information; and, students are empowered to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information. Our library strives to ensure all students have engaging and accurate materials checked out to them daily to support literacy and lifelong learning. Information and reading materials are provided in a variety of print and electronic formats and on a wide range of reading and interest levels, representing multiple points of view.

All students attend P.E. classes twice a week with the goal of teaching the skills that lead to enjoyment of lifelong physical activity. We know student participation in regular physical activity has been linked to improved academic performance and brain functions, such as attention and memory, and that physical activity can reduce stress, improve mood, and improve self-esteem. P.E. also provides many opportunities for students to learn to work cooperatively, problem solve and develop persistence in the face of challenges. Students also attend two hours per month of Health classes, where the focus is on all aspects of physical and emotional health.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is infused throughout the school day and also taught explicitly once per week in every classroom. These lessons focus on developing skills for learning, empathy, emotional management and problem solving skills. Huffman uses the Second Steps curriculum to teach the skills necessary to interact positively with other students and the adults in their lives. Teachers supplement this curriculum with age-appropriate life lessons engaging students with real life SEL examples.

### **3. Academic Supports**

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

Our MTSS process informs our decision making for students performing below grade level. Our school-based MTSS team includes the Principal, Instructional Coach, and a Teacher Leader. This process includes informing parents of concerns and consulting with support personnel [English Language Learners (ELL) staff, Resource staff, previous teachers, and specialists]. Additionally, the team will convene a professionals meeting to develop strategies and interventions specific to student needs and review any past data that may

have an impact on student achievement. Behavioral needs are also addressed at this meeting if behavior is impacting student learning.

A targeted intervention plan is developed collaboratively by the team which includes a specific learning goal and is then implemented by the classroom teacher. During the course of the intervention, progress is monitored and data is collected. After 4-6 weeks, the team meets again to assess the intervention using the data collected by the teacher. If the student is making adequate progress towards the goal, the intervention continues and can fade over time if appropriate. If the student is not making progress, the intervention is changed or modified in terms of intensity, frequency, or duration, and the new intervention is implemented for another period of 4-6 weeks. All changes are documented on a standardized form available electronically to all members of the team.

If adequate progress is not being made after implementation and monitoring of various intervention strategies, the team may request a Student Support Team meeting where all intervention and progress data is reviewed. If it is determined that interventions have been effectively implemented and there continues to be a lack of progress, the team may consider moving to an intensified plan that could include Tier 3 replacement curriculum, 504 support, special education, and/or a functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plan.

We currently have several subgroups of students who are not achieving at the same level as their peers. These groups include economically disadvantaged students, our Alaska Native/American Indian population, and our Asian/Pacific Islander population. To address these needs, we are committed to using our MTSS process universally, regardless of background. We are also committed to improving our understanding of issues related to equity and diversity. Through professional development, we are starting to have conversations about the historical barriers to success that different populations experience, and how we can eliminate those barriers and provide additional support for those affected in our school.

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

As well as supporting students who are behind grade level expectations, Huffman also diligently works to enrich the curriculum of students who perform above grade level. The Reach for Reading and SpringBoard language arts curriculums both provide extension opportunities for students. Book studies allow students to extend their reading and utilize higher-level thinking skills in response to the texts. i-Ready instructional pathways in both math and reading meet students at their instructional level and continue to build upon those skills, helping to provide advanced content when indicated. Data from MAP assessments helps teachers to determine what students are ready to learn and to tailor their enrichment instruction based on those areas. Teachers utilize and develop their instruction to provide a challenging and supportive environment for students who are performing above grade level, while also ensuring this instruction integrates and supports the interaction of all students in the classroom. Classroom teachers also work with other professionals in the building to develop and challenge their students who perform above their grade level. The specialists at Huffman (art, health, physical education, music and library teachers) support student learning during the WIN block and provide opportunities for above grade level students to expand their knowledge. This level of coordinated support and instruction, among and across specialties and general education teachers, provides a continually adjusting level of support, which maximizes student interest, learning, and achievement. In addition, Huffman has a gifted program providing additional support and enrichment to students who benefit from additional challenges. Students who qualify for the gifted program participate in a weekly extension class designed to promote critical thinking and problem solving. Students participate in project-based learning, passion projects, and focused unit instruction.

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

Huffman believes in an inclusive environment for students of all abilities. Before students qualify for special education support, they are tracked through our MTSS process to monitor general education interventions. If progress is not made, the Student Support Team may decide to pursue a special education evaluation. Our resource teachers provide several levels of support based on student needs determined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students may receive inclusive classroom support during their core instruction

time from a teacher's aide or resource teacher, or they may stay with their general education peers for core instruction, followed by small group or individual support in the special education setting. Our highest level of support for resource students is targeted small group or individual support with a replacement curriculum in the special education setting. The goal for students with IEPs is always to close their achievement gap and transition back to the lowest level of support in the general education setting as quickly as possible. Currently, our students with disabilities are not achieving academic success at the same rate as their non-disabled peers. One way we are addressing this is to make sure that regardless of a student's ability, they have access to grade level content in whatever setting best suits their needs.

For students who are two years or more below grade level benchmarks, Huffman houses an Extended Resource classroom. Students in this program receive their core instruction in replacement curriculum as needed, but are also members of a general education classroom that they join for specials (P.E., library, art, music), as well as science or social studies as appropriate. Our special education teachers work closely with our general education staff as team members and a resource to share ideas and interventions when needed. Huffman teachers believe all kids are our kids and this inclusive belief guides our practice of supporting all students.

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

At Huffman, English Language Learners (ELL) are supported in the classroom by an ELL tutor and by an ELL teacher on consultation. Support is immersed within the regular school day and differentiated by the need level of the student. Focus is given to help students gain academic language skills necessary to be successful. Our ELL population currently has a higher proportion of students who are not proficient in math and reading when compared to our overall student population. One focus area this year has been to work closely with our MTSS team and our ELL staff to help determine whether a student's needs may be related to language acquisition, or other factors that may influence learning. We are able to bring in native language speakers to assess students in their home language to help make this determination. We are committed to giving our ELL students the specific support they need while they acquire the language skills necessary to make academic progress at school.

Given annually in February, ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) testing determines a student's language proficiency in the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Using the data from this assessment, descriptors of what a student can do are generated. The tutor uses these to build the student's language proficiency and to work with the classroom teacher to help them understand the student's needs. This embedded support allows students to grow while being immersed in grade level curriculum.

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

Huffman students experiencing homelessness or in foster care are supported through our district's Child in Transition program, which works to guarantee children are given access to receive the same educational opportunities as other students. Families are provided with transportation support so students can continue to attend the same school throughout the year, regardless of their current living situation. At Huffman, this population is small enough that we are able to provide individualized support for these students. In most cases, the school nurse or another trusted adult checks in with the students on a daily basis to make sure their basic needs are being met. The nurse regularly communicates with classroom teachers to provide information on any outside factors that might influence student learning during the day. The front office staff work closely with our Child in Transition program and foster parents to ensure communication is open and consistent. We strive to provide the safety and stability these students deserve during turbulent times.

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

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

The foundation of our school climate and culture is built on relationships and collaboration. Our staff work together collaboratively to achieve the shared goals and mission of growth for all in our school community, and a positive relationship with school and learning. All staff build positive relationships with their students starting on the very first day of school, and that relationship builds throughout the year. We keep parents informed of what is happening at school and invite their participation in numerous ways. All adults in the building model respect and friendliness in their daily interactions with each other and with students.

Students are engaged daily in Social Emotional Learning (SEL), which provides each student with scenarios of real-life challenges students may face in their classrooms and everyday lives. Students are prompted through discussion to address real-life challenges and solutions and come up with effective strategies for dealing with these challenges in a positive and productive way. Each student's own academic, social, and emotional growth is supported and encouraged in discussion, allowing all students to feel valued in their own cultural identities and viewpoints. Students are also provided with activities, both during and after school, to promote positive social interactions.

We encourage positive student behavior with a schoolwide behavior incentive program. Our expectations are that Huffman Huskies are safe, respectful, responsible, friendly, and caring. We highlight these traits in our Husky Hollers program, where individual students are recognized for exemplifying these traits throughout each day. Students can earn a Husky Holler, which gives them the opportunity to add their name to a paper chain link that lines the hallways. Once this chain reaches a certain length, we have a schoolwide event to celebrate our shared success. Not only do we encourage individual accountability, but we recognize the shared goal of the entire student body.

We support a variety of extracurricular activities and projects which enhance our curricular goals and increase student connection. One example is our I-Did-A-Read program, which is a uniquely Alaskan program tying reading minutes to the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. Our students log reading minutes and move their dog along a replica of the trail that winds throughout our hallways, stopping at different checkpoints for incentives on their way to the finish line at Nome. Some other activities encouraging connection and engagement include winter sports day, running club, Battle of the Books, field day, math and science night, and participation in student council.

During school closures due to COVID, student engagement was achieved through multiple points of access and contact. Daily instruction was provided through scheduled class Zoom sessions, and students were given additional session opportunities throughout the day to focus on specific subjects for additional support. There were also allotted times for math and reading assistance, problem solving, and conference times for parents to address concerns or questions about student learning. Specialists were an integral part of grade level instruction. They worked with small groups as needed to fill learning gaps and also provided online instruction in their own content areas. They were essential to the feeling of community Huffman was able to maintain through the experience of distant learning. Our library stayed open during COVID closures, but not in the traditional sense. Library services were moved online and curbside pickup was offered. Families were able to request books and pick them up without leaving their car. In the height of the pandemic, up to 100 families participated weekly.

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

At Huffman, we work in collaboration with business partners, the University of Alaska, community non-profits, parent volunteers, our local high school, and an involved and supportive PTO. We partner with many local restaurants to provide opportunities for school funding through fundraising opportunities, and to provide prizes and incentives for our extracurricular programs and our positive behavior program. Frequent fundraising opportunities through these various business partners allows our school to diversify our revenue opportunities, while also providing choices for parents in providing financial support.

Working with the University of Alaska (UA) brings pre-service teachers into our school, providing an ongoing and present connection to educational learning, theory, practice, and research, while also providing additional support for student success and school improvement. We work closely with UA to train and mentor pre-service teachers. In addition, we work with the same university to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities for our staff through credit classes and advanced degree programs.

We partner with Beans Café, a non-profit organization with a mission to feed the hungry and homeless in our area, for one of our favorite school programs. Before school is out for the summer, students prepare garden beds and plant potatoes in our school garden. Local volunteers, many of them past parents, water and care for the plants during the summer. When students return in the fall, we have a schoolwide potato harvesting event. Students, educators, and employees from Beans Café work together to harvest potatoes and other vegetables for the homeless and hungry in our community.

Parent volunteers provide additional support, such as decorating the halls, assisting in the classroom, and aiding in school functions and activities. Educators and our administration communicate opportunities weekly via school newsletters and emails to promote parent and student involvement in school activities, functions, and the classroom. We also work with student volunteers from our local high school in a partnership which brings Huffman alumni back to their elementary school. Overall, the coordination and cooperation between volunteers, educators, and administration continues to improve our school every year.

The PTO provides an integral component of student success and involvement, by providing a host of activities and supports. The PTO promotes, provides, and supports after-school activities, events, and clubs throughout the year. Support is provided through volunteers, monitoring and supervision, and funding. The PTO provides teacher grants for every classroom teacher, to support student success and classroom improvements, and they provide field trip transportation so students can extend their learning beyond the walls of the classroom. Our PTO is truly at the heart of all of the activities and events students look forward to each year.

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

Teachers feel valued and supported at Huffman Elementary through shared leadership, professional development provided by the Principal and the Instructional Coach (IC), allotted times to attend conferences, collaboration, strong grade-level partnerships, specialists support, and high expectations and accountability.

Grade level teams coordinate and share strategies with other educators in the building, providing data on the most effective strategies for engaging and motivating each student. Grade level teams coordinate daily, weekly, and monthly, to review data, plan instruction, share resources, and adjust plans to maximize student learning outcomes. Grade level teams also coordinate with all other educators in the building, to obtain as much information on students as possible, in order to provide the most complete view of each student's areas of academic growth and need. Teachers feel supported by one another and this whole staff collaboration brings a sense of pride to our school family, as we are all working together to reach all of our students.

Our school provides numerous opportunities to provide input, discuss changes, and participate in decision making. Every educator is invited to participate on our Leadership Team. Our newest teachers are also encouraged to join these teams and become part of the decision-making process as we seek to combine our existing success with new ideas for improvement. The overarching goal of our Leadership Team is to use the cycle of continuous improvement to constantly evaluate the climate and culture of our building. Our structure is representative, so every staff member has a voice in decisions that are being made. This team was instrumental as we navigated the initial transition to distance learning due to COVID.

Our IC provides modeling and instructional support to all educators in the building and will develop and provide training on any requested instructional topic, to any educator. The IC works closely with the principal to develop a schoolwide professional development plan for the building as a whole, in addition to

providing for individual needs. Over the past several years, we have invested heavily in improving our professional understanding of the foundations of literacy. All of our teachers have attended district level training aligned with the Science of Reading, as well as school training facilitated by our principal and IC. We continue to evaluate building needs and make adjustments to our professional development plan to support all teachers in their own learning.

Educators were provided professional development days to attend conferences and collaborate with other professionals, both in-person and online, during distance learning instruction. The utilization and support of grade-level partnerships, during both in-person and distance learning, provided positive support to educators. The universal practice of high expectations and quality among all staff promotes collaboration and teamwork, resulting in an environment where teachers feel valued and supported.

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

The leadership philosophy at Huffman shares the school commitment that all people can grow in a positive direction. Every policy adopted or action taken remains focused on this guiding philosophy. The principal supports and values all staff members so they can bring the best version of themselves to their students each day.

The principal uses a shared leadership model to build capacity within the school, where teacher experts are recognized and empowered to become leaders within the school and among their colleagues. Over the last several years, the IC has taken the lead to improve teacher practice through modeling, coaching, data-driven discussions, and continuous feedback. During COVID, our Leadership Team evolved to include our school nurse as health concerns became a priority for everyone. We have teachers who excel in all different areas, and they are recognized and sought out by our staff because we have created a culture where collaboration is expected and valued.

In addition, the principal's extensive knowledge of the curriculum provides another level of support for educators, and further ensures all resources are appropriated with the primary end goal of facilitating student achievement. The principal is actively involved in school programs, providing support and oversight to ensure high expectations regarding instructional time and methods are met and exceeded. Educators are never uncertain about their desired goal and know that every lesson, strategy, and task is guided with the intended result of maximizing student achievement.

Continuous improvement is not possible without evaluation and feedback. The principal is actively involved in the evaluation of all staff members through observation, data monitoring, and gathering of input from various stakeholders. This information is used to start conversations about strengths and areas for improvement. The principal also invites feedback on their own performance as a way to model the cycle of continuous improvement. The principal practices engaged leadership and supports high expectations, focused on maximizing student learning. The principal also creates and develops staff meetings with professional development training for educators embedded in the meetings. Training is also adjusted to meet the current needs of educators, while promoting a positive environment for participation, input, and discussion.

During the ongoing pandemic, administrative roles have changed to really focus on the human side of teaching and supporting educators in all aspects of their professional life. Teachers made a tremendous shift to online learning and completely overhauled the way they engaged with their students. The return to in-person learning this past school year has been very stressful for teachers. The principal's role had to change to support the social and emotional needs of the staff as they navigated this new chapter. Building relationships and constantly adjusting based on actual needs each day became more important than ever in order to help teachers feel valued and motivated to stay in the profession.

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

Equity, cultural awareness, and respect are at the core of our teaching mission and philosophy. Huffman Elementary addresses the diverse needs and background of students, families, and staff through ongoing

collaborations with families and cultural groups, discussions, and SEL lessons. Our school begins each day with a formal recognition of the Dena'ina people and their life on these lands long before Anchorage was established, and the need to be good stewards of these lands. In addition, various Alaska Native groups are invited to help contribute and support the curriculum, to ensure all cultures are accurately represented in the classroom. For example, representatives from both the Athabascan and Yu'pik tribes were brought in to discuss our curriculum involving the accurate representation of their people, both past and present. Grade-level teams coordinated with representatives from each tribe to enhance the curriculum in a way that promoted equity, respect, and cultural awareness to students. These guests shared about their respective cultural histories and present-day life in Alaska and the communities in which they live.

In the classroom, educators interact with students, parents, and families of various cultural groups and elicit guidance from the family members of their students' cultural groups, to ensure equity, respect, and cultural awareness are practiced in the classroom. Parents and families are encouraged to provide ongoing feedback throughout the year, allowing educators to discuss any necessary challenges that need to be addressed, in a positive and cooperative way, to ensure all groups are represented in a respectful and accurate way.

The school addresses current events and social movements which may have a direct impact on students, families, and communities by utilizing opportunities at staff meetings, grade-level meetings, and Leadership Team meetings to develop positive-based and culturally accurate approaches that may have a direct impact on students and their families. We often receive guidance from our district on how to address current events in a developmentally appropriate way for our elementary students, and in a way which is sensitive to the existing diversity in our city. Our school district is one of the most diverse in the nation, and staff members participate in district level training focused on equity and diversity in the classroom. Our Title VI Indian Education program also provides staff and support who concentrate their efforts on academic assistance, counseling, and cultural enrichment.

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

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The one practice that has been instrumental to our school's success is the change in instructional practice related to literacy. This change has been in progress for several years, and we are now starting to see the real impact it is having on student achievement. This change includes materials, curriculum, professional development, and master scheduling support.

Our K-6 reading program has transformed from a hodgepodge of outdated materials and methods varying from classroom to classroom, to a standards-aligned program which is systematic and explicit. Through extensive professional development, our teachers have a broader base of understanding of the foundations of literacy, and how those skills build sequentially on each other throughout the elementary curriculum. In grades K-2, we work on explicit phonics instruction with a focus on repeated practice and decoding. For 3rd-6th grade, the focus is on comprehension strategies and the subskills needed for understanding complex texts.

Classroom teachers have successfully learned how to unpack the standards in student-friendly language, and they use visible "I can" statements so students are aware of what they are learning throughout the lesson. Teacher training was provided at grade level, but also included basic foundational skills training for all staff, regardless of grade level taught. This helped all staff to understand the Science of Reading and how skills build sequentially as we develop into fluent readers. At all instructional levels, there is a laser focus on what is most important.

Instructional coaches and teacher leaders were used to demonstrate lessons and model teaching practices for teachers. Time was allotted for collaborative grade level planning to review these lessons and implement new methods into everyday practice. Using backward design, teachers were able to clearly identify their learning targets and then plan what tools and methods they would use to help students achieve their goals. We now have teacher clarity at all grade levels on what we are teaching, how we are teaching it, and why we are using specific materials and methods.

To assess student performance and our own instruction, we utilize ongoing and data-driven instructional changes, guided by a standards focus. The continual collection of student-learning data, through both qualitative and quantitative methods, provides teams with a basis for instituting effective instructional changes. Administrative support and oversight of PLC time is an integral component. As a result, educators are able to adjust approaches in a proactive way, to ensure that the most effective and efficient practices for maximizing student success are achieved.

Through professional development, aligned curriculum with explicit instruction, collaborative planning time, and PLCs with data-driven decision making, we have transformed our literacy instruction at Huffman. As we add new staff members to our learning community, we will share the knowledge gained to ensure future students benefit from this instructional change.