

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 311 Willard Street PO Box 0306
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Good Thunder State MN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 56037-0306

County Blue Earth County

Telephone (507) 278-3039 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://www.isd2135.k12.mn.us E-mail jlewis@isd2135.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Daniel Anderson E-mail danderson@isd2135.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Maple River School District Tel. (507) 524-3918

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The 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

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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	10	11	21
1	8	13	21
2	10	11	21
3	10	13	23
4	12	26	38
5	0	0	0
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
Total Students	50	74	124

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 87 % White
 - 9 % 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: 10%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	151
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 34 %

Total number students who qualify: 42

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 16 %
20 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>3</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>9</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: 6

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	6
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
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 21:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	95%	97%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2021.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Maple River School District is dedicated to educate and prepare each student to succeed in a changing world.

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

Student Disability Nondiscrimination Policy:

<https://www.isd2135.k12.mn.us/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=6585&ViewID=C9E0416E-F0E7-4626-AA7B-C14D59F72F85&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=7674&PageID=3995&Comments=true>

Student Sex Nondiscrimination Policy:

<https://www.isd2135.k12.mn.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=6585&dataid=7675&FileName=522.pdf>

Nondiscrimination Policy:

<https://www.isd2135.k12.mn.us/cms/lib/MN01001544/Centricity/Domain/4/Annual%20Notice%20of%20Vocational%20Opportunities%20and%20Non-Discrimination%20Statement%2016-17.pdf>

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

Maple River West Elementary was formed in 1992. Four communities came together to consolidate into Maple River Schools. At that time, the high school was located in Mapleton, middle schools in Minnesota Lake and Amboy, and elementary schools in Mapleton, Minnesota Lake and Good Thunder. Currently, the district still has an elementary building in Good Thunder (Maple River West) and Minnesota Lake, with the middle school and high school in Mapleton.

The town of Good Thunder is tucked into south central Minnesota, on the banks of the Maple River, and is named after a Winnebago chief. As of the 2020 census there were 560 residents of Good Thunder. Blue Earth County has rich farmland and many of our families are tied to agribusiness. You will find many work the land or supply farmers with the resources they need to make a living off of the land. Our families continue to value education and support our school and our students. This is evident in Maple River as residents passed a \$63 million dollar referendum to build a new pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade building.

The student body at Maple River West is primarily white with a nine percent multi-racial and four percent Hispanic/Latino population. Thirty-five percent of our students receive Free or Reduced priced meals. Seventeen percent of our population receive Special Education Services.

Our district mission statement is: We are the Maple River School District dedicated to educate and prepare each student to succeed in a changing world.

In 2005, we made a distinct turn in our curriculum after a few years on the school needs improvement list in the state. We worked hard to implement a structured curriculum which focused on aligning curriculum and instruction to assessment. Also at that time, we implemented our Professional Learning Communities (PLC). We meet between six to seven times per school year at grade level to discuss best practices of instruction, internal tracking of data and overall methods to improve the curriculum and delivery methods to our students. Since the inception of our PLC we have made steady improvement in our curriculum design and brought the education of our two elementary schools closer together. This work we have completed will help us immensely as we move into one building.

Positive Behavior Intervention Systems has been in our school since the beginning of 2014-2015. However, as we prepare to come together for the first time in our history as one preK-12 building, we are working on developing "The Eagle Way." The Eagle Way is centered around our core principles of what we believe our students deserve. These key words chosen to represent these core principles are: Connected, Intentional, Hardworking, Determined, Helpful and Remarkable. We continue to work together to implement models to improve classroom environments at a K-4 level. Follow-up training is continuous and we are beginning the process of building pairings to assess how well our staff is doing in providing positive learning environments to all of our students. We believe these can be taught to our staff and the expectations we need and want from our students can be delivered effectively to enhance our school system.

Maple River has implemented a K-4 STEAM program, which has quickly become a favorite class for many students. Hands-on building activities and online coding allow students to express themselves in ways they cannot in their regular subjects. The support from teachers, PTO, parents, administration, and the school board has played a huge role in the program's success. This program is annually adjusting its curriculum to maintain student interest.

In kindergarten, first, and second grade, students have had opportunities to create short term projects. Kindergarteners have fun building bridges, working with gears, creating the solar system and are introduced to coding. In first grade, students study how leaves change in the fall, create marble Lego mazes, and learn about different mediums when creating art. In second grade, students are using Dash Robots, continuing to code and diving into many teamwork building projects.

Third and fourth graders work on multi-day, cooperative building activities. They make pinball machines,

tessellations, and are introduced to engineering designs. As students get older they begin to focus on Engineering and Design Process and problem solving. They build small boats, mini golf courses and Frankentoys, to name a few items completed in class. All of the upper grades are actively coding online using Code.org and love making familiar characters move on their screens.

The Maple River Elementary Title One program serves students in grades K-4 who are in need of extra reading and math support based on their STAR Reading, STAR Math and NWEA Data. Students receive support 25 minutes each day with either a teacher or para. During their Word Study Time, students work on phonics, vocabulary, spelling, fluency and comprehension skills specific to their needs. Student progress is monitored every six to nine weeks to assess the changing needs of students.

Maple River is implementing the Foundations in Sounds and the Barton Reading and Spelling program in our elementary schools. Students who are below grade-level benchmark and who are not making progress in the classroom are screened and placed in either the Foundations or Barton program depending on their screening results.

The Foundations in Sounds program focuses on building auditory discrimination, auditory memory, and auditory sequencing while the Barton Reading and Spelling program is an Orton Gillingham-based program which provides student with a multi-sensory, explicit and systematic approach to phonemic awareness and phonics skills. Students in these programs receive intense 1-on-1 intervention 1 1/2 - 2 hours per week by a tutor trained in the program. Student growth and progress is monitored through post-tests built into the program, as well as growth shown on Curriculum Based Measures (CBMs), STAR and NWEA tests.

Maple River West doesn't have a gifted and talented program per se. What we have done successfully is to implement a program based on Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math for all of our students, including students who excel in math and reading. These rigorous programs are geared for each individual to progress at their own pace and continue to improve their math and reading skills. The excitement they show when they are accomplishing these programs is exciting to see. In 2022, Accelerated Math is no longer available and we are working to develop a similar result using Freckle.

Our school board feels there is a need for our students to be prepared for life in the age of technology. Over the past 10 years we have progressed from sharing computer labs, to sharing I-Pad carts, to sharing I-Pads, to now having individual Chromebooks. With these devices students now have access to supplementary learning programs such as Accelerated Reader, Freckle, Reading Eggspress, IXL and others. They provide opportunities for students to access their math and reading lessons. Students are motivated by this method of learning. This has been a benefit to the students.

Education has changed since Good Thunder was first platted in the early 1870's. However, in this small rural community it has always been important. That is evident through the community's continued support. Our school has been recognized in the area for outstanding standardized test results. We are continually ranked high among area schools in our math and reading tests. We take pride in being held in high regard and celebrate with our students for these accomplishments. We continue to provide our students with a safe and supportive learning environment while continuing to make improvements to our system to provide the best education for our students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

At Maple River West, we have worked hard at aligning our curriculum with the Minnesota State Standards. Through our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), we have developed a common curriculum calendar at each grade level and discuss where each classroom is at monthly to keep everyone on track. This ensures our students will be exposed to all of the standards identified during the school year.

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

At Maple River West we have been using the Foundation in Sounds and Barton Reading and Spelling System. We began implementing this system with our Title 1 students in the fall of 2017-2018. We found how well it worked and began working with our Special Education teachers to use this system with their students. Again, the data proved that it has been beneficial for our students and in 2019-2020 we changed our method and resources of teaching reading at the K-4 level. We now incorporate our Word Study (Barton) into our daily reading lessons. This program is an explicit, systematic approach to reading and spelling using phonemic awareness and phonics. We have gone from having over 50% of our students not meeting the Nonsense Word Fluency benchmark to less than 15% not meeting that benchmark so it has proven to be an effective way for us to teach our students. The spelling component delivers very challenging words but is based on the rules the students are learning during the lesson. If the student learns the rules they are successful on the tests.

A typical day in an elementary classroom for our Word Study time is when the students are broken up into groups. Depending on the age and levels of the students there can be anywhere from 2-4 groups. One group is working with the teacher directly on the lesson for the day. Another group may be working on their spelling lists words, and another group may be working on one of the reading programs on their chromebook. After twenty minutes the groups rotate. This method allows the teacher to touch each student at their level in small groups every day. This direct method of instruction in small groups is paying dividends for our students. Depending on the needs of the individual classroom paraprofessionals are also in the room helping the other groups not working directly with the teacher.

To supplement our Barton system, we use the Journey's reading text. The textbook allows our teachers to use it for the rich stories and as a mode to teach skills such as: Sequence of events, main idea, point of view, etc. It has both print and digital components. Students work on skill mastery and enjoy the high quality text. It provides a high volume of problem solving and critical thinking skills, and challenges them to analyze complex text.

As stated on the Journey's material, it is a K-6 comprehensive, research-based English Language Arts program built on the foundation of the proven Journeys instructional design that provides all students with a path to achieving rigorous standards with print and state-of-the-art digital components. Students are empowered by skill mastery, inspired by authentic, award-winning text and are confident in their problem solving and critical-thinking skills, confident in their ability to analyze complex text and confident that they are building the skills they need for college and careers.

Knowing the importance of building background knowledge for our students, teachers worked together to create a Read Aloud Scope and Sequence to ensure all of our students are being exposed to quality literature each and every day. This scope and sequence is a working document that teachers adjust as new literature becomes available.

Our Preschool-2nd grade teaching teams have worked together to create a scope and sequence for implementing the Touchpoint Handwriting system created by Jan Hagedorn. They also aligned

supplemental fine-motor activities to enhance this program as well as parent communications. This handwriting system is used within our Language Arts Block because it is taught simultaneously with teaching the letter name and sound. Using this program, along with the Foundations in Sounds and Barton Reading Program we have fewer than 18% of our Kindergarten students below Letter Name and Letter Sounds benchmarks.

We use Curriculum Based Measures (CBM) probes to determine which students need additional practice on specific grade-level skills. Those interventions are provided by either classroom teachers or paraprofessionals until that student has met benchmark. All students are assessed in the fall, winter and spring with those needing intervention progress monitored every six weeks.

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

Maple River uses EnVisionmath 2.0 for our math series. It offers us the ability to use the text in a variety of formats including print, digital or a combination. It is very rigorous for our students and gives them visual learning strategies and project based learning. It has the ability for our staff to customize lessons for the students' learning. EnVisionmath 2.0 encourages our students to be deep critical math thinkers in having them deepen their understanding. It forces them to look for relationships and try different approaches when solving problems. It is a challenging curriculum. The other piece the faculty likes is the differentiation of the curriculum. It allows for teachers to pinpoint learning styles through tiered learning, centers, flexible learning and technology.

EnVisionmath 2.0 Common Core is a comprehensive mathematics curriculum for grades K-4 in our building. It offers our teachers the ability to use the material in digital, print or a combination of the two in their lessons. The rigorous standards are what we noticed as improvement from our previous series. The series lends itself to allow our teachers to use their creative talents to best present their lessons to their classes. Since switching curriculum many of our staff believe the students are becoming better math thinkers. This allows the students to be able to solve more complex math problems.

As part of math at Maple River we also track student progress on their basic math skills. Depending on their age and development we work aggressively on their addition, subtraction, multiplication and division work. We monitor their progress in these areas as an individual and a class at least three times per year. Again, we have found that these skills help students overall in their math experience.

Maple River West students also use Freckle to help with their basic math skills. Another program used by all of our students is IXL. This is a comprehensive list of skills based on their grade level. Teachers indicate which skills students are to complete and correlate it with their current math assignment. It is a great way to give students extra practice in the skill they are trying to develop. In this program the students earn ribbons once they reach a score of 100. At that time they are allowed to move on to the next skill. The teachers are able to monitor in real time how the students are performing and can address them at that time.

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

We are currently using MacMillan/McGraw-Hill's science program Science: A Closer Look. The teachers enjoy using the activities that help to promote their inquisitive spirit of exploration in the students. It helps to build upon a lifelong understanding of science concepts. MacMillan/McGraw-Hill's science program is marketed as a dynamic science program that offers exciting and accessible standards-based lessons that are engaging which promotes curiosity and fosters inquiry skills. Through the learning system, the students build upon their experience to develop a lifelong understanding of science concepts.

Teachers bring in alternative learning in Science when they have projects that would enhance the skill being learned. These real-life experiences help to bring the learning to life for the students. It could be in the form of taking a walk and watching the leaves change color, witnessing plants grow or bloom in the spring, or as easy as discussing what is happening when the rain changes to snow.

The STEAM program also helps to bridge the gap between the textbook and real-life. This is a hands-on

learning environment. It is great to see the excitement in the students eyes when they are learning something new in one environment then to see it again in another. It brings meaning to that child.

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

Scott Foresman Social Studies is our curriculum of choice. The use of reading and hands-on activities helps the students experience rather than just read about topics. It provides many options for the teacher to use to engage the students and adapt their lessons. This allows our students at Maple River West to actively experience the world around them. Using this variety, it is our hope that the students develop a love of learning. We try not to just memorize facts constantly but be able to use information and apply and adapt it to other areas and ideas. Many of the read alouds teachers are implementing in the classroom correlate with grade level social studies topics as well.

This is another area where classroom teachers excel in bringing work off the pages and creating hands-on projects. Students may make a mobile of the three branches of government and how each branch works with the other. It may be learning what each star on a flag stands for as well as the 13 stripes or drawing a map of the different regions of the United States and recognizing why each is different and still some have similar qualities. Students are able to recognize these things when they are out in public. Noticing how things work independently but rely on each other is important.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Physical Education is taught by a licensed professional each day for 25 minutes. During this time, the students are taught about teamwork, movement, game strategies, as well as health and wellness strategies that are pertinent to elementary age level students. We also tie into the Jump Rope for Heart fundraiser every other year. It is a great fundraiser for a good cause. Many of the students have been affected by loved ones with heart conditions, so it hits close to home. Currently, we follow the national standards in P.E./Health. We updated and wrote standards that are in line with the new Minnesota Standards.

Maple River Elementary Physical Education curriculum is following the National Physical Education Standards in conjunction with the Minnesota Physical Education Standards. Using these standards, our K-2 programs focus on gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination, social skills (conflict resolution and sportsmanship). We also introduce and incorporate a health emphasis on a wide variety of daily exercise to enhance the fitness level of our students. Our objective is to create an atmosphere of fun and enjoyment so our students develop a positive attitude towards physical activity. The grades 3-4 curriculum is a balance of units that focus on team activities and individual skill building units which include fitness goal setting and fitness testing. While fitness is vital to good health, providing and introducing a wide range of activities is paramount.

The elementary philosophy over the years has been movement based. Providing a good foundation and positive frame of mind towards exercise has been a priority. Most of our curriculum has been created with this in mind. The health lessons that are taught follow the National Health Standards. Community/consumer, personal, environmental, substance, family life, growth and development, injury prevention, physical/nutrition and communicable diseases are the categories our lessons are based on. Our goal is to use rain days (primarily in the spring and fall), days between major P.E. units, and days when the gym is unavailable to teach our health lessons.

Maple River has implemented a K-4 STEAM program, which has quickly become a favorite class for many

students. The hands-on building activities and online coding allows students to express themselves in ways they cannot in their regular subjects. The support from teachers, PTO, parents, administration and the school board has played a huge role in the program's success. This program is annually adjusting its curriculum to maintain student interest.

Kindergarten, first and second grade students have had opportunities to create short term projects. Kindergarteners have fun building bridges, working with gears, creating the solar system and are introduced to coding. In first grade, students study how leaves change in the fall, create marble Lego mazes, and learn about different mediums when creating art. In second grade, students are using Dash Robots, continuing to code and diving into many teamwork building projects.

In third and fourth grade students work on multi-day, cooperative building activities. Third and fourth graders have made pinball machines, tessellations and are introduced to engineering designs. As students get older they begin to focus on Engineering and Design Process and problem solving. They build small boats, mini golf courses and Frankentoys to name a few items completed in class. All of the upper grades are actively coding online using Code.org and love making familiar characters move on their screens.

The STEAM program is continuing to evolve into a program that our students learn and enjoy hands-on activities. This program offers our students 25 minutes every other day to explore the STEAM curriculum. Our students have failures and successes in their work. At the beginning of the year, when students had an idea that didn't work they looked to the adults in the room to solve their design problems. Now they look to their fellow classmates and themselves to make changes and persevere to their final product. It has been amazing listening to students' conversations and their willingness to work as a group. The students are becoming great problem solvers and are able to have true collaboration with fellow students.

Maple River's Elementary classroom music is set up to be in line with the Music Department's District Goals of Creation, Public Performance, Reflection, Connecting to a Broader Perspective and Developing Lifelong Musicians. We start in kindergarten and first grade by teaching basic elements of music such as beat, rhythm, melody, tempo and dynamics. We work a lot on singing and learn about different kinds of instruments, both classroom and orchestral. There are a lot of movement activities, both creative and beat-keeping, as these help "solidify" the concepts for the students. The activities in kindergarten music loosely connect to Maple River's kindergarten curriculum to help reinforce literacy. Students learn songs both by note and by reading and talking about the lyrics. By second and third grade, students learn to read music both in singing and by playing the bells. They continue to practice the basic concepts they have learned. When playing or singing as a group the students are often asked to reflect on their performance and give feedback to improve it. Towards the end of the year, we try to include at least one composition/improvisation activity.

Fourth graders continue to work on singing and movement and we reinforce music reading skills by playing the recorder. In preparation for middle school music, we also work a lot on reading notes and counting. Fourth grade spends a few weeks reviewing band instruments in preparation for Beginning Band in 5th Grade. Listening activities are included as well and encourage the student to share "what they hear" in terms of tempo, dynamics, mood, lyrics, etc. This prepares them for a trip to the Mankato Symphony Orchestra in May. As we move into one building it is our hope that we will be able to collaborate with middle and high school students to share their talents.

Other music components used throughout our K-4 music program include: music that is multicultural, from different genres, reading choral scores, as well as the history of music and composers.

All students K-4 prepare a Music Program for public performance either in the winter or spring, and we try to showcase as many different activities as possible at this program. If possible, we watch a video or listen to a recording of our performance and reflect on what we did well and what we could improve.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Teachers discuss students that have been identified as performing below grade level at our Student Support Team meetings. Oftentimes our first identifying academic factor is a deficiency in reading based on our district-wide testing process. We work to confirm the need for these students through further screening for placement in our 1:1 Barton reading program. We also include a dyslexia screener in this process. This Barton program is a 1:1 reading systematic approach to phonics instruction. This is a higher intensity version of what we do in our general education reading program. As the students progress through this program they are continually monitored. If they do not make progress they are then referred back to the Child Study Team. It is our hope that we are able to support these students early enough with the skills they need to keep them from falling further behind.

Our Student Support Team meets once a month at grade level to discuss our student needs. Student Support team personnel are special education, general education, literacy specialist, social workers and school administrator. These could be social, emotional, academic or other areas of concern. Interventions are given to teachers who have identified students that may need them. These interventions last six weeks. Depending on the success or failure of this intervention we either give the teacher another one or continue because of the current success. After two failed interventions we meet to determine whether we need more data or if we have enough to move to our Child Study team. We do have the whole grade level team present as support for the classroom teachers. There is some comfort in knowing many of the same issues occur in other classrooms. It also gives them ideas on what types of interventions they can implement.

Child Study meets once a month to discuss the intervention students. At this meeting we decide on whether we test for special education or continue. If testing is appropriate, we do discuss our areas of concern. We do meet with the teacher, who is not present at this meeting, to update them on the process. This team is made up of our Special Education staff, Literacy Specialist, Social Workers, School Psychologist and administrator.

If the student does qualify through our process to move forward with potentially being a special education student that referral is made through the Child Study team. The parent is contacted by the general education teacher, (this is not a new conversation at this point since the potential has been discussed at the parent and teacher level already), and told that the special education process is going to begin and we hold a meeting with the team to see what areas are going to be tested. This is a pre-evaluation planning meeting. Team members and parents are present. The battery of tests are described and agreed upon. The district has thirty school days to complete testing and have another meeting for the results. If the student does qualify based on the scores, they would officially enter the special education program upon signature from the parent confirming the Individualized Education Plan that we discussed and finalized.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

We do not have a formal program for students performing above grade level. What we have done successfully is to differentiate Tier 1 teaching to help challenge all students through their curriculum. In the past, we have used Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math to help further students in these two areas.

Maple River West uses Accelerated Reader to challenge all students at their reading level and implement five different goal periods. At the end of each goal period students who accomplished their goal are rewarded with different school-wide incentives. Some incentives the students have participated in recently are going to a movie theatre, ice skating and the community recreation center to swim. These activities entice the students to accomplish their goal. After the goal period has ended, a STAR test is given to set new goals and the next goal period begins. This has worked well for us as a practice venue for the students and the motivation helps.

Accelerated Math is a self-paced math program that allowed students the opportunity to work at their own level to further their math skills and that could be set up to follow the state standards. This extra practice helped teachers know what areas the students needed attention in. However, this program was replaced by the company with Freckle this year. We are trying to replicate what we previously were accomplishing with the new program. Time will tell whether the new program will be able to give us the same results. My teachers loved Accelerated Math.

We are able to use Renaissance to help us take a math test every six weeks to help us pinpoint areas of need for our students. We are able to recognize students that are going to be "bubble" students on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments. Once identified we are able to look at areas to improve.

3c. Special education:

Our special education team of teachers and paraprofessionals are outstanding at their respective positions and they deal with many different aspects of our students. We have Specific Learning Disability and Emotional Behavior Disorder students mainly. The special education teacher works on managing approximately 15 students on her current caseload with another three currently being tested. After the tests are completed, writing up evaluation reports and new IEPs to go along with her other IEPs complete her day.

The paraprofessionals have been with Maple River for a long time. Their jobs have changed over the past few years. When many of them started they were able to help the students with their reading, writing and math skills. Sometimes they are in the classroom and other times they are one on one or working with small groups. Recently, we have seen an uptick on the amount of Emotional Behavior Disorder students. These behaviors have increased in severity and frequency. The special education teacher and social worker have worked together to help provide training for these individuals in the skills they need to effectively complete their assignments and maintain their own mental health. It is one of the toughest jobs in the system.

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

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Since the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year we have been implementing the Positive Behavior Interventions System. Over this time we have been changing it to fit our needs. The past two years we have been looking forward to our new preK-12 building and began implementing different facets of the program to help our students make this transition. Our "Eagle Way" team is developing these structures along with our PLC leadership team. The Eagle Way is focused on our Core Principles of Connected, Intentional, Hard Working, Determined, Helpful and Remarkable. Adjusting these into language all of our students can use and apply to their specific grade level is important for us moving forward. Helping us wrap our student expectations around these principles will unify staff and students.

Pre-Covid we had the opportunity to have monthly assemblies to model different expectations throughout our school day. These assemblies were held by specific teachers and often included students. The behaviors modeled were what was expected throughout our student body and throughout our halls daily.

As an appreciation to our teaching staff and paraprofessionals we also have Pie Appreciation Day. This is a tradition we have done for many years. Pie is from a local restaurant and is served to the staff as a treat for the hard work they have performed throughout the year.

Adding to the school climate for our students we have many incentives for them as well. Tied to our reading program these incentives change throughout the years. Some of the activities the students have participated in in recent years are Cooler Day, where the students are able to bring in a cooler of food and drink and are able to eat and drink out of it all day, and Movie and Popcorn day, where popcorn is provided by the school and movies are watched throughout the building. We have also traveled to a nearby theatre to watch a movie on the big screen. The most popular incentive happened when we took the students to a neighboring town for a swim day. Another popular event was holding an end of the year water celebration day. The students threw water balloons and had bucket filling races among other things.

We plan five or six school-wide incentives for students throughout the year. Individual teachers are constantly planning incentives for their classes. It gives a nice break to the students from what normally occurs in schools.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The teaching staff at Maple River West work hard to engage the families of our students. Teachers and parents collaborate in setting achievement goals. Goals are set by the teacher and student on how much progress they should reach throughout the growth period. At conferences, the teaching staff works with the parent to generate some specific ways they can help their child reach these goals.

We believe this method creates some ownership by all parties in the education of the child. Throughout the year each student will keep a personal data file including baseline performance, goals, and strategies to reach goals. Teachers and parents identify strategies that they will implement to help each student be successful. After each summative measure, students graphically monitor progress to share with parents. Individual classrooms will collaboratively establish and set measurable achievement goals utilizing the same process identified above. Each classroom's result are graphically posted.

Maple River West provides a variety of volunteer experiences for our students' families such as field trips, Parent Teacher Organization and book fairs. Pre-Covid we welcomed parents into our buildings but have had to limit parents recently. But we are looking forward to inviting them back into our building to enhance the children's education.

Throughout our K-4 education the students are exposed to Junior Achievement (JA). We have several community members come in to teach our students during JA. The community is a big supporter of our

school. We receive donations from the local fire department, Lions Club, and the local thrift store as well as some school supplies from Cubs Grocery and Walmart.

Maple River West has encouraged our students to be active outside of their school experiences. Through our support parents have taken our lead and have coached many of our student teams. As a district we have encouraged our parents to take on these responsibilities for the betterment of their child's mental well-being and fitness. Through these opportunities our students gain not only gain knowledge and experience but also the ability to work with others in a competitive event. They learn many things in these situations that cannot always be taught in the school setting in the same manner.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Professional development activities funded by the district must align with the strategies identified by district, site and PLC improvement plans. Approval for professional development funds will meet established criteria and be reviewed by administration. Professional development for the professional and paraprofessional staff will be determined then offered and delivered through the Professional Learning Communities within the school.

Through our PLC process the curriculums have been charted with a calendar curriculum map to ensure that all content is covered in a timely manner in a systematic approach. All classroom summative measures are aligned with state test specifications.

The district has provided many types of professional development for our staff members.

As we transitioned our reading curriculum away from Balanced Literacy to Structured Literacy, to follow the National Reading Panel's suggestions, we began implementing an explicit, multi-sensory and sequential system of teaching phonics and spelling skills to our students. We found that almost none of our teachers were familiar with the Science of Reading so professional development was vital. We held several preK-12 training days, with grade-level specific training days as well, to dig deeper into grade-level expectations as well as to provide time for teachers to synergize implementation ideas and techniques. This program needed to be as good in practice as it was in theory, so teacher input and buy-in was vital. As new teachers join our staff, they also receive the Science of Reading, dyslexia and phonics scope and sequence trainings in the summer from the district Literacy Specialist. Teachers receive ongoing implementation support throughout the school year from PLC team members and the Literacy Specialist.

In recent years, we have had our staff attend an on-site Renaissance Place training. This is a product that we feel is integral for our students to obtain desired results. At this training, Renaissance sent out a representative to teach our staff how to better use their math and reading products. The training showed how to not only use the assessments but more importantly to use the data in the reports to better understand where our students are currently at, and how we may move them along from this point. We have also sent different individuals and groups to different professional development opportunities. The use of technology and how we can use it to improve education is one where the district has sent teachers over the past few years.

Maple River tries to arm the staff with the tools they need when we make major curriculum changes. When we changed the math and reading curriculum we were able to have representatives come in and help us implement these two subjects. In the past, the time wasn't taken to have this done and teachers wasted a lot of time hunting and pecking their way through the first year or two. Having the representatives come in took a lot of that wasted time away. We were shown how to navigate through the subject matter, what pieces were critical and which were supplemental. Like many intense professional development opportunities many expressed how overwhelmed they were at the end, however, they were armed with the ability to get started on a positive note when the year began.

In order to keep improving, the district will provide professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals to ensure strategies are in place for students to become independent, self-directed learners. Having students feel a sense of self-efficiency enhances a student's ability to learn and, in fact, will

accelerate learning. Learned helplessness is a risk which has a negative impact on student learning. The greatest risk is among student in the special education and Title I populations for whom much additional help is provided. With this in mind, we work with our Special Education paraprofessionals on ways to encourage students to do their work themselves with help when needed.

4. School Leadership:

School leadership at Maple River School District is typical for rural Minnesota. We have a very supportive school board made up of seven members who are elected to terms by the constituents of the district. The superintendent manages the entire district. He works closely with the business office and his two principals – one at the secondary level and one at the primary level. The superintendent also oversees every aspect of the district from budget management to building project lead to sitting in on interviews of the new employees of the district.

The principals work at their respective levels managing and leading buildings on a daily basis. These two people help to implement curriculum, build relationships with teachers, staff and community members and provide day to day building leadership with their staff and students. One difference at Maple River is there are two elementary buildings and one principal works at both.

Another integral part of the leadership team is the Dean of Students. The Dean works with the middle school students with discipline referral in the absence of the principal. Serving as curriculum director is another part of her duties. She helps research, order and implement different phases of curriculum development throughout the district. She has been a huge asset to our progress in moving the academics of our students forward.

The leadership model at Maple River is one of teacher leadership. Maple River teachers are empowered by administration to make decisions correlated to their grade level through their Professional Learning Communities. These decisions are guided by their PLC leaders at their grade level. There is also a PLC leadership team. This team is made up of the leader of the grade level or department and meets before and after each meeting. This allows all departments and grade levels to know what is happening throughout the building and district. Much collaboration is used at all levels through our PLCs. The results are telling of how impactful our model is on student learning. Things discussed at PLCs promote professional development, instruction, collaboration and data analysis. The principal allows for the teaching professional to lead in their areas of expertise.

It is empowering to allow teachers to show their talents outside of teaching and contributing in other ways to the school. Leading a PLC, an IEP meeting or a school activity allows the teachers' professional talents to show in these other roles allowing them to display their creativity and effectiveness. This leadership gives them the sense of ownership which carries over into all aspects of the school climate and creates a dynamic sense of professionalism in the environment. Students see these teachers in different roles, which allow them to have a relationship with teachers who are not their classroom teacher. The teacher in turn takes the role of teacher for all, not just his/her own classroom and creates a positive learning environment.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

In our rural area we do not have a very diverse population. We are approximately 87% Caucasian, 9% multi-racial and 4% Hispanic/Latino. Our diversity, however, comes from our economic background. We have 35% of our students on Free and Reduced Lunch status. It is our belief that there are more that are in need but our population is a proud one and do not ask for help.

With these things in mind we do have a strong Social Work Department at the elementary level which started three years ago. This person manages many different areas for us.

The first is our "Backpack" food program. The department works with the county organization that sends a backpack full of food home each weekend for our students that have signed up. This organization receives donations from many businesses in the area to provide this need. For our part, we identify the families that

could use this assistance and reach out to them to help them sign up. Families are very thankful for this food. Maple River West in return helps the organization in their annual fundraising event. The most recent was a "Climb to Feed" event. Our team of school volunteers raised donations to run up a ski hill and slide down. We are consistently one of the top schools in the area in fundraising for this event. It is a great school community building event.

The second area monitored by this department is student mental health needs identification. With the help of the teaching staff, students are processed through the current system when a need arises. The needs at an elementary school vary from a death in the family, not being invited to a sleepover, to trauma induced behaviors and everything in between. After identification, the social worker helps students work through their problem and provides them with skills to cope. If a deeper area of concern develops, parents are contacted to provide assistance in getting more help to the student. Maple River has also teamed up with a local mental health provider and has onsite therapy during the school hours. Through this parent interaction guidance has also been given to the parent for further assistance for the family and the county level. This has helped our families get the support they need.

Leading the Student Support Team is another duty filled by this department. Maple River Student Support Team encompasses the Special Education Department and the general education teachers. This is a platform given to teachers to bring students that are struggling in the classroom. It can be academic, behavioral or sometimes is from a home situation that has affected their school life. These referrals occasionally make it to Child Study, which may enter them into the world of Special Education or it may involve getting the student an intervention to improve the area of concern.

Staff wellness is also a part of the duties of the social worker at Maple River. Our staff is our greatest resource provided to the students. Through all of her other interactions with the staff, the social worker is able to make connections with the classroom teachers. She can reach out to them and provide a listening ear to them when she senses they are struggling. This has helped the staff to know they are not battling things alone and gives them an opportunity to confide in someone.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

We take great pride in hiring the best candidates. It is our belief this one attribute most impacts the quality of our educational system at Maple River West. The quality of our teaching staff is our highest priority. Through a rigorous interview with a number of staff members, we are looking for the person who best fits into our school system. We often look for the best fit and rearrange others to make our team better. Once we have secured this person, we use our mentoring program to engage our new teachers and connect them to a veteran teacher. This gives them an immediate colleague who has been successful in our system in the past to be able to go and ask them all sorts of questions from where in the textbook do I find out how to set up my lesson to where is the paper needed to refill the copier.

The mentoring system has helped us grow as a staff. Initiating mentoring does a number of things for our teachers. First, we would like to help the new teachers limit any beginner mistakes that new teachers make. We try to guide their decisions, trying not to limit their ability to try new things. Secondly, we want them to feel part of our teaching community and staff team. Connecting them with a veteran person allows them the freedom to ask any question they have and not to feel embarrassed about how silly it may be. It also gives them someone to sit by during staff and district meetings. Next, we can build a positive culture of the staff. We don't want these new people to feel isolated and stick together only with our new staff members. It is important to get the new and veteran staff together to learn from each other. The new staff has a whole new set of skills they grew up with, such as technology skills. Veteran teachers are continuing to learn. Finally, a good mentoring system may extend the career of a young teacher. Statistics show half won't teach after five years in the field. We want our teachers to grow and learn and stay in our district.

After our initial process with a mentor, we then expose the new people to our grade level team members from other schools. We have them meet with these other professionals from across the district at their grade level. We meet approximately seven times during the year on the third Monday of the month for a two hour session. During these sessions, we analyze data, discuss best practice, and plan for the upcoming month to make sure we are all getting through our curriculum maps in a timely manner. This helps our staff get on track and stay on that track so we are able to get through our curriculum by the end of the year. These meetings are integral in the development of not only our new staff members but also the constant updating of our curriculum. We have found that through these meetings, we are updating and giving the same tests throughout the district. When we do this, we are able to collect usable data in which to base the changes that may be needed in our curriculum to best suit the students and expose them to challenging curriculum.

All of the above starts with obtaining the best candidates that we can. Once we have secured these individuals we then go to work and inundate them into our system. The system has proven effective over time.