

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 1510 S. Lake Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Sioux Falls State SD Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 57105-1557

County Minnehaha

Telephone (605) 367-4655 Fax (605) 367-7372

Web site/URL https://www.sf.k12.sd.us/o/ssspes E-mail tracy.vik@k12.sd.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Jane Stavem E-mail jane.stavem@k12.sd.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Sioux Falls School District Tel. (605) 367-7900

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 Ms. Cynthia Mickelson
(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):
- 23 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 6 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 33 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	47	61	108
1	49	53	102
2	44	53	97
3	56	63	119
4	62	57	119
5	54	63	117
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	312	350	662

*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):
- 0.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.1 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 14 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 80.7 % White
 - 3 % 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: 2%

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	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	661
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

German, Swedish, Spanish;Castilian

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

0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %

Total number students who qualify: 82

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 16 %
107 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>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>30</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>54</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>3</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 8
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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	27
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
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.

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	96%	97%	97%
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.

To develop lifelong, multi-lingual learners with the cultural background and problem-solving skills to succeed in an ever-changing world.

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

<https://quorum.sparqdata.com/Public/File/siouxfalls?file=96498a3e-b1de-40f7-8bd8-e84429a56977>

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

Students begin in our specialized school at kindergarten by a lottery drawing. Applications are accepted starting the first day of school the year previous to a child starting kindergarten through the second Tuesday in January. The following Friday the lottery drawing is conducted and families are notified. Siblings of students already enrolled in the school are exempt from the lottery but must complete the application process by the deadline.

A student may enter the program in a grade later than kindergarten if his/her Spanish reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are comparable to that of the students in the grade in which the new student will enter.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Nearly 15 years ago, talk of a school that taught reading, writing, math, and more in Spanish-only classrooms raised plenty of eyebrows among residents of Sioux Falls, SD. German, Norwegian, Dutch, and Polish maybe. But, Spanish? Yes, Spanish!

Today, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary is the foreign language or one-way immersion program within a broader dual-language Spanish program in the Sioux Falls School District. In 2008, it began as a “school within a school” model. In 2012, the program expanded to a second elementary school. The one-way immersion program grew so popular, it moved into the newly built K-5 Sonia Sotomayor Elementary in 2016.

From a single classroom of kindergarten students in 2008, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary has rapidly expanded to twenty-seven sections in kindergarten through grade five, educating over 660 students. Sonia Sotomayor’s staff represents Spanish-speaking elementary teachers from across the world who call 12 different countries home. Bilingual elementary teachers from the Midwest are equally instrumental to instruction.

As the program expanded, so did the needs of students. In its early years, the program attracted the children of already-engaged families who had done their research about the benefits of immersive instruction. Today, a point of pride is that student enrollment more closely reflects the demographics of our wonderfully diverse city that welcomes any and all through economic growth, as well as refugee and resettlement work.

The program is open to all students from across the city, including those with special educational needs. Sonia Sotomayor Elementary strives for inclusivity and operates with the three pillars of dual language education at the core of meeting student needs. These pillars are grade-level academic achievement, bilingualism and biliteracy, and sociocultural competence.

Sonia Sotomayor Elementary is both supported by and supports the families it serves. Students are enrolled in Sonia Sotomayor Elementary via lottery in kindergarten. Families are able to connect with the school by participating in the district-level Parent Advocates for Spanish Immersion (PASI) group and/or the school’s parent-teacher organization (PTO).

The school actively engages and supports parents whose children are now speaking a language that is not spoken in the home. Parent education about immersion and language learning is also key. Parent education nights, as well as focus groups and advisory panels, bridge the home-school connection for the program. In addition to the two-parent organizations, the school provides a free camp to incoming kindergarten students, as well as academic summer camps to make the language learning a priority throughout the calendar year.

In addition to building connections with families, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary builds connections with educators across the globe. Through the ‘Intern Program,’ pre-service teachers from around the world spend a year student teaching within the program. Interns are hosted by families with students in the program, allowing the pre-service teacher to learn about the education system in the United States while sharing their knowledge and language skills with Sonia Sotomayor Elementary staff and students. These student teachers provide an additional opportunity for students to receive language-specific instruction and extra human capital to support struggling students. By leveraging families and creating a flow of high-quality elementary pre-service teachers in the Midwest, Sonia Sotomayor can meet both staffing and family needs.

Academically, Sonia Sotomayor Spanish Immersion Elementary provides students a clear path with focus the three pillars of high-quality dual-language programs named above. Students use the target language to acquire an understanding of academic content, as opposed to the study of the language itself. Time in the target language is sacred and classroom teachers instruct and interact with students strictly in Spanish, allowing students to acquire both grade-level content and Spanish language development.

Modeled after the Canadian French immersion program, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary defers English

literacy instruction until third grade. This allows students to be immersed in and develop their second language (L2) literacy and language skills. Although it may seem counterintuitive, this initial delay actually accelerates the acquisition of English literacy skills. This transference and support between the two languages is overt beginning daily in third grade when students begin attending English-Specific Skills (ESS) class.

This model requires two expectations: 1.) that students will experience a delay in English literacy skills initially, prior to receiving instruction in third grade and, 2.) that students will surpass their monolingual peers in academic areas by the time they move on to the next stage of the program in sixth grade. It is at this point that family connections to support parents and students becomes critical.

Parent support sessions, pre-service teachers via the intern program, feedback, as well as high state testing results allow families to navigate and even eliminate any perceived “risk” concerns of deferring initial literacy instruction in English.

In short, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary has built family, community, and district partnerships to support all students in becoming bilingual and biliterate. We achieve a high level of academic success and we educate socio-cultural competent bilingual learners to meet the needs of our ever-changing world.

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:

Academically, as an additive, one-way foreign language immersion program, the school's focus on the three pillars of high quality dual language program provides a clear focus. The pillar of grade level academic achievement ties directly to the core curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As a public school in the state of South Dakota, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary is accountable for grade level state standards as well as state and district level assessment outcomes equal to that of any other school in South Dakota. This expectation exists while all content instruction is delivered in Spanish. To ensure students meet grade level expectations while acquiring Spanish, weekly formative assessment of key content and language targets is addressed in team collaboration.

Students use the target language to acquire an understanding of academic content, as opposed to the study of the language itself. Becoming fully biliterate and bilingual is one of the core pillars of dual immersion. In addition to sheltering the target language, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary has developed a series of tools to monitor and support Spanish language acquisition in students.

Language acquisition at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary is framed through the proficiency scale developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). This scale consists of five levels (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished), and each level contains three sublevels (Low, Mid, and High). Language proficiency is monitored via a summative assessment: Standards-based Measure of Proficiency (STAMP) in 2nd and 5th grade. This summative assessment supports teachers in calibrating district and building level assessments.

Additionally, each grade level team has developed an Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) tied to the ACTFL scale. IPAs provide a formal mechanism for teachers to monitor language proficiency each year. As IPA assessments provide language performance outcomes for students at the end of the grade level, teachers are able to use these to develop weekly language proficiency targets that align with content instruction. The build from weekly language targets to the two formal summative assessments students take in 2nd and 5th grade provides a roadmap for instruction, intervention, and extensions in the classroom, as well as a method to ensure program cohesion and monitoring of student language acquisition.

Each day a 30- minute block is dedicated for Whatever I Need (WIN). WIN is organized by grade level and is designed to meet the needs of each student whether it be through intervention, reinforcement, and/or extensions. Each grade level has developed a systematic approach to best utilize the human resources they have available, including grade level teachers, special education teachers, gifted education teacher, educational assistants, and language model interns.

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

Content language arts instruction takes place in Spanish. Specific programs are used for both phonics and phonological awareness instruction in K-2. Explicit instruction in the area of phonological awareness takes place each day in grades K-2 using Heggerty's Spanish program. In the areas of reading comprehension and writing for students in K-5, the programs from the Center for the Collaborative Classroom (CCC) provide the framework for instruction. These programs exist only in English, however, and after an exhaustive search of language arts curricula across both languages, CCC provided the programs most closely aligned with our staff's beliefs about how children learn to read and write. Therefore, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary classroom teachers took on the enormous task of trans-adapting the content instruction in these two key programs. In the end, teachers were able to keep the core instructional practices while making the program accessible to both teachers and students in Spanish.

The Sioux Falls School District uses a balanced literacy approach. With this approach, students experience reading through read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. After teachers model strategies and skills, students are given the opportunity to implement those strategies and skills into their independent reading. This in turn, drives the discussion during student/teacher conferencing. This practice allows the teacher to evaluate the skills explicitly taught at the start of each day's lesson.

One unique course that exists at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary is daily English Specific Skills (ESS) beginning in 3rd grade. The focus of ESS is three-fold: provide instruction in skills specific to English which are not transferable between the two languages, develop a meta-awareness of the similarities and differences between the two languages for students, and identify English specific gaps and provide support in English for students to overcome these gaps. At the end of key units, students engage in a weeklong writing performance task in English, allowing them to transfer writing skills learned in the Spanish language arts classroom. The ESS teacher and the classroom teacher then compare the student writing in both languages. This allows both teachers to assess and analyze the students' ability to utilize key writing components in each language. The additional layers of support provided by ESS and specials teachers at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary support both content knowledge and language acquisition by making a public school Spanish Immersion program possible in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

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

Math instruction is based on the South Dakota Content Standards for Mathematics and the Eight Standards of Mathematical Practices. Math instruction is inquiry based. Students are challenged and are expected to be problem solvers. The process becomes more important than simply finding the answer. In addition to the proven mathematical benefits students receive from this model of learning, an inquiry-based model in mathematics supports student language development. Conjecturing, analyzing, and generalizing are seen as opportunities for students to not only develop their mathematical thinking but to take risks with and formulate their thoughts in the target language. Our math curriculum allows students to learn that there is more than one way to solve math problems and provides them the opportunity to share their thinking with their peers, justifying their reasoning.

Assessment is ongoing. In an inquiry-based model, teachers are able to facilitate conversations that elicit teacher understanding of individual student needs. Grade level teachers collaborate to backwards plan each unit, beginning with the end of unit assessment and rubric. This ensures that all grade level teachers have a shared understanding of focus of each unit prior to teaching. Students who are performing below grade level receive small group instruction that targets the specific needs of each child utilizing the Bridges curriculum during the WIN block.

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

Science instruction is guided by the South Dakota State Standards for Science. These standards define what all students must know in the following strands: life science, earth/space science, physical science and the nature of science. The curriculum provides students with the opportunity to participate in science inquiry, guiding students as they explore, engage, explain their learning, evaluate, and extend their learning. Science instruction takes place in Spanish. Students experiment, hypothesize, analyze data, and share their findings in the target language. The curriculum focuses on deep thinking, conceptual understanding, and real-world problem solving to assist students in understanding the world around them. The teachers at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary have worked diligently to find resources and materials in Spanish to provide rich, engaging science learning experiences for students in the target language. Teachers trans-adapted materials to ensure their language learners would have the same learning opportunities as those taught in our English programs.

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

Social studies instruction is also guided by the South Dakota Content Standards that encourage the development of civic mindedness in our students, to assist them in understanding the world around them, become responsible citizens, gain economic literacy, and be able to analyze historical events and facts. At the classroom level, social studies instruction blends the South Dakota Content Standards, Oceti Sakowin

curriculum, and socio-cultural competence goals by connecting historical events and experiences anchored in our city and state to the rest of the world. This instruction is delivered in Spanish. However, when resources are unavailable in Spanish, such as with South Dakota history and the Oceti Sakowin curriculum, our English Specific Skills teacher or librarian can provide the content in English to our learners.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Through a four-day rotation cycle, students at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary receive 48 minutes of instruction of art, music, library, or physical education each day. These are referred to as ‘specials’ classes in art, physical education, music, and library, and take place in English. These courses are critical for K-5 students in the program for a number of reasons in addition to the content each special area teaches. During primary years, before students have acquired enough language to navigate the school day, specials teachers can clearly articulate school and classroom expectations for students. They provide a mechanism to help students be successful at school without breaking the language barrier that exists in the classroom. They also simply provide a brain break for the youngest learners as students come to rely on a short period each day working in their first language (L1). Specials teachers also take on grade level content in two key ways. First, they provide instruction in specific content topics that are simply too awkward to teach in the target language (e.g., South Dakota History), and second, they reinforce vocabulary and abstract concepts for students in English while students are learning the content in their classrooms. As an example, the library teacher may ask kindergarteners to visualize while being read to in the library as a way to connect this abstract comprehension strategy to the work taking place in the classroom.

At Sonia Sotomayor, we are fortunate to employ a librarian and art teacher who are bilingual. They are great resources for our early language learners because they can provide content specific vocabulary in both languages. Our librarian has built a collection of rich texts that contains equal titles in Spanish and English.

In addition to meeting the South Dakota Standards for art, we utilize this class to introduce students to Hispanic culture. Each year, we host a Spanish speaking Artist in Residence through the South Dakota Arts Council.

Students participate in physical education class to work on building their individual skill set as well as learn how to work together for a common goal in team sports. They learn to collaborate, communicate, as well as the importance of being flexible when trying to obtain a common goal. Our students learn that physical health is meant to be enjoyable and is essential to their overall growth and development.

Music class encompasses music appreciation, instrumental exposure and performance, vocal performance and the study of various music styles, composers, and compositions. Each year, a second- grade musical is held as well as a fifth grade musical. Our teachers go above and beyond expectations to ensure that every student is engaged with a singing, dancing, and/or speaking part. Parent volunteers help to make beautiful decorations and costumes to add visual enhancements to each show. Students perform in standing room only gymnasiums year after year. On the first day of school each year, our music teacher orchestrates a school wide sing-a-long on the playground for all students, staff and parents to start the year with a strong sense of community and fun. Our fourth- grade students sing the opening songs at the city-wide Cinco de Mayo Festival each year. We are proud that each year several of our students are selected to be part of the South Dakota Honors Choir.

Orchestra is offered as an elective class beginning in fourth grade and band at the fifth- grade level. Students learn fundamental playing skills for the various string, woodwind, brass, and percussion instruments.

Students also learn music history, improvisation, composition, and basic music theory skills such as note and rhythm. For the past six years, our fourth- grade orchestra has been the largest in the Sioux Falls District, including middle and high schools.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Students in need of additional support are identified both during the weekly collaborative cycle at the team level and building-wide progress monitoring via MAP fluency (Spanish, literacy) K-2, math MAP growth (English, K-5), and reading MAP growth (English, 3-5). Once a student and a learning goal are identified, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary can deploy a range of tier two supports across content areas, language acquisition, and social-emotional supports. Some supports are common and systematic (e.g., Bridges Intervention for math) while some are developed by classroom teachers in line with program goals or state standards.

The most critical support for students takes place during a ‘Whatever I Need’ (WIN) thirty-minute block that exists in each grade level’s schedule. This thirty-minute block ensures access to additional support and/or extensions without students missing out on tier one instruction. Because a single teacher cannot meet the range of needs that exist in their classroom, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary leverages all of the available human capital to ‘flood’ a grade level during WIN. Specialists, student teachers, ESS teachers, and classroom teachers with students attending ESS flock to the grade level during WIN, each working with a group of students toward a specific learning goal.

When WIN is not sufficient, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary relies on the Student Assistance Team (SAT) process. The SAT team is made up of administrators, classroom teachers, and specialist teachers. Through the SAT process, individual student cases are brought forth. Goals are set, evidence is collected, and new goals are established. Any teacher can bring any student who is struggling for any reason to the SAT team.

Due to the program model, the transition from 2nd grade to 3rd grade is critical. This is when students take literacy skills developed in Spanish and consolidate them with English. Some students may need additional support. The MAP fluency assessment in English is delivered late in 2nd grade to students and used as a means of identifying students who may struggle with this transition before they get behind. Any students identified are offered a free six-week summer learning program focused on supporting their English literacy development.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Just like students who need extra support because they are performing below grade level, many students who need extensions are identified through the collaborative process and receive tier two extensions in WIN. Extensions are designed to more deeply explore grade level content or extend the language of the student.

Additionally, classroom teachers carefully design and deliver extension questions during tier one instruction with students who are performing above grade level. These simple extensions provide a space for all students to wrestle more deeply with a concept, while providing targeted enrichment for students who are performing above grade level.

When WIN is not sufficient for students who are performing above grade level, a district-wide gifted education program is also available for students. In its current form, it focuses on science and math. Students are served throughout the school day by the gifted education teacher.

3c. Special education:

Special education services at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary are delivered and designed at the student level. The language of the intervention is thoughtfully considered as special education services are available across

both languages. Special education services are delivered outside of tier one instruction and place an emphasis on delivering services inside of the student's classroom. Every student receives grade level instruction, and every student has access to the supports they need in order to be successful in their own classroom. A bilingual education assistant provides supports within the classroom setting.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are written for students identified for instructional support in core areas. Students struggling with specific learning difficulties in the area of reading receive Systemic Instruction in Phoneme Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS). Additionally, students with a learning disability in the area of math receive instruction through the Bridges intervention math curriculum. The Zones of Regulation program is used with students with social emotional and self-regulation needs.

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:

As a language program, student engagement in the classroom is essential. Students do not passively learn a language. As math is inquiry focused and language arts is focused on collaboration, student voice in classroom discussions and sense-making is critical. Each lesson design focuses on maximizing student opportunities to respond, to frame the teacher as a facilitator, and to elicit thinking from students.

Additionally, students receive whole-group and small group lessons from the school counselor focused on social-emotional growth. Whole-group lessons help students learn developmentally appropriate social skills, while small group support lessons are offered for students who need additional skills to positively participate in school. The collaborative language arts program focuses on social-emotional development in addition to the language arts content. Students are asked each day to engage in mindful planning and then reflect on both their learning and their role as learner.

While these are general practices that help build the culture and climate of Sonia Sotomayor Elementary, there is a key link in the chain supporting students' positive development across the school day. Our lunchroom supervisor is called our “Lunchroom Ninja.” She connects student behavior and choices in the classroom, to their specials classes, and outside activities. Each day the Lunchroom Ninja works with the entire grade level as they eat lunch. Students learn about personal responsibility, healthy choices and behaviors, acquire problem solving skills, and collectively address school-wide or grade-wide issues. Every day the Lunchroom Ninja is there to build student awareness of the choices they make and the outcomes of those choices. Our Lunchroom Ninja is the consciousness of the school. She turns what could be a utilitarian school lunch into a family meal. She helps students realize that their school is not four brick walls, but a place of learning and collective responsibility.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

One way in which families are able to connect with the school is by participating in the district-level Parent Advocates for Spanish Immersion (PASI) group. PASI was formed at the start of the Spanish immersion program and continues to support Spanish immersion in Sioux Falls across five buildings and two program models. PASI is specifically focused on supporting the K-12 Spanish immersion program through teacher and classroom grants and organizing and hosting the interns as part of the intern program.

The school also has a parent-teacher organization (PTO). The PTO’s focus is supporting teachers directly at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary, as well as bridging the home-school gap. Teacher support often takes the form of meals during conferences, treats, and thank yous. Bridging the gap between homes and school takes the form of a variety of events hosted by the PTO that bring our school community together. PTO has hosted everything from parent learning sessions to movie and BINGO nights.

Another key connection formed in a happenstance manner. Our middle school is in very close proximity to Sonia Sotomayor Elementary. Middle school also starts their day forty minutes later than elementary school in Sioux Falls. This can place parents of both middle and elementary school students in a difficult position in the morning. Thus began our middle school mentor program. Spanish immersion students in grades 6-8 are able to begin their day in an elementary classroom and then walk to their middle school. Elementary teachers deeply appreciate the extra support and hands at the start of the day. Parents appreciate being able to drop off their children at a single location and know they have a productive start to their day. Middle school mentors are also able to use their Spanish as models in a meaningful way.

When the Spanish immersion program began in 2008 and as it rapidly grew and expanded into its own building, relationships with leaders at the district and state levels became key. District leaders supported the school by navigating the hiring process, not just out of state, but out of country. In a similar fashion, the state’s department of education was crucial in building a licensure and accreditation system specifically designed for teachers moving to South Dakota from outside the United States.

Sonia Sotomayor Elementary has paid this forward by providing both formal and informal support for new language programs in our school district as well as across the state of South Dakota. Formal support comes in the form of partnering with the district's relatively new Spanish two-way immersion model as well as hosting representatives from other language immersion programs in South Dakota (Lakota/Dakota/Nakota). Because of these formal supports, informal connections between the teachers at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary and language immersion teachers across the state have formed for the betterment of all language learners in South Dakota.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Our professional learning communities (PLCs) are a cornerstone of the professional culture at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary. Time for PLCs is prioritized each week. Each year, the rest of the building's schedule is built around PLC access for teachers. Grade level teams meet with the administration and instructional coach and call support staff to attend when needed. The process of PLCs is consistent across all teams at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary. Teams develop norms, identify where they are in instructional pacing, discuss language targets, and then work through the four essential questions. While the content of this process varies by grade level and subject, the process remains the same for each team.

It is the PLC process that creates a culture of professional learning by valuing the expertise of those at the table. Teachers, coach, and administration work together to support student achievement. Professional learning takes place during the PLC as everyone works to discover what students need and the best way to deliver it.

The school's instructional leadership team (ILT) works to identify staff learning needs. This team is made up of teachers from each grade level, administration, and coach. Once the ILT has determined a staff learning topic, they work together to develop a timeframe and method of delivery. This broader staff learning can take place during monthly Staff Learning meetings in which the entire school's staff attends or during building and district in-service dates.

Additionally, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary has been fortunate to send teachers to national conferences as presenters and learners. In the 2021-2022 school year, Sonia Sotomayor Elementary teachers presented at the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) conference as well as the 8th International Conference on Immersion and Dual Language Education. However, sending teachers to national conferences is not sufficient if it does not connect back to the classroom and Sonia Sotomayor Elementary strives to bridge that connection.

An example that highlights the connection from national conference to the student level is Sonia Sotomayor Elementary's work with the integrated performance assessment. Integrated performance assessments were first highlighted as a method of monitoring student language proficiency while working with the Center for Applied Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA). Continual professional development was delivered through staff learning and building in-service. In the 2021-2022 school year, teams used their IPA goals to backward plan language targets each week in collaboration. Staff continued to refine and revise their IPA assessments at staff learning throughout the year. During the March building in-service, grade level teams met together to provide feedback on the developed assessments and share their student outcomes. The bridge from research to practice is often a hard one to build. Sonia Sotomayor Elementary works to connect current research on teaching and learning directly to teachers in the classroom.

4. School Leadership:

The administration at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary is composed of the school principal and the dean of students. The administration works to be the instructional leadership in the building and also creates a culture of shared leadership. Being the instructional leader comes to the forefront as administrators actively participate in PLCs, centering the discussion on best practices. It comes forward as the administration presents clear expectations for teachers in instruction and curricular decisions. Finally, it comes forth as they set student achievement goals.

Shared leadership at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary is evident in the school's Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the Instructional Leadership Team, and the Student Assistance Team (SAT). Our school has a 5th Grade Leadership Team made up of twenty students, two teachers, the school counselor, the Lunchroom Ninja, and the principal. This group provides input on school practices, areas of improvement, and community outreach activities that help our school serve others. The group meets monthly to discuss school happenings and plan service-learning opportunities for the school.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

We believe in service unto others. Our students, staff, and families participate in a multitude of activities that benefit others in our community. We host soup donation drives for our local food bank, collect juice boxes for the Family Visitation Center, create May Day baskets for children's hospitals, host a sock drive for a homeless shelter, hosted a coin drive for hurricane victims, and the Khor Wakow School Project, and more. Through Project Warm-Up, we have delivered blankets to homeless shelters, children's hospitals, Habitat for Humanity, tornado/fire victims, and more. Service learning is a vital component of our school foundation. We want our students to understand that they have the power to positively impact the lives of others.

One of the three key pillars for high quality dual education programs is sociocultural competence. For students and teachers at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary, this can be framed in the form of two questions: What does it mean to be bilingual? What are the additional privileges and responsibilities associated with being bilingual?

While students are at Sonia Sotomayor Elementary, they learn that they have a superpower of sorts. They are privileged to learn a second language. Students learn, "Because of my language, I have access to learn what others cannot. I am also the link from my home to my school and the Sioux Falls community."

Students also have the responsibility to learn about Hispanic cultures from across the world. This takes place in both formal and informal settings. Formally, kindergarten students learn about UN Spanish Language Day and the local Sant Jordi Festival in Barcelona. In the spring, there is a schoolwide Carnival celebration that showcases this Hispanic tradition that is celebrated in many countries throughout the world. Social Studies and language arts programming draws from authentic Spanish language sources. Informally, classroom teachers and interns from across the world make learning about cultures in faraway places very real.

Connecting this learning to people and places in Sioux Falls is a crucial step. Students from Sonia Sotomayor Elementary participate in field trips and share letters with Spanish-speaking students in Sioux Falls from other schools. Students support Caminando Juntos, a local Hispanic charity, by participating or raising funds for their events. Teachers and students volunteer as translators for the Guatemalan Embassy. Sonia Sotomayor students participate in the community's Cinco de Mayo celebration. Sonia Sotomayor Elementary hosts Project Warm-Up which has created and distributed over 30,000 new fleece blankets to children and families in need/crisis.

All of these various activities demonstrate to the students that Spanish exists in Sioux Falls, outside the four walls of the school. As bilingual learners, students have both the opportunity and responsibility to learn and support these communities.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Collective teacher efficacy is one strategy that has contributed most to our school's success. We believe in the three pillars, not just a model to build our program, but we truly believe that each student that walks through the door is capable of high academic achievement, of becoming bilingual and biliterate, and of being a sociocultural competent learner. We believe this regardless of student background, diagnosis, perceived disadvantage, or disengagement. We believe that we can overcome any obstacle a student may experience. We know that no one teacher can do this alone, but the answers are in the room. Every adult in the building is a rockstar and we need each other. Our collective expertise and diverse experiences are what allow us to make the best possible decision for each student, each day.

We value learning. Not just the learning our students do, but the learning all educators must do in order to stay effective. We learn from each other. We learn from our teammates and from the other adults in our building. As we learn, we get better at what we do. We celebrate each others' successes and contributions to our learning community. We support each other when we stumble. We hold student outcomes above convenience for the adults who serve them. And we realize that our students are our greatest teachers. It's our students who show us how well we've taught something, and we realize that we still have a lot to learn from them. We will not rest until every adult and student in our building is the best possible version of themselves and we know that each of us has a personal role to play in getting there.