U.S. Department of Education
2018 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 <u>Ms. Cindy J Tjoelker</u>
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name <u>Nooksack Elementary School</u>
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address <u>3333 Breckenridge Road</u>
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

<u>Everson</u>   <u>WA</u>   <u>98247-4307</u>
City   State   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County<u> Washington</u>

Telephone <u>(360) 966-3321</u>   Fax <u>(360) 966-7512</u>

Web site/URL
<u>   https://www.nv.k12.wa.us/Domain/</u>
<u>283   </u>   E-mail   <u>katie.brown@nv.k12.wa.us</u>

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*<u>Dr. Mark Johnson</u>
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)   E-mail <u>mark.johnson@nv.k12.wa.us</u>

District Name <u>Nooksack Valley</u>   Tel. <u>(360) 988-4754</u>
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 <u>Mr. Steve Jones</u>
(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, write N/A in the space.

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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)

2. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.

3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 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.

4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.

6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.

7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.

8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

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.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

                                        5 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

[ ] Urban or large central city

[ ] Suburban

[X] Rural or small city/town

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	8	9	17
K	43	26	69
1	28	33	61
2	36	32	68
3	30	34	64
4	35	35	70
5	35	21	56
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	215	190	405

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
   the school: 1 % Asian
                                      1 % Black or African American
                                     33 % Hispanic or Latino
                                      0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                     61 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 12%

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 *to* the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	24
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	43
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	368
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 19 %
                                                      75 Total number ELL

   Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
   Spanish, Mandarin, Mam, Aguacateco, Chalchiteko

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 58 %
   Total number students who qualify: 233

8. Students receiving special education services: <u>13</u> %

   <u>54</u> 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. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>2</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>7</u> Developmentally Delayed	<u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>27</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: <u>10</u>

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., guidance 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   <u>18:1</u>

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	95%	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 2017.

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 X   No

    If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2005

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

Ensuring Success for All Students

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Nooksack Elementary School is located in a rural agricultural community located north of Bellingham, Washington, adjacent to the Canadian border. Nooksack Elementary serves students that live in the cities of Everson and Nooksack within the Nooksack Valley School District. Opened in 1998, there are currently 413 students in preschool through grade five. Our student population consists of a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Currently, 52 percent of our student population is eligible for free and reduced-price meals and approximately 17 percent of our students are in our English Language Learner program, with 33 percent of our student body being Hispanic.

Nooksack Elementary is a personalized school with caring and dedicated adults who are focused on student success while constantly looking for ways to improve instruction. We strive to teach students how to think no matter the content. In our continuing efforts to improve instruction and learning, we pay careful attention to the whole child. All students benefit from our Physical Education and Music programs. Our staff accepts the responsibility for all students to achieve their highest potential while developing the skills to be lifelong learners. We have received the Washington State Achievement Award every year from 2008-2016 and also received the National Title I Distinguished School Award in 2015.

Our mission is to "Ensure the Success of All Students." In an effort to achieve this mission we have created a school motto, "Yes We Can! Si Podemos!" to build a growth mindset in students. Students, staff, and families share the responsibility for academic achievement as well as for creating a welcoming climate for all. Having highly skilled teachers is vital to student success, and professional development has included extensive collaboration with staff to align our curriculum and assessments, and the implementation of high leverage strategies. Teachers participate in a yearly cycle of inquiry focusing on teacher and student growth goals around our district's instructional framework.

Since receiving the National Blue Ribbon School Award in 2005 our population has grown significantly. Many families research the schools in the area and choose to make our community their home because of our school's high standards for excellence. With this growth we have increased in our number of students as well as staff, but we continue our commitment to quality instruction, high standards, and educating the whole child. Though teacher retention is high in our building, because of growth, we have many new staff members. Seminars are held monthly to support their needs, which helps them understand and articulate the building and district vision. At these meetings teachers receive history about the Nooksack Valley School District, training with our evaluation framework, instructional strategies and pedagogy. Our teachers have benefited from district partnerships with the University of Washington in both leadership training and mathematics instruction.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

English Language Arts (ELA) – Reading & Writing
At Nooksack Elementary students are taught core curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards. Extensive professional development has been provided to deeply understand the standards and align our curriculum and assessments to them.

We use a balanced literacy approach to language arts. Reading is a foundational skill that plays a role in the success of all students. This approach builds independent readers in authentic ways and creates life-long learners. Students acquire skills through the implementation of our reading/writing workshop model. We have found success integrating Lucy Calkin's Reading and Writing Units of Study Curriculum with our state standards.

Our reading program includes four components that students need to become proficient readers. Students need 1) choice in what they are reading, 2) time to read independently every day, 3) a supportive community for sharing responses, and 4) responsibility for their own learning. In reading, teachers help students monitor their comprehension by stopping to record their questions, make inferences, create predictions, and record new learning.

Extensive professional development has been provided for teachers to become skilled at the components of reader's workshop including read-aloud, shared and guided reading, word study for teaching phonics skills, and independent reading for practicing skills and strategies. Teachers confer with individual students about their progress, needs, and next steps. They organize reading materials in classroom libraries that allows student choice at appropriate reading levels from a variety of genres, including a balance of fiction and non-fiction. Accountable talk and partner reads are other ways for students to demonstrate comprehension, and cognitive strategies are integrated into the reading program. Teachers encourage families to engage in a reading partnership through classroom-based home reading programs, family literacy nights and a summer lending library reading program.

We believe writing and reading are essential partners in a balanced literacy program. A mini-lesson is taught and the students are sent to write independently. Conferring with students provides individualized attention to meet the specific needs of students and to assist students in setting appropriate goals. Students then share their writing with a partner or the whole class. This provides an opportunity to model revision as part of the writing process. Students write in a variety of genres including narrative, informational and opinion. Our efforts gradually shift the responsibility for learning to the students, so they become proficient and independent writers.

Mathematics
Guided by the Common Core Standards, students learn math content as well as mathematical practices to deepen their problem solving, reasoning, and communication of their thinking through a variety of talk moves. Student learning in mathematical content is differentiated through a workshop format that includes inquiry-based collaboration, focused mini-lessons, gradual release of responsibility, and differentiated practice. We work toward deep understanding of mathematical concepts using practices such as modeling, use of manipulatives and student discourse. Students are encouraged to utilize visual representations to support their mathematical understanding. Learning activities involve the use of concrete representations to allow all students an entry point to the task. The curriculum is cyclical, which allows students numerous opportunities to become proficient at a concept.

Science
Nooksack's science program is research-based with a hands-on inquiry approach. We are in the process of transitioning to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and currently our curriculum covers disciplinary core ideas in physical, life, Earth and space sciences. Building a conceptual understanding and strengthening the students' ability to use inquiry and problem solve is a focus for instruction. The scientific

and engineering practices such as asking questions, developing and using models, and analyzing, and interpreting data are all integral parts of our science curriculum. Our goal is to develop students who can meet the needs of an ever-changing world.

Social Studies
Our primary purpose of Social Studies is help young people make informed decisions for the public good, as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society. We do this by teaching pivotal topics, people and events. Teachers bring a Pacific Northwest perspective to social studies, which is taught through a variety of forms, reading materials, technology and experiences. Studies highlight the way of life in the Pacific Northwest, such as studies of our Northwest Coast Native Americans, environmental studies around salmon migration, and local cultures. American history is also heavily embedded within our nonfiction reading units at the intermediate level.

Preschool
Early intervention is crucial for student success, and we are fortunate to have Head Start as a partner for preschool. Reaching students at the age of three has helped close the achievement gap for these neediest of students. Oral language skills are strengthened before entering kindergarten. Through hands-on, project-based investigations, children's confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills are built. Preschool teachers receive ongoing training in literacy and math, and the Preschool Creative Curriculum prepares students for entering kindergarten and is aligned to the ELA standards. In Head Start, our preschool students have services that may otherwise not be available to them. Data is collected around school readiness, and students are identified who may have health or developmental needs.

2. **Other Curriculum Areas:**

Music
In our music program we teach a sequential program based on being "tuneful, beatful and artful" musicians. Students in kindergarten receive 60 minutes of music instruction weekly and grades 1-5 have 45 minutes weekly. The program for primary grades focuses instruction on singing and beat keeping. Students are exposed to a wide range of folk songs from different cultures and languages. We make a specific effort to include songs in Spanish as we have many students from Spanish speaking countries. Students also move to music for both beat and form. We use classical music for movement activities, exposing students to the great composers' works. The intermediate program continues the work from primary grades, adding recorders and world drumming as well as reading standard music notation and creating rhythmic compositions which are shared with others. We recently applied for and received grant money to purchase tubano drums to implement a World Drumming Curriculum. This gives another avenue of music expression to students beyond singing. It also honors the tradition of oral music which is prevalent in many of our students' cultures.

Physical Education
Nooksack Elementary understands the benefits of physical activity and supports a comprehensive Physical Education (PE) Program. All students receive 90 minutes of PE per week. Students at the primary level focus on locomotor and manipulative skills that sequentially lead up to more complex games and sporting activities. The President's Fitness Test is used to teach the students to set goals and learn the importance of lifetime fitness. Our PE program has been recognized by the Fuel Up to Play 60 and the Washington Dairy Council to help implement a healthy food and physical activity program. We also received a grant from the American Heart Association/NFL Play 60 Challenge to purchase heart monitors. In addition, local partnerships provide nutrition classes to second and fourth graders, teaching them about balance nutrition and healthy lifestyle. We believe it is important to help our students understand the benefits of physical activity for a lifetime of health and success in the future.

Library/Technology
Every class receives 45 minutes of library and computer instruction a week. During this time students build their listening skills through being read to and they check out books for at home use. A full computer lab helps them grow their computer skills. This includes keyboarding and learning how to code. Library class also allows time for playing board games and puzzles, opportunities not otherwise available to some

students. Beyond our library, technology is integrated into every classroom. We have a ratio of approximately one Chromebook for every two students in the building, and they are used in the classrooms for research, remediation programs, and for extending lessons for students.

Social Emotional Learning
The Second Step curriculum is used to strengthen the social emotional well-being of our students and to help them reach their full potential. Skills focus on mindfulness, bullying prevention, protecting themselves and self-regulation. Our counselor is directly involved in the teaching of these character building classes, and they are crucial in maintaining the culture of our school. Taught throughout the year, by meeting with all students, the counselor keeps a pulse on the building climate and potential issues can be prevented.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

We believe there are six major components of assessment for all students. Good assessment practices begin with students having a clear understanding of the specific learning targets they are expected to meet. We present each standard in student-friendly terms using "I Can" learning target statements or essential questions across subject areas and grade levels, providing students with a purpose for every lesson. Success criteria is stated and internalized by using self-assessment against these criteria. Learning targets and questions guide student learning, help students gauge their understanding and make connections to real-world experiences. Throughout a unit of instruction, students try on new strategies. The students use formative assessments, assessments for learning, as they receive specific feedback that will help them meet the learning targets.

Teachers meet in Professional Learning Communities weekly to ensure instructional alignment, analyze formative assessments, and plan for next steps. They use a variety of high quality summative assessments, assessment of learning, with their students. Planning and implementing instruction through analyzing formative and summative assessments drives classroom instruction. Students complete pre, mid, and post assessments to ensure proficiency of content.

Students set goals, reflect on their own learning, and communicate this understanding to others. Grades are based on ample evidence that accurately reflects a student's level of achievement in specific subjects, performances, products, or skills. Finally, students are recognized as being the primary users of assessment information and they regularly participate in communication about their achievement.
Not all students learn at the same rate and differentiated instructional strategies are essential at every grade level. Our instructional approach includes whole group, small group, and individual conferring that allows for flexible grouping which may be by ability. Students below standard are provided additional scaffolding support through explicit targeted instruction. This model allows our students who are excelling to also be stretched to meet their next instructional goal.

Everyone at our school, including office staff, cooks, custodians, and teaching staff, must be committed to mentoring and supporting the academic and social development of all students. All adults in the building take responsibility for encouraging every student to raise their personal aspirations to have "pictures of hope in their heads" and look to their future with promise. Special programs, such as Title I, Special Education, and the Learning Assistance Program support students not meeting the standard. Our goal is to focus on early interventions to close the achievement gap. Based on student data, interventions focus on literacy or math. Students working on reading interventions focus on strategies to increase reading comprehension, accuracy, and fluency. Other specific skills, for example, grammar, spelling, sentence structure are taught in cross-grade level groups. Math interventions focus on conceptual understanding of mathematical operations and fluency with facts. Students problem solve in small groups, as well as receive instruction through a computer-based math program. Grade level teams monitor the progress of students, clearly identifying those making progress or in need of instructional adjustments.

As part of our tiered instruction process, support services for students are determined by standard based assessments such as the Developmental Reading Assessment and other classroom-based assessments for literacy. Interventions are implemented based on student need. Small group instruction is done through flexible groupings. The literacy specialist will do further identification of specific gaps in learning to plan

the instruction. Every six to eight weeks data is reviewed with classroom teachers and changes are made as students meet their goals.

An extended day program provides academic support and enrichment opportunities. Nooksack Elementary recognizes the importance of providing diverse opportunities for all learners. Our after-school programs include choir, theatre, dance, cooking, and Club de Lectura which strengthens our bilingual students' home language literacy skills. Extended year programs are also provided during the summer, including a program serving incoming kindergarten students who have not had preschool experience or who have delays. Ongoing collaboration and data analysis enables teachers to identify gaps in instruction and provide support where needed. Teachers work diligently to meet the needs of ALL students at Nooksack Elementary. A team effort contributes to the success of our school. We believe our collaborative environment and systems significantly impact our students' academic and social-emotional gains, which in turn allows us to close achievement gaps.

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

Nooksack Elementary School believes in a growth mindset. Our school adopted the motto "Yes We Can! Si Podemos!" Students embraced this saying with CAN standing for Care about others, Always try our best, and Never give up. Our students are expected to learn and grow both socially and academically. Students understand that it is okay to make mistakes and learning can occur from these mistakes. We praise the progress students make. Classrooms at Nooksack participate in building relationships through restorative practices. One way this is achieved is using circle discussions in classes. Students share their successes and challenges as well as acknowledging the success of others.

It is important for all children to feel safe and happy at school. To achieve this goal, students in grades 3-5 participate annually in a student perception survey. Given since 2008, we noted a significant jump in positive perception after implementing a Positive Behavior Intervention Support Program (PBIS). This program is used throughout the building to recognize students for showing positive behaviors. Students receive star behaviors for helping others, following rules, and exceeding expectations. Weekly drawings are held to highlight students with positive behavior. At the end of each month, students who have been able to maintain positive behaviors receive a monthly reward.

Support is provided for all teachers through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Common planning is provided for PLCs to meet minimally weekly, where teams come together to plan, problem solve, and celebrate student success together. The work of the teacher isn't done in isolation. Our belief is we have ownership of all students, and by working within a PLC, teachers not only focus on the needs of their students, decisions for remediation and extension are made together.

Just as we believe with students, personal relationships matter. The administration understands the need for staff at times to put their own family first, which ensures when we are with our students, our attention is on them. We find the time within the school year to get to know each other personally and have social functions so we build not only working relationships but collegial relationships as well.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

To achieve our mission, "Ensure the Success of All Students," we realize the importance of engaging families and community members in the learning process. Our kindergarten teachers started a program titled "Ready for K." At the end of May, incoming students and their parents attend sessions with the kindergarten team to discuss expectations, curriculum, and ways families can support their child. Teachers also meet with each family individually for orientation before school starts in the fall to learn about the child and family.

With our growing Spanish speaking population, we recognized the need to help our Hispanic families feel comfortable in the school environment. One avenue is through our Hispanic Literacy nights, where parents come together and are provided materials and resources for literacy building activities at home. This allows staff and parents to build relationships in a relaxed setting.

As our community has grown and diversified, a district task force was formed to take away barriers to learning for students. Our school hosted community forums focusing on building a resilient community. One idea that came from these meetings was to have local law enforcement, fire fighters and community members present throughout the school day. At the beginning of the school year, representatives from these agencies joined us in welcoming students back to school. Numerous partnerships connect the school and community, such as the fire department brings a fire house in for demonstrations and safety training. In addition, our school partners with Western Washington University (WWU) throughout the year hosting practicum students and teacher interns. Other WWU students volunteer with our 5th grade students through the Compass to Campus program where students are connected with college mentors to give them a sense of continued education. A visit to WWU and continuing mentoring through high school are part of this

program.

We recognize and value the contributions of our families. Nooksack Elementary has an active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). Throughout the year the PTA plans many community events including a talent show, family dance, and holiday festivals. On any given day you can see parent volunteers working throughout the school with small groups of students, making copies in the office, or supporting in social activities. We recognized a need for more positive male role models in the school, and with the support of our counselor we implemented the Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program. We know it is important to communicate with families about students' academic progress. Teachers send newsletters, conduct student/parent/teacher conferences, and communicate progress through progress reports and report cards.

3.   Professional Development:

A key to the success of Nooksack Elementary is the belief in providing quality professional development (PD) to all staff. We have high expectations but with that comes a high level of support. Teachers collaborate and are committed to upholding the curriculum through best instructional practices.

Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) support both literacy and math. They assist teachers in looking at student work, plan intentional interventions, and monitor progress of students. In addition, all teachers participate in learning labs each month. During the lab sessions planned by teacher leadership and the TOSAs, they examine best practices, focus on implementation of the curriculum, plan lessons together, teach and observe in classrooms, debrief, and plan the next instructional steps. This allows teachers to try on new practices in a supportive environment with follow-up training from the TOSAs.

A need we had this year was filled by our district ELL advocate/language developer to support a gap in achievement between our white, Hispanic, and bilingual populations. With an emphasis on knowing more about our ELLs, teachers have learned the stages of language acquisition, what they can expect from students at the various stages, and how to plan lessons around the particular needs of their ELLs. The importance of student talk and how to structure lessons to set up our ELLs for success has also been part of our professional development. Teachers have learned how to distinguish when a student needs more time to learn the language and when there is a suspected learning disability.

Meeting the needs of both veteran and new teachers is a challenge in providing PD. Our new teachers are provided additional support through meeting regularly with a mentor. They also have monthly PD sessions addressing specific topics. This allows our building PD to keep instruction moving forward for teachers of all levels of experience.

We have early release opportunities for additional PD. About half of these sessions are building-based where the school improvement plan drives the agenda, and the building leadership team helps to plan and implement the learning for the day. The other half are devoted to district-wide grade level sessions, which promotes alignment of curriculum and best instructional practices across all three elementary schools. We credit our academic success to the level of support our teachers have received in professional development. We believe that the teacher is the key variable to student achievement.

4.   School Leadership:

In a small district all staff wear multiple hats. Our teachers are an integral part of every aspect of our school. We believe in shared leadership, which includes all teachers, teacher leaders, an extended leadership team, instructional supports such as our Teachers on Special Assignment in literacy and math (TOSAs), and our English Language Learner (ELL) advocate. The principal is supported by this vast team working together to meet the needs of our students. Every teacher has a responsibility to be part of the larger team and support each other.

Our district promoted an intensive leadership training program through the University of Washington several years ago and two of the participants have become teacher leaders at Nooksack Elementary. They

work with the principal to ensure implementation of initiatives through assisting in the planning of professional development, working with grade level professional learning communities (PLCs) and are lead learners in the building. The teacher leaders also connect monthly with the district administration and monitor the progress of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Five teacher leaders are also part of an extended leadership team that represents a variety of educators from veterans to new teachers and remedial support teachers. Meeting weekly, much of the focus is to plan and implement professional development as well as give input to a wide range of school activities that promote a strong culture within the building. This group keeps a pulse on the needs of both staff and students. For example, as part of our SIP this year, we have an emphasis on building relationships through resiliency. Classroom circles have been a focus, and the leadership team has led our building meetings throughout the year by planning a circle for staff to try on and experience.

Literacy and math task forces are made up of grade level leaders, and Nooksack Elementary is well represented on these district teams. These leaders give direct input to the direction the district goes in content area work. They are considered lead learners, and when the district adopts curriculum and/or instructional skills, they help support the implementation within the building and grade levels. Their expertise is invaluable in helping teachers understand the curriculum as well as supporting instructional practices.

The role of the principal includes many jobs, and without strong leadership team support, the capacity to implement an effective SIP is not possible. Leadership is valued and is an integral part of the success of Nooksack Elementary.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Our school population and community has seen an increase of students with a high number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). We know that children cannot learn if their basic needs are not met. Understanding the impact of ACEs and how to support students from trauma has been a focus of much professional development. One main goal from our School Improvement Plan (SIP) has been to build resiliency through relationships. Through targeted professional development provided by our school counselor, our staff developed a plan to solidify both physical and emotional safety within our school walls.

Every student meets with our school counselor for 45 minutes each week to establish a foundation of social skills and problem-solving strategies through a class called Character Building. This year-long class also includes bullying prevention, career exploration, and a month-long focus on cyberbullying prevention. Younger students learn concepts from Stephen Covey's "7 Habits of Successful People" curriculum. In many classrooms, you can hear students reminding each other to "be proactive" and "find a win-win" when problem solving with their peers.

To focus on building positive relationships and safety, we implemented a school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) system, where students are positively recognized for showing expected behaviors and there is a systematic and consistent response to problem behaviors. Rituals and routines are so important with children with trauma and we know this is an important piece to focus on. In fact, there was a large increase in our school climate survey (given to all 3rd-5th graders) after the first two years, which was the exact year we implemented PBIS at our school. Each year this climate survey was administered, our data showed an increase students feeling happier, helped by teachers, and safe from bullying in different areas of the school.

Inspired by the work of Carol Dweck and Angela Duckworth, our school motto "Yes We Can! Si Podemos!" is to inspire grit and growth mindset in our students. We have this phrase on staff t-shirts, posters in the hallway, and it is a regular response to teacher prompting within the classroom. We measure students' perception of their own grit over the course of the school year with targeted instruction and it has increased each data collection period. Students at Nooksack know they are safe enough to try on new learning without fear of failure each and every day in their classrooms.