

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 300 Section Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Norway State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 49870-0000

County Dickinson

Telephone (906) 563-9543 Fax (906) 302-2370

Web site/URL <https://www.nvknights.org> E-mail rmeneghini@nvknights.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Louis Steigerwald E-mail lsteigerwald@nvknights.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Norway-Vulcan Area Schools Tel. (906) 563-9552

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Cory Heigl
(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 2023 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 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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 (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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, 2022 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 Students |
|----------------|---------------|
| PreK | 17 |
| K | 47 |
| 1 | 44 |
| 2 | 32 |
| 3 | 39 |
| 4 | 45 |
| 5 | 45 |
| 6 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 |
| 8 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 |
| 11 | 0 |
| 12 or higher | 0 |
| Total Students | 269 |

*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 95 % White
 - 0 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 4%

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year | 5 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year | 7 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 12 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 | 269 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.04 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 4 |

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 42 %

Total number students who qualify: 112

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 14 %
Total number of students served 37

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 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>11</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>16</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. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 0 %
Total number of students served: 0

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 6

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

| | Number of Staff |
|--|-----------------|
| Administrators | 1 |
| Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 13 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 3 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 8 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 1 |

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1

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

| Required Information | 2021-2022 | 2020-2021 | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance | 95% | 96% | 96% | 95% | 95% |
| High school graduation rate | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

14. **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 2022.

| 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% |

15. 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.

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

To address the academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural needs of each child and to prepare our students for the future by nurturing a life-long love of learning.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<http://www.nvknights.org>

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

We are a small, rural community in the upper peninsula (UP) of Michigan. The Norway-Vulcan Area Schools district (NVAS) is the hub of the community and the focal point of pride. We are hard-working, inclusive, and relationship-based in our approach to education. Norway Elementary is the first step in the education journey for families of the Norway-Vulcan Area Schools district. We are a blue-collar community, with the majority of employers in the region featuring jobs in manufacturing, forestry, and agricultural industries. A large percentage of our residents are retirees; yet, they maintain a solid connection to the NVAS system through the academic, athletic, and civic accomplishments of their families, friends, and neighbors.

In recent years, our district has upgraded many of our classroom resources. We have purchased new ELA (Wonders), Math (Ready Math), Science, and Social Studies series. The process of selecting new materials was designed intentionally and based on teaching staff recommendations. By assembling a select team of lower and upper elementary staff members we ensured all voices would be heard throughout the screening process. We researched evidence-based programs, placed an emphasis on digital and traditional resources, highlighted programs with individualized elements of instruction for both below and above grade level students, and ensured that content and pacing were aligned with local and state growth/achievement measurement tools. This has all manifested with increased ELA and Math scores across the board on our state assessment, the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (MSTEP).

Norway-Vulcan Area Schools was an innovator and leader in the adoption of educational technology in our region. Our voters passed a school bond that generated the capital to purchase 700+ devices for the start of the 2012-13 school year. This support was the cornerstone in strengthening our school. Not only were we a pioneer with technology with a 1:1 (iPads) educational initiative, we also saw the importance of applying that philosophy for all grades, early kindergarten through 12th grade. Many of our neighboring districts lagged with adopting technology, and when they did invest in technology, they often limited it to middle school/high school grade levels.

Many Norway Elementary teachers and administrators have taken leadership roles in our local, intermediate school district, and statewide professional organizations. School districts both locally and statewide have noticed Norway's strong track record of academic success. We have been contacted concerning the textbook series we use, our technology initiative, PTO fundraising programs, to provide mentorship for area teachers and administrators, and peer-to-peer observation opportunities.

Our forward-thinking approach had us well prepared for the COVID pandemic that forced us to teach remotely for the last months of the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, the medically supported best-practice safety measures instituted by the state of Michigan and followed by our local school board in the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years required our quarantined students to learn remotely, either through synchronous or asynchronous instruction. The community investment in technology updated textbooks series that embraced technology, and our staff's expertise and skill with both allowed our students to continue growing, teachers to continue teaching, and our families to stay connected to their school. As a result, our school's performance on the MSTEP remained strong. We truly made lemonade out of lemons.

The Capturing Kids' Hearts (CKH) initiative is the most recent of our strategies to further connect and strengthen our effectiveness and bond with our students. The program follows Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) philosophies by "implementing transformational processes focused on social-emotional wellbeing, relationship-driven campus culture, and student connectedness." Our entire staff, including administration, custodial, food service, support, and teaching staff, attended a two-day comprehensive training on the CKH program. Through continued sustained professional development and support, we are ensuring the principles of Capturing Kids' Hearts will further strengthen our effectiveness as educators and our connection with our community. We are on the cusp of being awarded a National Showcase School award by the CKH organization, bringing more well-deserved attention to the efforts of our school and community to grow, connect, and support relationships.

This is our first time receiving this distinguished award. Norway Elementary is only the third UP school to receive this accolade, following Dickinson Area Catholic School (Iron Mountain, 1986) and Graveraet Elementary (Marquette, 2021). This is quite an accomplishment for a community of our size in the little slice of Michigan we call home.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Using the framework designed around pacing and content guidelines from Michigan’s Standards and Benchmarks, we have approached the challenge of English/Language Arts instruction with grit and determination. Generally, our ELA block runs for 90 to 120 uninterrupted minutes every morning. During that time, we will not schedule school assemblies announcements (e.g., announcing the winner of the “Jump Rope of Heart” fundraiser), or have a guest speaker “pop into our rooms.” We will not have scheduled fire, tornado, lock-down or other drills during that time. If we have a weather delay to the start of the day, the ELA block gets its time and adjustments to the remainder of the day will be made. We hold that time sacred... literacy is an essential building block for further success in school and life. We also use the tool of explicit phonics instruction to further cement key literacy concepts into students at a young age.

Early in the school year, students are individually tested using the Acadience Learning tool to provide universal literacy screening to detect when students need extra support. Using the information gained through that process, data gathered from the previous year’s local and state assessment, and common planning time between staff a cohesive individualized plan is set in place of each student. Students are then assigned to small instructional groups. Often in a class of 20 students, four to six groups may be working on their appropriate literacy goals. This helps all students to be accordingly challenged, whether they are above, on, or below the benchmark.

Students identified in need of intervention are progress monitored weekly. Based on those results, classroom groupings may be modified and intervention services continued, altered, or discontinued. Schoolwide we use the NWEA Reading MAP growth assessments in the fall, winter, and spring. The data are used to provide our teachers with overall feedback on the effectiveness of their instruction, strengths/weaknesses in their students, data on their teaching methods, and academic resources. If we identify a weakness in a certain grade, classroom, or instructional benchmark, we meet to devise a plan to rectify the deficit. Fortunately, the data we gather from using the NWEA Reading assessment give us a very clear projection of expected performance on the state of Michigan assessment, the MSTEP. It is not a complete 100%, apples-to-apples correlation, but the NWEA tool is very effective in identifying where adjustments need to be made on a tri-annual basis, not having to wait on the state data which are not returned until the fall of the next school year.

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

Using the framework designed around pacing and content guidelines from Michigan’s Standards and Benchmarks, our Math assessment results have seen a sustained, substantial performance increase in recent years. Our Math block generally begins after lunch (we follow the philosophy of recess before lunch to encourage students to eat a more well-balanced meal without rushing for playground time) and continues for 45-75 minutes as age appropriate. As true with our ELA block, unscheduled interruptions are eliminated from this instructional time window. The consistency and routine of schedule expectations set the tone for high-quality instruction and the importance of that instruction.

Although not as differentiated as our ELA instructional groups (a goal we are working toward), Math instruction is also grouped based on individual strengths and weaknesses. The technology associated with our math series, Ready Math, provides tailored assessments based on each student’s performance. Their tool, iReady, has shown to be an engaging supplement to the daily Ready Math curriculum. We do not have the proper resources to provide math interventions as we do in reading, but the reinvestment in the professional development of our teachers, an updated engaging series, and the individualized supplements that the accompanying technology provides help us challenge the students who are above-, on-, and below-benchmarks.

As discovered with the NWEA growth and achievement measurement tool, our iReady diagnostic gives us

all but instant feedback on the performance of our students. Conducted once in the fall, once in the winter, and once in the spring, the diagnostic is used to measure individual student growth, classroom performance, grade-level achievement, and schoolwide success. Data points gathered from these tri-annual assessments communicate to us which students need more opportunities, what resources need to be reexamined, what methods need to be reevaluated, and most importantly, whose successes need to be celebrated.

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

We use Michigan Standards and Benchmarks are primarily to align and guide our science instruction in both content and pacing. Our science curriculum resource of choice to help us accomplish this goal is Science Studies Weekly. We alternate weekly (somethings bi-weekly) instruction in science and social studies for 30-45 minutes per lesson. With our core focus on ELA and Math skills in terms of instructional time, funding, and scheduling, the fear of science and social studies taking a "backseat" is a real one.

As intentional as we are in carving out resources for the 3Rs, we are also focused on finding a tool to help us educate our students in the sciences given the unique parameters associated with our focus on ELA and Math. Through analyzing several products we have found that Science Studies Weekly fully aligns with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and incorporates the engineering design process. This resource helps translate scientific processes vertically when students have to opportunity to take deeper dive into the sciences in middle school and high school careers. We offer a STEM class as an exploratory course in middle school in an effort to provide for any lost elementary opportunities. Much of our reading and writing in the upper elementary years focuses on non-fiction informational texts which are often related to science.

Our elementary students are assessed in Science only in fifth grade, on a third-fifth grade cumulative content MSTEP test. We have identified our Science scores as an area for growth.

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

Michigan Standards and Benchmarks provide the framework for content and pacing to be included in social studies education. In Michigan, our third grade explicitly is taught "Michigan History" as their social studies curriculum. This is an effort to educate our young Michiganders on the fine accomplishments of the 26th state. More than the memorization of the state flower (apple blossom) and state bird (robin), third grade students delve into the unique historical events (e.g., Toledo War) which laid the foundation of the Great Lake State for years to come.

Following the same constraints as our science instruction, we alternate weekly or bi-weekly instructional units. My World Interactive is the tool staff selected to help "effectively engage students in social studies through civic involvement and literacy." There is a strong technological component to the resource, which fits well with our 1:1 iPad initiative and overall tech integration approach to elementary education. The informational, non-fiction text that is highlighted in our ELA series often focuses on history, civil rights, geography, and government. This meshes well with the increased focus we place on ELA and Math but still delivers cross-categorical content via the types of reading, writing, and mathematical instruction our students receive. This is an effort to supplement any shortcomings of instructional time explicitly underserving social studies concepts and benchmarks.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

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

At Norway Elementary, we provide both Pre-School (three-year-olds) and Pre-K (four-year-olds) programming. Our academic focus is on the acquisition of literacy and math foundations, along with developing gross motor and fine motor skills. Social awareness-building activities enhance sharing, cooperation, and friend-making opportunities. Our purpose is to provide a developmentally appropriate environment in which our graduating students will display a higher level of kindergarten readiness. Being a

small school, we luckily have the opportunity to work closely with multiple age-level teachers. Our Pre-K/Pre-School staff has an aligned instructional philosophy with our grade-level staff. State performance testing in later years shows a strong correlation between attending our Pre-School/Pre-K programs and future academic success.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Our EK-fifth art program, offered once a week for 30 minutes total, provides a space for students to engage in creative thinking and problem-solving. Students have access to a variety of materials and techniques to explore and expand on their ideas and tasks. In our art room, we encourage students to test and experiment in order to grow. Mistakes are not something to hide, be embarrassed about, or become discouraged, but rather an essential part of the creative process to learn and grow. Students become more confident and relaxed in the learning process, less focused on being right or wrong, and more open to the ups and downs of learning. Through this process, students gain emotional and social confidence, growing a positive relationship with learning. Academically, the critical thinking process can transfer to other subjects. Mostly the art room is a space where kids can be themselves and have multiple ways to express ideas and develop good relationships with learning and each other. It offers a process leading to optimal opportunities to learn, lead, and contribute in school and community environments. Our instructor is an expert.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Our EK-fifth physical education (twice a week for 60 minutes total) and health (once a week for 30 minutes total) programs help students with essential skills for everyday life. In Health, students learn about emotional support, behavior management, relaxation techniques, self-care, empathy, diversity, values, relationships, conflict resolution, and goal setting. In physical education, they learn how to move their bodies, acquire activity skills, be respectful, and show compassion, cooperation, self-control, and responsibility. The mind and body connection are crucial to a student's success.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

Foreign language instruction, Spanish at Norway Elementary, is delivered once a week for all grades EK-five, and is 30 minutes in length. Studies show that foreign language learning at a young age is helpful in skill building because it is shown to help with literacy in English, increase problem-solving, and encourage greater attentional control. Other benefits of exposing students to a foreign language are that it gives children the ability to switch tasks, build memory, and enhance creativity. Perhaps the most important reason young children are intrinsically better language learners is that they are capable of becoming more proficient and can better retain the language throughout their lifetime. We teach language and culture together making it come alive.

2d. Technology/library/media

Our elementary classes have weekly scheduled 30-minute blocks of time with our librarian in the media center. Younger grades learn the goings-on of a library and have stories read to them, while upper-grade levels have the opportunity to check out books, engage in programs like the Reading Olympics, and explore the library/media center offers for topics of personal interest. The library/media center is located in the central hub of our K-12 building, so often multi-aged groups of students and staff can be found utilizing this tremendous resource at the same time. It personifies the community connection we wish to promote.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Elementary students performing below grade level in literacy skills often qualify for Title I services. Our Certified Reading Specialist carefully crafts an individualized plan to address, intervene, mitigate, and possibly reduce or eliminate the individual deficit. Weekly progress monitoring ensures effective approaches are being taken and best practice strategies are being implemented.

In recent years, all after-school intervention grants have focused on literacy. Norway Elementary has made a sustained effort to apply for funds and use them specifically in the ELA discipline. The summer school grants that we were fortunate enough to receive in the past several years also focused on ELA and Math strictly. We purposefully timed the summer school program (mid-August for Michigan schools) as a kick-start session for identified students to combat the "summer slide," have them ready for the routine of the school, and start the year with confidence.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Through the small group reading instruction as highlighted earlier, advanced ELA reading groups can be formed. This enables ensuring that all readers are getting appropriately challenging materials. Our students regularly perform in district, regional, and UP-wide competitions that highlight excellence in reading and language usage. The Upper Peninsula Community Education Association conducts a spelling bee. Our local intermediate school district conducts a Reading Olympics program. This challenges students in third-eighth grades with a variety of texts and novels. We have a surprisingly large number of parents, families, and friends come to witness the competitions. The adaptive math instruction program, iReady, is tailored to individual strengths and weaknesses. Weekly, students are assigned between 40-100 challenge problems specifically designed for the individual. Once mastery is attained, the student receives a more challenging level of problems. If a student performs below the benchmark on two consecutive assessments, they meet with their teacher or teacher aide to determine the appropriate intervention.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Norway Elementary's inclusive resource room instruction philosophy follows the push-in vs. pull-out model. Classroom teachers expertly use a series of Tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions to ensure highly effective classroom instruction. We differentiate when applicable, modify assignments, and provide small group and/or one-to-one support with general classroom personnel. However, some students need more ability-level programming than the general education classroom can provide.

Classroom schedules are crafted in conjunction with the resource room services in mind. While keeping with our schoolwide philosophy of a 90-120 minute uninterrupted ELA block in the morning and a 45-60 minute Math block in the afternoon, scheduling support services can be a tangled web. With intentionality, we ensure our students that are most in need are not forgotten. We hire the appropriate skill set needed for working with children with disabilities. Not just enough physical staffing numbers, but the proper mindset, willingness to connect, and ability to "switch gears" as student needs demand are key attributes we have in all our staff.

3d. English Language Learners:

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

In the past five years, Norway Elementary has instituted many initiatives aimed at improving engagement, motivation, and academic, social, and emotional growth. Our Climate and Culture team meets every other week before school to plan activities focused on the above. From these meetings we have developed elementary dance-offs at halftime of sporting events, a mega party/bounce house extravaganza for our March is Reading month fundraising success, holiday events like movie days, community parades, and more.

Our PTO working closely with the staff has been instrumental in increasing engagement as well. Trunk or Treat events, Daddy-Daughter Dances, Mother-Son events, fully funding the fourth-grade ski trip, birthday celebrations, and Track and Field day end-of-year surprises.

Finally, our school's commitment to the Capturing Kids' Hearts curriculum is another key program used to increase academic, social, and emotional growth. The training associated with CKH provided us with the framework and continuity needed to best reach all our students. Students make their classroom rules (the social contract), celebrate "good things" every day in class, and get greeted at the door by staff to take a quick temperature check on the student's emotional well-being. The consistency of "the four questions," and the students being taught how to help their classmates redirect all help our school become more student-centered. All these initiatives have made a positive impact.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Based on one metric alone, engaging families and the community is our biggest growth opportunity. Sadly, our voters have not supported the last three sinking funding/school bond issues that were on the ballot. Our building and grounds are over 30 years old. The needs associated with a campus of that age have become evident. Physical deterioration of parking lots, bathrooms, and other high-traffic areas is an issue. We are an elderly, conservative, rural community, with much of our population being retirees on fixed incomes, who do not directly have a school or child in our school system so they may not see the importance of these ballot issues or want taxes raised to fund them. Additionally the farther the voters physically get from school, the lower the percentage of "yes" votes for our school. The school funding initiatives routinely pass in the city but have recently failed in both the townships we service.

We are not unique with these demographics in our intermediate school district or UP as a whole... so re-sparking engagement is vital. Our sporting teams have traditionally been a source of community pride, along with elementary programs like holiday music events, summer sports, art, and technology camps. We need to become our biggest cheerleaders. We need more events that bring the voters into our school. We need to get out in front of our voters and promote the awesomeness happening at Norway Elementary. When our school was nominated for the National Blue Ribbons Award, it reinvigorated our students, staff, and community. Our Culture and Climate team is working on how to parley this monumental achievement into an opportunity to reengage our voters.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Norway-Vulcan Area Schools' commitment to technology was the first step in supporting and valuing our teachers. Our 1:1 technology initiative which passed in 2012-2013 put us at the forefront for schools in our region. Many hours of professional development on how to best use the tools in the school setting, followed by continual training and updates with hardware, software, and cybersecurity measures had us well prepared for the COVID pandemic that affected teaching and learning for several years. Having made this commitment when we were an outlier showed the forward-thinking approach we have for our staff.

We followed the 1:1 technology initiative up with providing our staff with professional materials and training to demonstrate full buy-in. By creating teacher-led curriculum committees, we have updated our

entire ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies resources. Fortunately, teacher input was all that mattered during the selection process. The tools and series they selected were the resources we purchased. The cost was always in the back of the administration team's mind, but we and our school board fully supported their selections.

Finally, our Capturing Kids' Hearts initiative was also a staff-led enterprise. CKH and the training associated with it were selected by our climate and culture team and fully supported by our school board. We trusted the voices of the professionals in the classroom and got them the training and resources they had been asking for. The process has also helped us become a more unified EK-12 staff. Being able to conduct peer observations of each other has helped break down the siloed nature of the elementary classroom.

4. School Leadership:

Initially, the biggest impact our school leadership had on the structure of the elementary school was advocating for new resources, specifically Math. We were disjointed and struggled with vertical alignment. By acquiring an updated series, with embedded technology, and following up with quality sustained professional development, the plan showed immediate results. This allowed for more trust when rearranging the K-12 schedule in an effort to provide an uninterrupted ELA morning teaching time block was presented. The intricacies of shared K-12 teachers presented a challenge. Working closely with middle school and high school administration and teaching staff, a coherent plan was developed without eliminating opportunities. This also allowed for grade-level planning time which didn't exist before. Finally, advocating for a more structured intervention plan was implemented. Norway Elementary did not have a Title I teacher, however, a benefit of being in a smaller school is the different hats administrators wear. The elementary principal/Title I/Transportation/Community School director was able to meet with our Title I representative and bring a best practice approach to the building. Not only was this key in helping struggling students, but it also positively impacted our private school partner. The focus of Norway Elementary leadership is to get the staff the educational structure they need so our students get the education that they deserve.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Norway Elementary is a fairly culturally homogeneous group. Like many communities in rural America, we suffer from the impact associated with low socioeconomic groups. Our families suffer from drug use, domestic violence, and unemployment. As we know, students coming to school from these environments often are experiencing hunger, illness, instability, insecurity, and more. This unfortunately manifests in lower IQ scores, increased depression, attention problems, and learning disabilities. Our focus on social-emotional learning, explicitly through the Capturing Kids' Hearts program, demonstrates our approach to meeting the diverse needs of our students. Hiring staff that grew up in similar communities gives an innate advantage to understanding the needs of our students. We also aim to hire the best candidate possible, and understanding social-emotional impacts is an important part of the process. Our updated ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies series all incorporate a cultural awareness component. Even though we are a relatively culturally consistent population, our school's philosophy focuses on supporting historically (and continuing) underserved populations in society.

Our school social worker (who doubles as our school nurse) is routinely the key cog in this area as well. Communicating with families, local health services, law enforcement, and the school is a routine part of her job. Just this year, spotting a parent in distress on school grounds prevented a potential suicide attempt. Possessing a staff that is connected to our students and families may very well have saved a life... It doesn't get any better than that!

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Be intentional. We are intentional about who we hire. We want staff that adds to our culture, not just fits into it. Finding employees that have the skills and training is becoming increasingly difficult in recent years. Couple that with finding a candidate with the proper social-emotional skills Norway Elementary puts a premium on... the job just got harder. We do not compromise on finding out the "heart" of potential employees, our interview process and reference checks focus on this. We often have several contingency plans available to find the best staff for our students and community. In recent years retiring staff will communicate their plans to use early in the year, providing us to be one of the first schools in our area to know what positions we need to fill. This helps us with attaining quality applicants.

We are intentional about what tools we teach with. Hence our newly updated, staff selected, state-aligned, and technologically integrated resources. Our ELA and Math are series highly rated by national agencies. Using the local beginning, mid-year, and end-of-year assessment tools allows us to make informed instructional decisions in real time. Incorporating technology into our daily instruction keeps our students well-prepared for their future schooling. The center of attention we place on ELA and Math is not accidental. Those two key academic cornerstones are deliberately targeted throughout our entire day, week, month, and school year. All of our interventions focus on these two key areas as well.

We are intentional about when we teach. The uninterrupted 90-120 minute morning ELA block, recess before lunch, Math after lunch, and the timing of after-school and summer school intervention programs are all examples of how we purposefully plan our day. The August three-week back-to-school warm-up, twice-weekly after-school interventions for eight weeks only, and after-school advancement programs are all kept to time windows where we feel the impact on students is greatest.