2003-2004 *No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program* Cover Sheet

Name of Principal   Mr. Raymond Staatz_____
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name   Dolson Hill Elementary_____
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address_____900 6th Ave._____
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

Pipestone_____   MN   56164-1031
City   State   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

Tel. (507   )825-6763_____   Fax (507   )825-6757_____
_____

Website/URL___www.pas.k12.mn.us_____   E-mail   ray.staatz@pas.k12.mn.us_____

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

_____ Date February 2, 2004_____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*   Mr. Jim Lentz_____
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Other)

District Name_____Pipestone Area Schools_____ Tel. (507) 825-5861_____

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

_____ Date   2/3/04_____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson _____Mr. Gary Gillen_____
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate._____ Date 2/03/04_____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

[Include this page in the school's application as page 2.]

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2003-2004 school years.

3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.

4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 1998.

5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

6. 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 the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

7. 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.

8. 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

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: ___2__ Elementary schools
    ___1_ Middle schools
    _____ Junior high schools
    ___1_ High schools
    _____ Other (Briefly explain)

    ____4_ TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: __6,722_____

    Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: __7,655_____

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

    [   ]   Urban or large central city
    [   ]   Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
    [   ]   Suburban
    [   ]   Small city or town in a rural area
    [X]   Rural

4.   13___ Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

    _____ If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total		Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
K					7			
1					8			
2	37	48	**85**		9			
3	43	40	**83**		10			
4	49	36	**85**		11			
5					12			
6					Other			
			TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →					253

6. Racial/ethnic composition of   96 % White
    the students in the school: 1_% Black or African American
                                              1_% Hispanic or Latino
                                             ___% Asian/Pacific Islander
                                            2_% American Indian/Alaskan Native
                                         100% Total

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: _____5____%

    (This rate includes the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in the school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.)

(1)	Number of students who transferred **to** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	5
(2)	Number of students who transferred **from** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	8
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	253
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	.05
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: ___1___%
                                                 ___3__Total Number Limited English Proficient
    Number of languages represented: ___2_____
    Specify languages: English, Spanish

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: ___53.7_____%

                                              __133_____Total Number Students Who Qualify
    If this method does not produce a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: __13_____%
                                             _ 34_____Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

_1_ Autism   ____Orthopedic Impairment
____Deafness   _6_Other Health Impaired
____Deaf-Blindness   _18 Specific Learning Disability
_4__Hearing Impairment   _12 Speech or Language Impairment
____Mental Retardation   ____Traumatic Brain Injury
____Multiple Disabilities   ____Visual Impairment Including Blindness

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

Number of Staff

	Full-time	**Part-Time**
Administrator(s)	1	0
Classroom teachers	12	0
Special resource teachers/specialists	3	10
Paraprofessionals	9	0
Support staff	1	2
Total number	26	12

12. Average school student-"classroom teacher" ratio: 22:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. (Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.)

	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999
Daily student attendance	97.89	96.56	95.8	96.1	95.7
Daily teacher attendance	99.0	98.9	99.0	98.7	98.5
Teacher turnover rate	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%
Student dropout rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Student drop-off rate	1%	1.4%	1.5%	1%	0%

SUMMARY

Dolson Hill Elementary School could be described as a traditional small community elementary program. This school year, we have approximately 255 students in grades two through four. The average student to homeroom teacher ratio is about 21 to 1. Dolson Hill has typically four homerooms per grade level. Of the students that we serve, approximately fifty-three percent are eligible for free/reduced breakfast and lunch programs. During the 2003-04 school years we had approximately 254 students enrolled in second through fourth grades.

The teaching staff has an average of twenty-three years teaching experience. This broad based experience has enabled our staff to analyze student needs based on our local and state standards. This process then guides the staff in implementing improvements involving instruction and curriculum development.

The curriculum used at Dolson Hill lays a firm foundation in the basics. In addition to the subjects that are taught in the homeroom setting, students have specialist teachers in Title One, Physical Education, Music, Media, Gifted and Talented, Technology, Special Education and LEP. All of the specialist and homeroom teachers are fully certified in their respective teaching fields.

Grade level teams meet monthly on staff development days and after school to discuss and develop strategies towards improving student achievement. The district provides a monthly early release day that is focused on providing training directly related to building and district goals which lead to improved student learning. The district wide staff development team meets twice each month to assess and plan for continual staff improvement programs based on identified needs.

We believe as an elementary staff, our mission is to provide a foundation of academic excellence which enables students to reach their highest potential and become productive citizens. We believe that the climate within our school system is an important factor that contributes to academic improvement. Our school climate is established by a caring and nurturing staff that implements programs and services that help students grow and develop into effective and considerate learners.

Our elementary staff has incorporated visionary goals that include:
        -Maintaining open communication among staff, students and parents
        -Believing that staff, students and parents are all held responsible for our
         own behaviors
        -Students and staff who are actively engaged in attaining high academic standards
        -The district maintenance of current technology and curriculum materials
        -Incorporating teaching methods that are supported by quality school research

As a staff, we will continue to stay focused in providing effective/progressive educational, social and psychological services to our students. They are our future and deserve our best efforts.

Part IV - Indicators of Academic Success

1. The 1997 Minnesota Statewide testing law called for the creation of a comprehensive assessment system and the use of statewide tests. These tests are part of the educational accountability system in Minnesota and are referred to as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA).

All public elementary schools in third grade take reading and mathematic tests. Only those students in special education who are exempted as part of their Individualized Learning Plans or 504 Plans and students with limited English proficiency who have been in the U.S. for less than a year are waived from taking the test.

The third grade reading tests include both fiction and nonfiction selections. The areas included in the test are poems, recipes, a short story, a set of directions, and a page from a grade level text book. Students are asked to answer questions about the main ideas or the author's purpose, make logical conclusions based on the selections, or retell a story in their own words. The reading test has multiple and short answer questions so schools can have information on the way students perform on both types of responses.

The third grade mathematics tests include story problems that are solved by applying the following concepts of shape, space, and measurement, number sense, and chance and date handling. The mathematics test has multiple and short answer questions so schools can have information on the way students perform on both types of responses.

Students do not pass or fail the tests. The tests are part of the educational accountability system in Minnesota. Schools use these results to make curricular and instructional decisions for all students.

2. The school uses the MCA data results to make curricular and instructional decisions for all students. Improving school performance began with our school organizing curriculum and grade level teams that meet monthly in order to share assessment results discuss trends in performance, and curriculum. At the beginning of the school improvement process, we formed a committee of staff and community members who were asked to read and discuss best practice research to help understand what methods and strategies increase student achievement. The team's task was to examine the test data and determine which areas were in need of improvement. Grade level teams determined if the use of strategies or materials were needed to supplement areas in our curriculum that were identified as weaknesses based on state standards. The staff development team used the information to provide training that met the needs of our staff.

The early identification of strengths and weaknesses in our test results assist our personnel in making the best decisions about curriculum and instruction. Therefore, the staff is better able to prepare students to meet the graduation standards. Consequently, our school provides additional support services for those students who are working significantly below grade-level in one or more content areas.

Our commitment to improving student performance is evidenced by the following:
- • implementation of an After School Program that provides remedial support with basic skills
- • employment of certified teachers in our Title I reading and math program
- • implementation of Reading Recovery program services for at-risk first graders
- • funding a specialist to assist staff and students in implementing the 6-Traits of Writing
- • hiring of classroom support staff that are highly qualified para-educators.

3. Data-driven decision-making, community involvement and public reporting are key components in a continuous improvement process to increase student learning. Information and assistance regarding district and school level processes are available in a document called a Student Accountability Report (SAR). This report contains the results of the assessments and is provided to the public, by mailing it to every household in the community.

Individual student test results are reported to parents as follows:
- • School results are posted on the Minnesota Department of Education website
- • Individual student progress reports are provided to the school
  - - a copy is placed in the student's cumulative file
  - - a copy is mailed to the parent by the school district
- • For students who fall below the target score of 1420, parents are informed that if nothing changes in the student's performance they are not on track to pass the Basic Standards Test (BST) given in the eighth grade
- • During Connecting Home and School day, which is held the first day of school, parents are informed of state standards and testing requirements during an orientation session.

4. Dolson Hill Elementary will share its successes with other schools through the use of a variety of methods. The school will use radio spots to inform the public of our performance that will be broadcast to many communities and schools throughout the area. The principal will share the good news in our schools at monthly board meetings where the information will be published in our local newspaper and read by other communities and school personnel. We will make our school available to other districts as a resource and share what we did to improve performance. Teachers will model best teaching practices and strategies by offering their services to teacher training programs from area universities to provide field experiences for pre-student teaching and student teaching opportunities in our school. The staff, when appropriate, will participate in presenting at "Best Practice" workshops/conferences. The school will utilize the "Review," that is published by Southwest West Central Service Coop, as a means for our district to share with other schools our successful practices and accomplishments in their quarterly newsletter. The district maintains a website that will provide information to the public regarding school achievement.

Part V – Curriculum and Instruction

1. The curriculum establishes a foundation for the program goals, program outcomes and learner outcomes. It incorporates state and local standards. Teachers have reviewed the state standards and aligned the content with classroom instruction. In the area of Language Arts, word recognition, analysis and fluency, we use VOWAC, a structured phonics program that incorporates different learning styles to teach word analysis skills to all students. One minute timed fluency tests are used with Title I and Special Education students in improve rate of reading based on need. In the primary grades the Reading Recovery program provides additional services to students in the lower ten percent of grades one and two. Upper grade level teachers use balanced literacy techniques and guided reading strategies. Teachers provide fifteen minutes of Daily Oral Language practice to improve vocabulary and grammar skills. Accelerated Reader is used to engage students in reading trade books at their individual reading levels and is used to monitor comprehension skills. Our reading anthology contains stories that are literature based, rich in content, diverse in topics, and incorporate both fiction and non-fiction type stories. Non-fiction reading is also found in our Science and Social curriculum. Teachers engage students in hands-on activities in both subjects that help them investigate not memorize processes.

Teachers are a very key component in our writing curriculum because grade level teams meet to collaborate on teaching methods and examine student work using scoring criteria based on the 6 Trait model. Students are asked to compose pieces using the four modes of writing. They follow the writing process including pre-writing, drafting, editing, and revising (peer and teacher), incorporating conventions. Students and teachers are involved in assessing the student writing using a 6 Trait rubric. Upper grade levels research a topic, write, and present a short report. Our technology instructor collaborates with the classroom teachers and supports writing through teaching students the use of keyboarding and graphics skills. Our media specialist instructs students in locating resources and researching skills.

In the area of Mathematics, we apply skills of mathematical representation, communication and reasoning throughout our program. Number sense, computing, and operations, geometry and measurement using concrete objects, are highly stressed in our curriculum. Teachers have supplemented our current math curriculum with strategies that help the students understand place value and representing whole numbers in various ways to quantify information and to solve real-world mathematical problems. They provide students with a Problem of the Day task and engage them in discussing different ways to solve problems. This also provides students the opportunity to review skills over time.

Title One and Special education students receive support from certified teachers providing activities that address individual learning needs. In the classroom, reinforcement of the skills being taught is provided to students through the use of para-educators. Teachers ask the students to demonstrate mastery of the basic facts by using many strategies to help students improve their rate of fluency while emphasizing the number of facts they know and not how fast they achieve it. Teachers subscribe to publications like Weekly Reader and the Scholastic magazine, and use Science and Social texts to help students be involved in interpreting data, charts, graphs, and

patterns. This enables the students to recognize that this information is found in sources other than math textbooks.

We are fortunate to have a strong Children's Theatre in our small community which provides our young children the opportunity to be a part of three major plays throughout the year. The school district offers music education four times per week by a licensed teacher to each grade section which includes instruction on state level music standards. Art application is part of our technology program in which each grade section receives instruction from a certified teacher on a weekly basis.

2. The reading curriculum at Dolson Hill Elementary includes the following:
   • HBJ Treasury of Literature, a literature based anthology
   • VOWAC, a program that teaches vowel patterns, spelling rules and the organization of sounds that can be spelled more than one way
   • Accelerated Reader, a computer assessment program for monitoring student comprehension skills using trade books at independent reading level
   • Balanced Literacy incorporating the use of Guided Reading and Reading Recover strategies that match students to their reading and writing levels

   When selecting this curriculum it was important to the district that all students:
   • be provided the opportunity to read to their maximum potential
   • use reading as an independent, life-long process for personal learning and pleasure
   • develop confidence and be successful in reading
   • learn skills and strategies for gaining meaning from print using real-language materials in authentic situations
   • be exposed to diverse genres of literature
   • need positive role models, including parents, teachers, and peers, who display the enjoyment and value of reading
   • study literature as a process for seeking answers rather than a set of answers ending at a literal level

3. The science curriculum that we have implemented provides the students with the opportunity to develop process skills as they actively investigate concepts and evaluate the results of their investigations. They develop critical thinking and scientific reasoning skills as they respond to thought provoking questions.

In learning how to think scientifically, students need frequent opportunities to develop process, critical thinking and scientific reasoning skills that support scientific inquiry. Our school has implemented a science curriculum that promotes hands-on activities by providing our students with concrete experiences that make conceptual development more meaningful. Contracting with the coop's "Ecology Bus", provides tremendous enriching outdoor activities that aligns with our basic science program. Supporting students to become involved in the local and regional Science Fairs, by providing extra instruction and assistance to them, aids in fostering an environment that is nurturing and caring. The common themes or big ideas that permeate our

science curriculum are important aspects in developing critical thinking skills that are promoted through classroom instruction.

4. School personnel use a variety of instructional methods depending on the developmental level of the students and subject matter being taught. *Direct teaching* is used in subject matter where very specific learning targets have been identified. Classroom teacher and support staff in the Title One and Special Education programs use this method when specific facts and basic skills are being target or reinforced. This can be observed in practice or demonstrated in *lectures with discussion* type activities in the classrooms. In classrooms, small groups of students can be seen working on individual skills using *flexible learning* groups which transform based on the needs of individual students.   Another effective method being used in specific situations and classrooms is *cooperative learning*.   The staff incorporates this method in order to develop mutual responsibility for learning subject matter. In order to implement this method effectively, staff and students need time to prepare to learn how to work in groups. Staff members believe this helps to prepare students to be able to work with others in constructive ways as adults. Inviting *community experts* or *speakers* helps expose the students to different opinions and perspectives on subject matter and helps students see real-life application for their learning. Teachers use *multi-media* such as video tapes, technology programs, internet research and instructional games to stimulate discussion or reinforce learning during teaching.

5. For the past two years, our district has employed a curriculum consultant to help us through the process of school improvement. We have identified our purpose, visions, values and goals which are focused toward improvement in student achievement and building positive self-esteem.   During this process, school improvement teams were formed consisting of parents, school board members, certified and non-certified staff. Their purpose was to focus on best practices research, local survey information and student test data, all leading to implementing strategies centered towards improving student achievement. Additionally, school personnel have met by grade levels and departments to further discuss and develop instructional plans and strategies leading to the implementation of effective research based practices and embedding the state standards. Staff has especially identified reading, math and writing skills that have been designed into their specific curriculum areas.   The majority of our staff development has been focused on defining context, process and content standards with the goal of improving student learning.   Personnel have reviewed state and local data in determining learning priorities, monitor progress, in the search to promote sustained continuous improvement.

Grade 3 Reading

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	
Testing month	March	March	March	March	
SCHOOL SCORES					
School Scale Score	1572	1527	1536	1512	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	90	82	80	82	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	75	78	81	86	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	25	22	19	14	
Total students in grade	86	95	110	113	
Number of students tested	84	93	106	111	
Number of students absent	0	0	2	0	
# of students using alternate assessments	2	2	2	2	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
% Eligible for Free and Reduced	42	40	37	29	
Average Scale Score	1536	1475	1528	1477	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	89	78	72	75	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	91	86	80	100	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	9	14	20	0	
Number of students tested	35	37	40	32	
% Ethnic Population	5	4	5	6	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Number of students tested	4	4	6	7	
% Special Education Population	8	8	13	12	
Average Scale Score	N/A	N/A	1228	1288	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	N/A	N/A	0	8	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	N/A	N/A	20	8	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	N/A	N/A	0	0	
Number of students tested	7	6	10	12	
STATE SCORES					
State Scale Score	1517	1485	1487	1461	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	83	82	82	83	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	83	84	84	88	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	17	16	16	12	

Grade 3 Math

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	
Testing month	March	March	March	March	
SCHOOL SCORES					
School Scale Score	1601	1565	1542	1538	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	82	84	87	83	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	77	84	84	89	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	23	16	16	11	
Total students in grade	86	95	110	113	
Number of students tested	84	92	104	109	
Number of students absent	0	1	2	0	
# of students using alternate assessments	2	2	2	1	
SUBGROUP SCORES					
% Eligible for Free and Reduced	44	33	38	29	
Average Scale Score	1553	1490	1519	1505	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	69	80	90	75	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	89	92	87	94	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	11	8	13	6	
Number of students tested	35	36	39	32	
% Ethnic Population	5	4	5	6	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Number of students tested	4	4	5	7	
% Special Education Population	8	8	13	12	
Average Scale Score	N/A	N/A	1329	1232	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	N/A	N/A	0	8	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	N/A	N/A	20	0	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	N/A	N/A	0	8	
Number of students tested	7	6	10	13	
STATE SCORES					
State Scale Score	1541	1486	1494	1478	
% At or Above Level IIb (Basic)	82	83	83	82	
% At or Above Level III (Proficient)	81	89	84	91	
% At Level IV (Advanced)	19	11	14	9	