U.S. Department of Education
2011 - Blue Ribbon Schools Program
A Public School

School Type (Public Schools): (Check all that apply, if any) ☐ Charter ☑ Title 1 ☐ Magnet ☐ Choice

Name of Principal: Mrs. Kathy Baker

Official School Name: Ponderosa Elementary School

School Mailing Address: P.O. Box 40
3483 Ponderosa Road
Post Falls, ID 83877-9613

County: Kootenai State School Code Number: 273

Telephone: (208) 773-1508 E-mail: kbaker@sd273.com

Fax: (208) 773-0789 Web URL: www.pfsd.com

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

_____ Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*: Mr. Jerry Keane Superintendent e-mail: jkeane@sd273.com

District Name: Post Falls School District District Phone: (208) 773-1658

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

_____ Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mrs. Donagene Turnbow

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

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

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

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager (aba.kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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 for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

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

2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2010-2011 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals 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 and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2005.

6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 or 2010.

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

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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

1. Number of schools in the district: 6 Elementary schools
   (per district designation) 2 Middle/Junior high schools
   2 High schools
   0 K-12 schools
   10 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 6485

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Small city or town in a rural area

4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 8

5. Number of students as of October 1, 2010 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total			# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0		6	0	0	0
K	0	0	0		7	0	0	0
1	58	52	110		8	0	0	0
2	60	55	115		9	0	0	0
3	37	62	99		10	0	0	0
4	59	62	121		11	0	0	0
5	62	40	102		12	0	0	0
							Total in Applying School:	547

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:

1 %	American Indian or Alaska Native
1 %	Asian
1 %	Black or African American
5 %	Hispanic or Latino
1 %	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
91 %	White
0 %	Two or more races
100 %	Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting 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.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2009-2010 school year: 22%

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

(1)	Number of students who transferred ***to*** the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	54
(2)	Number of students who transferred ***from*** the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	71
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	125
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2009	564
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.22
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	22

8. Percent limited English proficient students in the school: 0%

Total number of limited English proficient students in the school: 0

Number of languages represented, not including English: 0

Specify languages:

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 60%

   Total number of students who qualify: 328

   If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 9%

    Total number of students served: 48

    Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

4	Autism	1	Orthopedic Impairment
0	Deafness	9	Other Health Impaired
0	Deaf-Blindness	8	Specific Learning Disability
0	Emotional Disturbance	20	Speech or Language Impairment
0	Hearing Impairment	0	Traumatic Brain Injury
3	Mental Retardation	0	Visual Impairment Including Blindness
0	Multiple Disabilities	3	Developmentally Delayed

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	22	2
Special resource teachers/specialists	6	1
Paraprofessionals	9	6
Support staff	8	1
Total number	46	10

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1: 24:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only high schools need to supply graduation rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any student or teacher attendance rates under 95% and teacher turnover rates over 12% and fluctuations in graduation rates.

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Daily teacher attendance	94%	95%	96%	96%	96%
Teacher turnover rate	6%	6%	10%	7%	3%
High school graduation rate	%	%	%	%	%

If these data are not available, explain and provide reasonable estimates.

During the 2009-2010 school year the H1N1 ("Swine Flu") hit our region particularly hard. In addition, three of our teachers took maternity leave and two had significant health issues that required lengthy absences. These reasons account for our daily teacher attendance rate of 94% during the 2009-2010 school year.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools): Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2010 are doing as of Fall 2010.

Graduating class size:	_____
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	_____%
Enrolled in a community college	_____%
Enrolled in vocational training	_____%
Found employment	_____%
Military service	_____%
Other	_____%
Total	**0**%

PART III - SUMMARY

Vision Statement: It is our vision at Ponderosa Elementary School that all staff and students demonstrate the traits of responsibility, integrity, respect, and compassion while all students meet or exceed the state achievement standards.

Nestled in a neighborhood among the Ponderosa pine trees and near the Spokane River, Ponderosa Elementary School opened its doors in 1978. Since that year Post Falls, Idaho, has experienced a surge in population from 4000 to 30,000. While the district enrollment continues to grow, Ponderosa's population has stabilized to approximately 550 students.

Our 17 acre campus is shared year round with the community. Little League, soccer organizations, exercise groups, the city's Parks and Recreation Department, and many more are present at Ponderosa Elementary School on any given day.

Ponderosa's active volunteers and Parent Teacher Organization are a critical component of our school. This cadre of dedicated adults provides the inspiration and labor needed to provide additional assistance and positive relationships for the children while serving as a cheering section for our staff. Programs that have been made possible by our P.T.O. include an embedded art history program, After School Odyssey classes, Reading is Fundamental book distributions, and Spanish Club. It is this parent group that makes possible our annual school carnival, Santa and a Book event, talent shows, field days, 5th grade National Junior Rodeo Leadership Day, Cocoa & Cookie nights, free family dinner nights, and more.

Ponderosa's staff is best described by the term "Whatever it Takes" (DuFour, 2004). Adults are committed to helping children succeed through loving relationships and high standards. Teachers are driven to employ creative means in order to continually improve all facets of our school. When the value of using technology to engage students became evident, it was the teaching team who made the choice to forego supplies and dedicate site monies to technology. When teams wanted to embed collaborative time within the school day to analyze student data, they were able to devise a schedule to make it work- without reducing instructional time. As resources shrink and needs continue to grow, the staff at Ponderosa flexibly share teaching responsibilities for their students, demonstrating their belief that Ponderosa children are the responsibility of all staff members. It is not uncommon to see students moving throughout the day to different classrooms and grade levels based on their instructional needs. These examples speak to the collaborative and often creative culture at Ponderosa.

The adults at Ponderosa harbor strong beliefs about the importance of meeting a child's basic needs before he or she can learn. Community partnerships help provide shoes, gloves, coats and free summer meals at our school. Anonymous individuals provide funds that allow for specific needs to be filled as they become known, whether it be socks, a lice treatment kit, or a certified copy of a birth certificate so that a child can have access to state healthcare. Children who have the need for extra TLC are set up quickly with loving volunteer mentors for additional positive attention. Student jobs throughout the school fulfill another need of our children: the need to belong. Ponderosa "employs" student fire marshals, who run the required monthly fire drills, student photographers, and students who model friendship for others who struggle with social issues. Students also tutor peers, stock paper, pass out milk, clean the lunchroom, change the reader board, shovel snow, assist PE classes, recycle paper, restock library shelves, and assist with school maintenance. Our children thrive when they feel that they are valued members of our community.

Teachers volunteer to go beyond their regular duties to make Ponderosa a special place for children. Each fall nearly one-third of our teachers coach cross country after school. Approximately half of our students participate in this free program. Our music teacher directs nearly fifty children each week in her free special chorus program that begins well before the school day commences. The Title I Reading teacher volunteered to teach a before school remedial reading group for fifth graders when the budget would no

longer allow for their instruction during the school day. The PE teacher dedicates his lunch and prep times in the spring to overseeing a recess running club.

Fostering Ponderosa's creativity in action and the desire to go the extra mile is a school district administration and a school board dedicated to the whole child. As the bar continues to rise under the No Child Left Behind legislation, the district leadership recognizes that we must teach the whole child. Innovative approaches to instruction are wholly supported and teachers do not feel unduly pressured by the administration to have a myopic focus on our state's annual test.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

Third, fourth, and fifth grade students at Ponderosa are administered the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in reading, math and language usage each spring. Each test consists of fifty to sixty multiple choice items on selected objectives of the Idaho State Content Standards. Cut scores are established at four different levels: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. A student must score at the proficient or advanced level to meet the standard and be considered on or above grade level. Complete ISAT data for school, district, and state results may be located at http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/assessment/ISAT/results.html

Reading scores over the past five years for grades three through five, as measured using the ISAT, show a continual upward trend. Most notable, however, is the steady increase in the percentages of students achieving at the advanced levels in reading. Half of our students in grades three and four and over seventy percent of our fifth graders scored at the advanced levels on the spring 2010 ISAT. During the 2006-2007 school year the percentage of students scoring at the advanced level was an average of 15 percentage points less than current levels. A strong school-wide literacy focus, along with multiple tiers of support, is credited for this achievement.

In the spring of 2010, 98% of fifth graders at Ponderosa scored at proficient or advanced levels, with 72% scoring at the advanced level. Reading support for this grade level through Title I reading was cut significantly during the 2009-2010 school year. The large gains, despite a reduction in supplemental reading services, are attributed to a concerted effort to integrate reading skills across the curriculum in this particular grade level. For example, when planning for social studies and science instruction, the teachers use the content as the vehicle through which to deliver specific reading skills. In addition, this learning team set a heavy emphasis on student articulation of the posted learning targets for all subject areas. Students' understanding increased as they had to explain their understanding of the specific reading skills. These efforts, combined with an emphasis on using formative assessment to guide instruction, affected student outcomes.

Math proficiency as measured by the ISAT has steadily increased over the past five years, particularly in terms of the percentage of students scoring in the advanced categories. Math scores as measured by the ISAT increased substantially from 2009 to 2010, climbing six percentage points to an overall proficiency rate of 95%.

When the testing provider changed after the spring 2006 test, the 5th grade scores dropped from 96% to 63%. This grade level has made remarkably steady gains since, with 94.5% of the students scoring at or above proficiency levels in the spring of 2010.

The percentage of students in 4th and 5th grades scoring in the advanced category in math has risen from 19% on the spring 2007 test to 49% on the spring 2010 test. The overall increase in math achievement as measured by the ISAT is attributed to the addition of tier two math supports that have been embedded within the school day to support students struggling with both math facts and concepts, as well as opportunities for children who are excelling in math.

Our free and reduced sub-group also showed great growth in math proficiency, matching the overall percentage of 95%, compared to 84% in 2008-2009. Forty-six percent of students in this subgroup scored at the advanced levels, compared to 36% during the previous year.

No achievement gaps of ten or more percentage points between the test scores of all students and the test scores of reported subgroups existed on the spring 2010 ISAT results.

2. Using Assessment Results:

The journey from a focus on teaching to a focus upon student learning has taken place over the past ten years at Ponderosa. Assessment results first began to drive instruction in the Title I Reading program. Nine years ago, a meta-analysis of the research on effective reading instruction conducted by the Title I teacher (now the principal) led to an overhaul of that reading program, which now hinges upon frequent diagnostic assessment to drive instruction. As the Title I students began to outperform the other students, teachers became interested in data driven instruction. Within a few years, a demand for evidence of student learning in all areas had permeated our culture.

Assessment results drive the school improvement goals. Those measurable goals are revisited monthly by a team comprised of parents, teachers, the administrator, counselor, and classified staff. Goals are broken down into activities, persons responsible, and specific deadlines.

Embedded collaborative blocks of time allowed for grade level teams to meet weekly and share data pertaining to their student achievement goals. Teachers would share their raw scores, the instructional methods used to obtain those scores, and their instructional adjustments for the following week based upon those scores. When the focus was on improving student writing, for example, teams used written expression curriculum based measures, specifically correct writing sequence data. Trends in student writing were discussed and targeted.

When the third grade team noted that the primary issue for their students was spelling, they developed another plan of action, which included additional research-based spelling instruction. Teachers began collecting additional data on words spelled correctly to determine whether this new instruction was paying off. It was.

Weekly math assessment scores determine whether or not students will attend tier two math intervention classes during the following week. The focus is on specific skills missed by each student.

Within the classrooms, formative assessment use is the norm at Ponderosa. Whole staff meetings provide an opportunity to share specific “checking for understanding” techniques employed by each teacher each month along with those assessment results and the teachers’ use of those results. During a month where technology and formative assessment were on the agenda, for example, a team demonstrated how the use of a student response system to provide immediate feedback and allow for immediate remedial instruction on specific skills. This staff driven sharing time often sparks and spreads new ideas that ultimately help students succeed.

3. Communicating Assessment Results:

It is our belief that if you don’t know where you are, you can’t get where you’re going. Parents, teachers, and volunteers need to know exactly “where” their students are. Most importantly, however, is that the students know where they are and where they are going.

Clear, student friendly learning targets posted in each classroom for every subject set the stage for communicating results with students. Children understand that their goal is to reach each target each day, as evidenced by either formative or summative assessment results.

A large part of using formative assessment results is student involvement. Students learn in first grade how to track their fluency data on graphs and celebrate their improvements with their older “reading buddies.” Fifth graders record their language arts homework completion and quiz scores and develop personal weekly academic goals. Students on IEPs know exactly what their goals are and where they are currently in relation to those goals thanks to weekly progress monitoring data. Title I Reading students know their fluency goals and can track their progress on graphs with aimlines.

While monthly school newsletters communicate school-wide assessment results in layman's terms for parents and other stakeholders, we have found that the most effective way to communicate results with parents is face to face. Teachers frequently contact parents, who are seen as critical members of a learning team for children. Parents are given both information and materials to help support their child at home.

Interactive Title I Family Night events provide parent education about assessment methods and results in a fun, non-threatening way. Parents are trained how to affect assessment results through specific involvement at home.

Assessment results are shared with partnering colleges of education, along with on-site training in how to provide instruction to remediate deficiencies. For example, the state testing results for our struggling intermediate level students provide the framework for a summer school program developed specifically for those children through a partnership with Lewis-Clark State College's teacher education program. A variety of reading assessment results are shared with all parents of students attending a summer school through hour long conferences. This is conducted as a component of the Literacy Assessment course that the principal teaches each summer to prospective teachers.

4. Sharing Lessons Learned:

"Sharing the wealth" is a critical component of helping all children learn. Ponderosa's staff have shared their lessons learned in multiple capacities throughout the past decade.

After the Title I Reading program was radically changed to a results-driven model, Ponderosa's state primary reading test scores rose from 34% of first graders reading at grade level, to 77% the following spring. These numbers continued to climb. As a result, neighboring districts visited to learn how we were using data to drive our instruction in reading. The Title I teacher, who developed the new program after conducting a meta-analysis of the research on reading, was asked to share our model with all elementary schools in our district and present workshops during district wide in-service days. That teacher now serves as our principal. She continues to share our lessons learned through the partnerships she has created with area colleges of education and other organizations.

Six years ago Ponderosa began a partnership with the University of Idaho, developing a quasi laboratory school on site. About twenty-five college of education students each semester attended courses taught at school during the school day. Theory taught by the professor was then quickly applied in real settings: the classrooms. The teachers collaborated with the professors, who would tailor the theory application to the instructional needs of the students. The partnership outgrew our site in 2008 after district rezoning increased our student population along with need for classroom space.

Several of our teachers share through providing key leadership on district curriculum and professional development committees. Many pilot curriculum and provide valuable feedback prior to curriculum adoption decisions. Others have taught professional development courses to their colleagues district-wide.

When our school's professional development focus was centered upon student achievement in writing, several teachers dedicated a significant amount of time to become teacher consultants for the National Writing Project. These teachers continue to present their lessons through teaching workshops at National Writing Project conferences.

School wide system lessons specific to research based instruction, scheduling, and professional development have been presented by our administrator at conferences and regional meetings held by the Idaho Association of Administrators and through Project Leadership. In addition, she has shared lessons learned through her role as a consultant for the Albertsons Foundation, teaching professional development courses for the University of Idaho, and as an adjunct professor for Lewis-Clark State College.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

Ponderosa Elementary School's core curriculum content is aligned to the Idaho Content Standards. Reading, language arts, and math goals and objectives are posted at (http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/content_standards/). Teachers have developed curriculum maps and instructional calendars for each of these core content areas.

Reading goals focus on the reading process (phonological awareness skills, concepts about print and text, decoding, syllabication, fluency, and vocabulary development) and the comprehension and interpretation of both expository and narrative works.

Reading instruction is delivered in flexible groupings for the primary grades. Groups are determined using assessment data. Students scoring at the intensive and strategic levels receive instruction in small group settings (one to eight students), while students reading on or above grade level learn in larger whole class settings at their instructional level. In addition, students are with their heterogeneous classroom groupings for the core instruction using the adopted Harcourt StoryTown curriculum. Science and social studies content is the vehicle through which reading skills are also taught, allowing for a nonfiction emphasis.

Goals in language usage focus on the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing), writing applications (writing text to inform, persuade, and entertain), the components of writing (handwriting, spelling, sentence structure, and conventions), and communication (acquiring listening, speaking, and viewing skills).

Language instruction is delivered in an integrated fashion with reading instruction and throughout other content areas. Teachers follow an instructional calendar to teach writing applications. These applications are made relevant and connected with other content area and follow the writing process. The components of writing are taught through mini-lessons based upon student needs as determined by formative assessments.

There are math standards in five areas: number and operation, concepts and principles of measurement, concepts and language of algebra and functions, concepts and principles of geometry, and data analysis, probability, and statistics. Number and operation includes goals for understanding and using numbers, performing calculations accurately, and estimating and judging the reasonableness of estimations. Measurement goals include customary and metric measurement, using rates, ratios, and proportions, and applying dimensional analysis. The standard of concepts and language of algebra and functions includes goals on using symbolism to represent relationships, evaluating expressions, solving equations and inequalities, and applying functions to a variety of problems. Concepts and principles of geometry standards include goals on applying concepts of size, shape, and spatial relationships, applying the geometry of right triangles, and applying graphing in two dimensions. Goals in analysis, probability, and statistics include understanding data analysis, collecting, organizing, and displaying data, applying simple statistical measurements, understanding basic concepts of probability, and making predictions or decisions based on data.

Math instruction is delivered in heterogeneous groupings in the primary grades and in somewhat homogeneous groups in the intermediate grades. The Saxon math curriculum is the district's adopted series that is used in most classrooms, though pilot programs have been in place in a variety of classrooms over the past five years. While the Saxon program provides a spiraling curriculum, the pilot programs are set up for mastery of one goal area at a time with more frequent problem solving opportunities.

Three of the four 5th grade classrooms switch for math, science, and social studies with the groupings of children based upon math ability. The math teacher in this configuration has been using a pilot series,

Envision Math, since the 2008-2009 school year. In addition to receiving their math in a block of instruction, the science teacher integrates math standards into her instruction. All three of the 5th grade teachers who participate in this grouping also use challenging math problems for the daily entry task.

The humanities are an important part of Ponderosa's curriculum. The music teacher connects the core content areas of math, history, science, and reading with music instruction. Employing an interactive white board and music software, students learn to read, compose, and play music. Musical performances including dance and theater arts are connected to history standards. After school enrichment programs in theater arts and the visual arts are provided by local performance groups and artists. Though art specialists are not funded in the district, during 2004-2008 Ponderosa was the only elementary in the district with an embedded art education program. Stakeholders dedicated site monies to fund this endeavor.

The Physical Education program consists of weekly classes augmented by fall and spring running opportunities. Staff volunteers provide a free cross country program each fall. Nearly half of the population participates. In the spring the P.E. teacher volunteers to coordinate a "Mileage Club" program, wherein children redeem punch cards for charms to indicate how many laps they have run or walked during recess times. Health programs are taught by regular education teachers, the school nurse, the counselor, and community partners. Nutrition program instruction occurs in the context of science coursework and using online interactive resources.

2. Reading/English:

Harcourt's Storytown was chosen as Ponderosa's core language arts program for several reasons. In addition to being strategically aligned with the Idaho State standards, Storytown provides ample materials for differentiation of instruction. Supplemental instruction for below level readers is infused in the core program, providing a seamless approach to the three-tier reading model. Abundant materials for written instruction are provided, supporting the staff's beliefs in the importance of writing across the curriculum (see Center for Performance Assessment's 90/90/90 Schools study). Furthermore, Storytown's vocabulary component provides challenging material for all learners. Overall, the program provides ample practice on high priority skills, explicit instruction on new skills and strategies, includes systematic and cumulative review of high priority skills, and demonstrates and builds relationships between fundamental skills leading to higher order skills.

Frequent assessments identify readers who require additional support beyond the two hour core morning reading block. Further diagnostic assessments in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (components of reading derived from the National Reading Panel report) pinpoint the area of reading need. Additional reading instruction in these given areas is provided during the afternoon in the form of pull out classes. Depending upon their need, some students engage in as many as four reading classes on any given day. This includes before and after school opportunities with certified staff and/or volunteer tutors.

Ponderosa fosters a culture of reading. Cross grade level reading buddies meet weekly. Fourth and fifth graders volunteer to tutor primary students during the afternoon recess. All grades participate in the RIF (Reading Is Fundamental) program. Independent reading of self-chosen level appropriate books is required. First graders participate in a nightly Read At Home program using decodable books that focus on the phonics' skills appropriate for each student based upon frequent assessments. Title I Family nights focusing upon parent education occur twice yearly. Special guest readers read in every classroom at least three times per year. Picture books are used at all grade levels to teach specific character education lessons depending on the need of each classroom. Every classroom doorway features a large photo of the classroom teacher reading his/her favorite book.

3. Mathematics:

While well-versed in effective reading instruction, our teachers did not feel so confident about their math instructional skills, particularly since using a scripted curriculum, Saxon, for nearly ten years. As a result, every primary teacher committed to and completed a Mathematical Thinking Instruction (MTI) course

within the past year. The MTI principles focus upon a deep conceptual understanding of math, as opposed to memorization of algorithms, a large shift in how many teachers had been teaching math and how they themselves had been taught. Teachers are now asking their students to think deeply about mathematical concepts and articulate their understanding through class discussions. Additional time is given for students to experiment with multiple pathways to a common answer.

While a tier two safety net had long been in place for students in reading, staff expressed the need for something similar in math. Each grade level developed an embedded system that worked well for them. In third grade, students scoring below 80% on weekly Saxon assessments report to their teachers for 20 minutes of their final daily recess for instruction and practice on items missed. With budgets being reduced each year, creative scheduling and use of existing staff and volunteers have allowed us to continue offering tier two interventions at most grade levels.

Primary students achieving at high levels in math as evidenced by classroom and curriculum assessments, are often given the opportunity for math enrichment led in small groups by their teacher. Students in third grade, for example, are motivated to perform at their best level on the weekly pre-assessment. Those scoring 90% or higher are exempt from that week's lessons, and instead focus on furthering their understanding of mathematical concepts during enrichment groups. The weekly pre-assessment data is used to drive instruction for the remainder of the students.

In fourth and fifth grade, students are grouped for math instruction based upon assessment results. Smaller group sizes are maintained in classes designed to accelerate learning to grade level. Advanced classes provide students with continual challenge and opportunities for growth. One such class recently won recognition for their high levels of participation and achievement in an online math challenge. Much of the work was achieved outside of the math class and at home. Students were independently choosing to do math.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

"Why are we here?" Ponderosa students will most likely respond to this question by saying "To learn and to be good people." The vision at Ponderosa is for all students to do well academically and demonstrate these four character traits: responsibility, respect, compassion, and integrity. In addition to our embedded character education program, social studies provide our students a vehicle by which to learn what it means to "be good people."

Fifth graders culminate their grade school experience through a year long study of "Images of Greatness." Through biographical studies, American history, local and international service projects and more, they learn what it means to "be good people." Students make the discovery that successful people are those who serve others. Last year a group of our students was awarded the Mayor's Youth Award for collaboratively deciding to have a birthday bash that benefited the local food bank and relief efforts in Haiti. Additional Ponderosa fifth graders were also recognized for their selfless service to others.

Ponderosa fourth graders are immersed in history as they learn about the pioneer spirit of perseverance. Their annual Idaho History Rendezvous, a long established tradition at Ponderosa, is often the most memorable event of their elementary years. A large part of the campus is transformed into 1800's Idaho with horses, wagons, medical tents, Dutch ovens, archery, sharp shooting demonstrations, gun safety, and young Native American dancers from the local tribe. Recently one Ponderosa teacher was recognized by the Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History as the Idaho history teacher.

One of the events most near and dear to the hearts at Ponderosa is the annual Veterans Day Assembly. Children learn about the depths of service to one's country as they honor local veterans and hear the mayor instruct them on the most important words to say to veterans: "thank you." It is not unusual for our audience members, first graders through adults, to have tears in their eyes as they acquire an essential understanding of our civic responsibilities.

Students are given many opportunities to put their knowledge of their responsibilities in action. The student driven action at our school has included city wide recycling projects, an annual Valentine's party given to area senior citizens, and fundraising events for those in need both locally and around the globe. An after school card making club meets weekly with the purpose of encouraging others through the written word.

5. Instructional Methods:

When Ponderosa made the journey from an emphasis on teaching to a focus on student learning, instructional methods had to change. We were once a staff of what educational researcher Rick DuFour deems a "Pontius Pilate" school. One size fits all instruction was provided which did not meet the needs of all children. Now "Whatever it Takes" is the mantra when it comes to helping students succeed. This means it is no longer acceptable to simply teach a lesson; students must reach a specified target.

As a result, the use of formative assessment as an instructional tool is prominent at Ponderosa. Formative assessment strategies employed by teachers give them the feedback that lets them know which instructional methods work for their particular groups of children. During the 2010-2011 school year teachers are systematically trying every strategy from Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom, by Fisher and Frey. Teachers share strategy implementation tips and triumphs with each other as they continually strive to improve.

As Ponderosa's demographic rates have changed over the past several years, the teachers have changed their instructional methods in an effort to engage all learners. Instruction is more interactive and student centered than ever before, while instruction is focused clearly on specified learning targets.

Technology use increased significantly over the past five years as teachers changed their instructional methods to engage more learners. Ponderosa became the first elementary school in the area to equip every classroom with ceiling mount projectors wired to document cameras and the Internet. Teachers are adept at using online student resources to teach any lesson as they strive to reach children who are immersed in technology. Grants have been awarded that allow us access online software and purchase student response systems and other hands-on materials.

Teachers at Ponderosa keep a pulse on the changing needs of their learners. A sudden increase in the numbers of children having diagnoses of ADD and ADHD during the 2009-2010 school year led to mini in-services on research-based instructional methods to engage these types of learners. Frequent opportunities to move and interact verbally were built into instructional routines, resulting in more engaged students and fewer office referrals related to classroom behavior.

School-wide, instructional methods at Ponderosa are best described as interactive. Teacher observations have an emphasis on student engagement, calling pattern variety, and the ability of students to articulate their understanding of the learning target.

6. Professional Development:

Professional development is driven by student data and teacher needs. Input from the teachers regarding student performance trends determines specific content of professional development. Regular professional development occurs at least twice monthly as a whole staff during regular meeting times. "Administrivia" (information that can easily be shared in writing) is shared via electronic weekly bulletins so that valuable meeting time is not compromised.

Our study of research by Doug Reeves and the 90/90/90 Schools study led us to focus on writing for many years. Weekly bulletins contained links to articles along with grade level meeting agendas focused upon measuring student achievement in writing, which was deemed "critical thinking on paper."

Monthly inter-rater reliability sessions were held during which vertical grade level teams met, scored student writing samples based upon grade level rubrics, then discussed differences in scores, which in turn led to improvements in the rubrics and more focused writing instruction. As a result, inter-rater reliability increased from 28% to 95% over the course of the school year while grading practices grew more objective and instruction became more standards driven. Teachers collected written expression curriculum based measures of correct writing sequence for four years to gauge student progress, which grew from the 24th percentile to the 90th percentile as based on a nationally normed measure.

Student writing, specifically writing to learn activities, and how these can be used to develop cognitive structures in children while serving as formative assessment measures, was our professional development focus during the 2009-2010 school year. We were awarded a Professional Standards Commission grant by our state department of education that funded books used for a whole staff book study. Our regular professional development meetings were centered upon book discussions and student achievement as related to employing the methods learned in the book. Teachers from every team participated as leaders during these meetings, sharing specific ideas that they had tested in their classrooms.

This year the professional development focus has shifted to critical thinking in mathematics and the use of formative assessment strategies to check for student understanding. Two staff members have been developing primary materials for this focus which has been used district wide. One teacher is in her second year of teaching a formative assessment course for the University of Idaho. Staff meetings center upon sharing formative assessment strategies used, what the results were, and how teachers used the results to impact student learning.

7. School Leadership:

Shared leadership best describes our school's leadership structure. Decisions are made collaboratively with much input from all stakeholders, with the guiding question: "What's best for kids?"

The site council provides a forum to gauge progress toward school goals and allocate resources to such, and to brainstorm solutions to any area identified as having room for improvement. For example, a school-wide discipline plan, including a student created rule slideshow and specific steps for communication, was developed with input from all stakeholders. In addition, opportunities for positive recognition were created. These changes have resulted in a significant reduction in disruptions to instructional time and a more positive, compassionate, and respectful environment.

This example speaks to our stakeholders' comfort level and expertise in identifying systems within the school that can be improved. Under our continuous improvement model, all input is welcomed. This also illustrates shared leadership in action.

The principal leads the charge for continual improvement. Embedded professional development aligned to student and staff needs has been key to improving professional practice. Research on effective instruction is disseminated electronically, demonstrated and discussed during staff meetings, practiced during observations, and then discussed at subsequent staff meetings. The principal is adept at highlighting staff members' strengths and having them share with and teach their colleagues based upon those strengths, fostering a collaborative culture. Furthermore, she involves herself as an adjunct professor for local colleges of education as a means to both help her staff and students and to help prepare future teachers for the profession.

The principal's actions demonstrate her belief in the importance of meeting students' basic needs. This means doing whatever it takes to overcome obstacles to learning: removing head lice, doling out hugs, testifying in court, helping broken children find their voice, and partnering with higher education to provide free after school tutoring and summer school programs. It also means spending summer and Christmas breaks transporting and working side by side with work release inmates to paint bare concrete walls. One thing these jobs all have in common is their importance in building relationships. The principal believes that children and adults alike need to know they are cared for before learning can take place. "Love 'em and learn 'em" is the grammatically incorrect phrase Ponderosa staff uses when speaking of our shared leadership mission. People often remark that they can feel that love when they enter our building.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 3 Test: Idaho Standards Achievement Tests

Edition/Publication Year: 2007/2006 Publisher: DRC/NWEA

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
At and above grade level	89	90	97	91	90
above grade level	56	60	73	56	41
Number of students tested	116	117	96	104	93
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	98	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	4	0	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	4	0	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
At and above grade level	90	82	98	83	86
above grade level	51	44	63	45	35
Number of students tested	61	50	46	42	43
2. African American Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
4. Special Education Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
At and above grade level					
above grade level					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11ID3

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: 3 Test: Idaho Standards Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2007/2006 Publisher: DRC/NWEA

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
At and above grade level	83	88	92	88	79
Above grade level	48	50	51	42	37
Number of students tested	118	115	98	103	92
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	4	0	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	4	0	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
At and above grade level	79	88	89	81	72
Above grade level	42	30	43	31	23
Number of students tested	62	50	47	42	43
2. African American Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
4. Special Education Students					
At and above grade level	0	64	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	18	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	11	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
At and above grade level					
Above grade level					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11ID3

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 4 Test: Idaho Standards Achievement Tests

Edition/Publication Year: 2007/2006 Publisher: DRC/NWEA

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
At and above grade level	88	95	91	88	87
Above grade level	42	59	52	19	42
Number of students tested	109	101	97	91	93
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	99	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	4	1	1	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	4	1	1	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
At and above grade level	83	94	85	88	86
Above grade level	40	51	49	19	36
Number of students tested	48	49	39	41	44
2. African American Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
4. Special Education Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
At and above grade level					
Above grade level					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11ID3

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: 4 Test: Idaho Standards Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2007/2006 Publisher: DRC?NWEA

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
At and above grade level	91	95	92	92	84
Above grade level	52	48	35	37	48
Number of students tested	110	101	97	90	89
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	4	1	1	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	4	1	1	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
At and above grade level	92	92	87	93	84
Above grade level	39	41	26	28	36
Number of students tested	49	49	39	40	44
2. African American Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
4. Special Education Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
At and above grade level					
Above grade level					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11ID3

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 5 Test: Idaho Standards Achievement Tests

Edition/Publication Year: 2007/2006 Publisher: DRC/NWEA

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
At and above grade level	94	84	77	63	96
Above grade level	52	37	14	19	41
Number of students tested	99	112	96	85	101
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	98	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	1	0	1	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	4	1	0	1	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
At and above grade level	93	77	71	55	98
Above grade level	41	32	17	15	35
Number of students tested	44	53	42	40	40
2. African American Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
4. Special Education Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
At and above grade level					
Above grade level					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11ID3

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: 5 Test: Idaho Standards Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2007/2006 Publisher: DRC/NWEA

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
At and above grade level	98	92	89	84	92
Above grade level	72	50	33	46	48
Number of students tested	99	112	96	87	101
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	1	0	1	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	4	1	0	1	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
At and above grade level	98	87	90	81	90
Above grade level	61	51	21	43	40
Number of students tested	44	53	42	42	40
2. African American Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
4. Special Education Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
At and above grade level					
Above grade level					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11ID3

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 0

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
At and above grade level	95	89	88	80	91
Above grade level	50	52	46	33	41
Number of students tested	324	330	289	280	283
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	98	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	6	5	5	2	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	2	2	1	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
At and above grade level	95	84	85	80	89
Above grade level	46	42	43	24	33
Number of students tested	155	152	127	123	127
2. African American Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
4. Special Education Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
At and above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
At and above grade level					
Above grade level					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11ID3

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: 0

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
at or above grade level	94	91	91	88	87
Above grade level	49	40	40	41	42
Number of students tested	327	292	291	280	319
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	6	5	5	2	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	2	2	1	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
at or above grade level	92	93	90	84	83
Above grade level	46	36	30	34	33
Number of students tested	155	152	128	124	127
2. African American Students					
at or above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
at or above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	13
4. Special Education Students					
at or above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
at or above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Above grade level	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
at or above grade level					
Above grade level					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11ID3