



## PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

---

11MN5

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: 2 Elementary schools  
 (per district designation) 0 Middle/Junior high schools  
1 High schools  
0 K-12 schools  
3 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 8226

## 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: 4
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		<b>6</b>	0	0	0
K	15	14	29		<b>7</b>	0	0	0
1	12	7	19		<b>8</b>	0	0	0
2	15	14	29		<b>9</b>	0	0	0
3	9	15	24		<b>10</b>	0	0	0
4	11	13	24		<b>11</b>	0	0	0
5	0	0	0		<b>12</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total in Applying School:</b>								125

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
0 % Asian  
1 % Black or African American  
0 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
98 % White  
1 % 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: 11%

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

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	6
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	8
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	14
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2009	125
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.11
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	11

8. Percent limited English proficient students in the school: 1%

Total number of limited English proficient students in the school: 1

Number of languages represented, not including English: 1

Specify languages:

Spanish

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 47%  
 Total number of students who qualify: 58

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: 17%  
 Total number of students served: 21

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

<u>1</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>2</u> Developmentally Delayed

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

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>0</u>	<u>8</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
Support staff	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
Total number	<u>7</u>	<u>16</u>

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: 21:1

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	97%	96%	97%	96%	96%
Daily teacher attendance	95%	95%	92%	96%	95%
Teacher turnover rate	8%	32%	16%	8%	24%
High school graduation rate	%	%	%	%	%

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

The daily teacher attendance was calculated by using the number of classroom teachers. In 2007-2008, the teacher attendance is under 95% due to the death of a teacher's spouse.

The teacher turnover rate is computed using a total of 13 teachers. Eight percent represents one teacher. Eleven teachers have left our district over the five years: four were due to budget reductions, two were retirements, two were transferred to another building within the district when our district's grade levels were reconfigured, two were leave of absences and one teacher relocated to another position out of the district.

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	_____ %
<b>Total</b>	<b>_____ 0%</b>

West Central Area South Elementary is one of two elementary schools in the West Central Area School District which is comprised of the communities of Wendell, Elbow Lake, Barrett, Hoffman and Kensington. The West Central Area School District encompasses 469 square miles in West Central Minnesota and currently serves 710 K-12 students.

The West Central Area School District's Mission Statement reads: "The Mission of the West Central Area School District, with the support of our families and communities, is to provide opportunities for all learners that will inspire a passion for educational excellence and lifelong learning." The School District's Mission Statement serves as the sieve that all educational decisions must pass through when determining programs, curriculums and staffing. One of the main commitments of the West Central Area School Board has been to maintain small class sizes at the elementary level.

South Elementary is a K-4 Elementary school located in Kensington, MN. Kensington is a small rural community with a population of approximately 300 people. South Elementary is a source of pride within the Kensington and Hoffman communities as is evidenced by the extremely active PACT (Parents and Community Team) parent group. Community volunteers dedicate time and energy to our South Elementary students through many fundraising events they organize including roller skating, a school walk, Book Bingo and pizza sales. Elderly community members volunteer to read to our students on a consistent basis, providing our school with positive community connections. A popular activity day called Short-Course Day is an annual highlight for our students. This is a day when our students learn from community members who teach our students interesting hands-on activities.

South Elementary provides a warm, inviting educational environment starting with a quality Early Childhood Family Education program for children birth through pre-kindergarten. All-day, every day Kindergarten is available to all students at South Elementary. Kindergarten through fourth grade students are housed in traditional elementary classrooms and are led by outstanding teachers and support staff. The teaching and support staff include a healthy blend of veteran professionals who serve as mentors to our newer first and second year teachers. The South Elementary Staff consists of 19 teachers and support staff, including office, custodial and food service staff who are dedicated and committed to the students and families of South Elementary.

All students have access to specialists in the areas of physical education, music, media and counseling on a daily basis. Additional specialists in the areas of Title I, Reading, and Special Education services are also available. All specialists work closely with classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to meet the individual needs of our students.

Up-to-date technology is available to students and staff with all rooms having Internet access. SMART Boards are currently used in many of the classrooms and a full computer lab with Internet access is also available for all our students and staff. Increased technology access continues to be a goal for our South Elementary learning community.

South Elementary is worthy of Blue Ribbon status because we have strong partnerships within and outside of our school walls. The dedication of every staff member is outstanding! The administration and school board make decisions based on a "What's best for kids?" philosophy. Our incredibly positive staff collaboration allows an openness to discuss and explore solutions. The ongoing interagency partnerships and strong community relationships provide another layer of support for the students and staff at South Elementary.

When a small, rural Minnesota school like West Central Area South Elementary is chosen as a Blue Ribbon nominee, it is an amazing honor! We appreciate the opportunity to share the many good things happening in our school. The Blue Ribbon School application process has been an opportunity to reflect as a team on the positive things happening for our students, families, communities, staff, and administrators.

### 1. Assessment Results:

Our state assessments are called the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA). In 2006, the MCA tests were renamed MCA II to reflect the new state standards and to include the addition of 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students taking this state assessment. Prior to 2006, only 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students were tested using the MCA test. With the MCA II Assessment, student performance is recorded in four categories: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Partially Meets Standards and Does Not Meet Standards. The top two categories signify proficiency. Our South Elementary scores can be accessed at <http://education.state.mn.us> and clicking on the “School Report Card” tab.

The MCA Testing at WCA South Elementary has demonstrated significant increases in Trend Data over the last 5 years in both math and reading. The percentage of students at South Elementary meeting or exceeding the standards has been higher than the state average for each of the past 5 years, for both math and reading. More impressive are the gains made in each area over the past 5 years.

Math – The average number of students meeting or exceeding the standards for the state has steadily risen from 58% to 68% in the past 5 years. During this same period of time, the average number of WCA South students meeting or exceeding the standards has increased from 76% to 94%. During this time the students have scored on average 18% percent better than the state average.

Reading- WCA South Elementary students have scored at a high level, above the state average over the past 5 years. The state average has remained relatively flat over the course of 5 years, scoring between 68% and 72% of students meeting or exceeding the standards. WCA South data indicates that students have steadily increased from 84% to 91% of the students meeting or exceeding the standards.

Students receiving free and reduced lunch is a subgroup that has performed particularly well at WCA South. During the past 5 years, this subgroup has increased from 71% to 89% meeting or exceeding the standards in math. In reading, the same group has increased from 73% to 89% meeting or exceeding the standard. This subgroup not only outperformed the state average among similar students but also performed above the state average for all students.

The achievement gap between special education and regular education students presents a challenge, not unique to any school. West Central Area South staff cooperates with parents and other appropriate experts while planning individually for our special education students. Intervention programs such as the Minnesota Reading Corps, Alternative Delivery Service (ADSIS), and Title I are utilized to address students' specific need areas.

Small class sizes often have variable results as data is more easily influenced by scores that significantly deviate from the averages. It should be noted that scores have increased steadily with the exception of one year. In 2007, math and reading scores declined slightly, yet during that same year, WCA South students scored 16% higher and 5% higher in reading and math respectively than the state average. Data indicates this trend is possible in part because 44% of those meeting or exceeding in 2009 continued to grow and 48% made exceptional growth. Similarly in Reading, 79% of 2009 proficient students maintained their growth and 44% made exceptional growth.

Overall, WCA South Elementary students have consistently made significant gains during the past five years in the areas of math and reading.

## **2. Using Assessment Results:**

WCA strives to provide a quality education for each child. Measuring academic progress through assessments and analyzing that data helps us reach short-term and long-term academic goals. Our school district implemented several excellent assessment tools several years ago. One of these instruments is the Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress (NWEA) also known as the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP). This test, administered three times each school year, drives curriculum choices, building goals, grade-level goals and most importantly individual student goals. Many of our students know their MAP scores and work to improve them with each round of assessment. For our students, academic awareness and immediate MAP score feedback seems to be something our students enjoy and strive to improve.

When our school began using this assessment data, we recognized the need to make changes in our reading and math curriculums and set new reading and math goals to reflect areas of growth for our students. These assessments currently provide accurate information to make informed decisions about curriculum, individual teacher planning, and student goal setting.

Many of our teachers also use the RIT Growth Calculator, accompanying the MAP tests, to more specifically predict and establish measureable and attainable outcomes for their classes and individual students. The DesCartes Learning Continuum provides RIT bands of skills of academic performance and is currently being used to create more individualized plans for students.

Initially, when our teachers began studying the data, they met in Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) to collaborate their efforts in identifying weak areas specific to the South Elementary and throughout the West Central Area school district. Positive outcomes emerged from these meetings and have been rewarding. Support staff, parents and volunteers are more involved in helping students reach their individual goals and highest potential. Periodically, those PLTs have continued meeting to collaborate efforts and set new goals. One goal resulting from the PLTs includes across the curriculum activities specific to math.

Another primary assessment tool is the AIMS Web Testing, which assesses nonsense words, phonemic awareness, and fluency. This test is also administered three times throughout the school year, providing benchmark reading data and a measure of individual student and grade-level reading progress throughout the school year. This reading assessment tool provides an accurate predictor of performance on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA).

As a school district, a Systems Accountability Report is also developed and published yearly. This report reviews district data as well as specific curricular areas. Parents, school board members, students, staff and administration make up the committee that develops this report.

These assessment tools also provide opportunities for our school district leaders and specialists to support teachers and students in using innovative practices. A Child Study Team was developed to identify individual learning needs for students and to develop appropriate intervention strategies using the RtI (Response to Intervention) model. Another intervention unique to South Elementary was the development of our first elementary after school homework catch-up program entitled TRAKS (Together Reaching All Kids).

## **3. Communicating Assessment Results:**

South Elementary prides itself on being transparent with students, parents, community members. Therefore, communicating assessment data is an intrinsic practice occurring through many face-to-face contacts, print venues, and technologies.

Face-to-face communication occurs several ways. At semi-annual Parent-Teacher Conferences our teachers share and interpret assessment results with parents. For example, classroom teachers review assessment data provided by the MAP and AIMS scores. They also provide targeted assessment data through evaluation tools specific to the math, reading and other curriculums. Likewise, teachers provide grades to students and their parents during Parent-Teacher Conferences. The South Elementary PACT group also provides opportunities for open discussions about assessment results and mentors parents on a variety of ways to learn more about the many wonderful things happening at South Elementary. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, teachers frequently call or e-mail parents to keep them informed.

Parents and students also have access to TIES (a web-based program) which provides a snapshot of current student grades, missing assignments and attendance information. Students can request a copy of their TIES grade report anytime from their classroom teachers, and parents can access TIES from any computer.

A variety of print venues include many resources for parents and the community. MCA scores are mailed home accompanied by a letter explaining the scores. The *Roundtable*, the WCA school district newsletter, is distributed to every household in the school district. This newsletter highlights data results from the MCA's, MAP scores, and AIMS testing. Readers also discover glimpses of data-driven decision making efforts with information about new curriculums and innovative programs. Classroom and school-wide newsletters are used to communicate information directly to parents and students. These newsletters provide warm communication about student successes, special activities, volunteer requests, and words of celebration as classes meet specific goals connected to core curriculum areas. The *Grant County Herald* and *Herman-Hoffman Tribune*, our local newspapers, cater to our schools and willingly print information about assessment results to our communities.

Additionally, the Systems Accountability Report is published yearly and is broadcast to community members via the local cable access station, printed in local newspapers and posted on the school website. The school website provides another excellent resource for obtaining data specific to the school district as does the Minnesota Department of Education website. School board meetings are broadcast on the local cable access station and provide current information to our families and community members.

#### **4. Sharing Lessons Learned:**

South Elementary educators are strongly committed to professional growth and development and work hard to support one another professionally. Throughout the school year, teachers glean kernels of wisdom, new techniques and strategies, and problem-solve through collaboration experiences. New teachers to the district are partnered with a seasoned teacher for a year long mentorship experience. South teachers experience rich connections through these professional learning and sharing partnerships.

In August, South Elementary educators attend the Multi-District Teacher's Workshop in Morris, Minnesota. It is held during inservice days, and includes neighboring districts. This workshop showcases an inspirational speaker well-versed in the challenges and joys of education. However, the highlight of this day is the Job-Alike Breakout Sessions. During these sessions, regional attendees share their best ideas on a broad range of topics specific to their grade level. Our teachers come home with great ideas and inspire neighboring teachers with their outstanding practices and ideas. The multi-district workshop is a win-win for everyone and South Elementary teachers appreciate the administration's partnership with neighboring school districts.

On a weekly or bi-monthly basis, faculty meetings encourage staff to share successes with each other. Staff members lead mini-workshops on a variety of topics including Brain Gym, Best Literacy strategies, Responsive Classroom, SMART Board How-To's, Handwriting without Tears, and other innovative instructional approaches. Conversations about these topics often continue in the hallways, faculty lounge or in classrooms before or after school. The teamwork of our teachers and their willingness to help each other succeed is remarkable!

On a regular basis, teachers attend teacher in-services. These in-services offer professional learning opportunities, goal-setting exercises, and grade level collaboration meetings district-wide. Many of the professional learning opportunities are led by local educators who have specialized training in a subject area. In addition, we are fortunate to have professional learning opportunities facilitated by our local Lakes Country Service Cooperative and the Midwest Special Education Cooperative.

Many of our educators fit time into their professional lives to volunteer and serve on professional and local organizations. Some of these organizations include: MESPA (Minnesota Elementary School Principal Association), MKA (Minnesota Kindergarten Association), and MSCA (Minnesota School Counselor Association).

Volunteer time commitments to local service organizations include the LIONS, PACT, Runestone Committee and other community groups. Frequently, they serve as speakers, organizers or advisory board members for community groups.

## 1. Curriculum:

Responsibility training begins at an early age with high expectations from school entry in Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) through fourth grade.

First and foremost, teachers prepare objective lesson plans built around a thorough understanding of the knowledge and content standards, using the Responsive Classroom approach. Their delivery of the curriculum is presented with high expectations in a safe, welcoming environment. We believe that children learn best when they feel a strong sense of safety and belonging. The South Elementary school staff strives to provide pride in our school and fosters a strong sense of being a part of the South Elementary “school family” for all students.

South Elementary incorporates many specific outstanding curriculums and supplements those curriculums with support programs and enrichment activities to help meet the needs of all students. For example, South Elementary uses the Scott Foresman reading curriculum as the foundation for reading. This curriculum area will be described in more detail in section V. part 2a.

The Envisions Mathematics curriculum was recently introduced. This curriculum utilizes traditional math and contemporary approaches to teaching math. Some of the instructional components include practice worksheets, hands-on application through games, activities and technology. This curriculum area will also be described in more detail in section V. part 3.

Rebecca Sitton Spelling was used until the recent change to the Scott Foresman reading program. Currently, a comprehensive spelling approach occurs through the reading, social studies, and math curriculums.

The Scott Foresman social studies curriculum at South Elementary relies on many facets of formal instruction and informal community experiences. Time for Kids (TFK) is used for current events instruction. The Passport Club helps students gain a thorough understanding of geographical locations. Community volunteers organize and facilitate this enrichment program with teachers assisting students with study opportunities in the classroom.

Other community connections include partnership with the American Legion. Veterans teach students about Veterans Day and flag etiquette. Third grade students visit and interview nursing home residents to gain awareness of recent history with local citizens. The WCA Education Foundation provides local grants for classroom extension projects like fieldtrips. Timely lessons in civics and historic events occur throughout the school calendar year.

The science curriculum is a popular hands-on program primarily utilizing Foss Science Kits. This curriculum area will be discussed in more detail in Section V. part 4.

WCA teachers understand the importance of reaching every learner and utilize teaching strategies to meet multiple intelligences, special needs, and enrichment. As a result, a wide range of instructional strategies are employed including traditional teaching methods, supportive instruction, technology, and partnerships with parents. Traditional teaching strategies involve teacher-directed classrooms, cooperative group learning, and teacher modeling. More contemporary instruction strategies include peer instruction and partnering, white board all-pupil response, and the use of manipulatives. Technology is widely used through SMART Board technology (purchased by our PACT group), computer lab activities, and academic music teaching tools.

Our teachers develop a wide-range of engaging visual art opportunities for students including work in a variety of mediums. Special emphasis in the visual arts honors our presidents, veterans, Martin Luther King Jr. and other historic individuals and events as well as monthly holidays. A professional artist also leads an Artist in Residence program each school year. This has proven to be an especially engaging program for all of our students and staff.

Daily music class provides a strong background in rhythm, pitch, tempo, dynamics and many other musical skills. Music notation and early composition study is incorporated. History, social studies and geography are all studied when students learn about a new composer each month. A science lesson about sound and instrument study round out a deeply comprehensive music program. Vocal performances occur twice a year during two public concerts.

Daily physical education class incorporates traditional games like basketball and nontraditional games like Ultimate Frisbee. A mathematical approach to the Presidential Mile Run is just one component of the cross curricular approach involved in physical education. Heart-rate monitors encourage data collection, charting and interpretation. Additionally, many school and community activities provide year-round fitness and skill-training opportunities, including Jump Rope for Heart and Square Dancing. Parent led booster clubs reflect strong support for student activities and wellness.

WCA adopted a wellness policy several years ago and encourages healthy cafeteria meals and snacks. Collaborative educational activities occur through the University of Minnesota Extension-Nutrition Education program and PACT. These collaborative activities include 5-A-Day and Calcium Week, the Community Walk, and Roller-skating activities. This year WCA School collaborated with other county schools in obtaining two MN SHIP (Statewide Health Improvement Program) grants. One grant is establishing an apple orchard in the district. The other is focused on improving child nutrition through the planting of fruits and vegetables. These opportunities provide outreach to promote community involvement of student wellness efforts.

Additionally, a comprehensive school counseling program and a classroom health curriculum equip students with many life-long strategies for healthy decision-making. Special programs like Gun Safety, Good Touch/Bad Touch, DARE and other collaborative activities with outside agencies strengthen a strong commitment to personal safety and wellness.

## **2. Reading/English:**

The South Elementary is committed to support every student with a strong reading foundation. This commitment begins at the ECFE level with the recently adopted Houghton Mifflin reading series. Large group instruction introduces our youngest learners to phonemic awareness and letter recognition. As these concepts are introduced, small group instruction provides more specific instruction for each child.

At the elementary, the WCA school district has a rich reading curriculum history with members of our staff belonging to the Best Practices State-wide Reading group. At that time, we developed our own multi-model approach to successful teaching of reading. Recently, the Scott Foresman Reading Curriculum emerged and we chose it. It met our school's high expectations for a high quality reading program, using a comprehensive basal approach. A strong technology component supports this curriculum for school computer lab and at home practice. This program also supports individualized instruction through the use of leveled readers. Accelerated Reader supplements this reading curriculum.

Foundational reading skills are taught through a variety of curriculums and methods for students of all skill levels. For example, improved comprehension for all readers emerges from intensive teaching, practice and review of the curriculum. Weekly Targeted Comprehension Skills, AR, ADSIS, PALS (Peer Assisted Learning Strategies), Reading Buddies, and Guided Reading Folders all support reading growth for every student.

A comprehensive effort to improve reading skills for all students performing below grade level involves several steps and programs. A Tier System using data collected through MAP and AIMS testing serves to identify struggling students quickly. Supportive levels of support include Reading Corps, Reading Recovery, Title I, Special Education, Great Leaps, and TRAKS.

The Media Center/Library engages students in library and reading skills once a week and provides a beautiful collection of interesting books for every reader at every level. The library is also equipped with a strong AR collection of books and is maintained by a licensed media specialist. A primary goal during this time is to match student interests to books with similar topics to encourage a love of life-long reading.

South students and staff definitely celebrate reading! Special events like I Love to Read month and Read Across America Week are filled with many fun activities. The PACT group organizes Books for Bingo each winter. A Book Fair at school excites kids about reading. All of these activities serve to engage every learner with enjoyment for reading.

### **3. Mathematics:**

Our school is pleased to be using the Envisions Math curriculum and has seen significant gains in number sense and computation skills. This program utilizes traditional math instruction with a more contemporary approach to math instruction, including the use of manipulatives to introduce concepts, guided and independent practice, leveled center activities, and technology. Teachers utilize the daily “quick-check,” topic, and benchmark assessment components.

This curriculum is a spiraled program emphasizing review of previous units and chapters to help students retain acquired skills, concepts, and vocabulary, in order to help our students become outstanding problem-solvers. A web-based home connection component for each math concept provides parent support, at-home practice, and additional review. Leveled worksheets are also utilized for enrichment, practice and reteaching. Minute Math, Rocket Math, and Math Facts in a Flash supplement the program to increase recall of basic facts.

During the PLT district-wide goal setting sessions, a cross curricular approach to teaching math evolved. There is now a focused intent and implementation to include mathematical concepts, vocabulary, math facts and problem-solving exercises in specialized curriculum areas. Some of these specialized areas include physical education, music, school counseling groups, and library skills class.

MAP scores assist in the identification of struggling students. When students need support in the area of mathematics, a wide range of strategies exist. Benchmark reviews assist teachers in identifying and reteaching skills students did not acquire during initial instruction. Other support services include targeted interventions through the RtI process, Title I support, TRAKS, Study Island, and Special Ed. Services for qualifying students. Additionally, several of these supports incorporate pull-out small group instruction for reteaching skills needing to be reinforced.

### **4. Additional Curriculum Area:**

The South Elementary science curriculum is highly regarded by students and staff. It continues to be an area of strong emphasis and will likely lead to high content standards, benchmarks, and enrichment during the coming years. Teachers utilize the Foss Science Kits in grades K-4, and the Scott Foresman textbook in fourth grade.

This inquiry-based curriculum encourages hands-on experiments, constructivist learning, data collection, and vocabulary enrichment. Students engage in active learning as they relate to the world around them and implement the scientific method. Problem-solving, cooperative learning and data interpretation reflect specific skill sets obtained by our students.

Specialized programming involves community members, local businesses, and local educational communities. Two of these special programs are field trips to the Lake Carlos Environmental Learning Center and the Wolfridge Environmental Learning Center. Both field trips introduce students to recycling, renewable resources, glacial lake study, wetland studies, animal habitat and identification. Both of these experiences provide experiential learning opportunities in a fun-filled environment with environmental scientists as their instructors. Second graders also have a bi-monthly wetland lesson taught to them by an environmentalist through a program called Nature-Works. This class is taught in their outdoor classroom and inspires a love and respect of nature, while students gain knowledge in observation and journaling.

The Rocket Model Launch is a popular public event. Additional programs include lyceums and programs led by the Minnesota Science Museum, University of Minnesota, Morris Science students, WCA High School physics students, Lakes Country Coop Planetarium sponsorship, and Ottertail Power Company. The Soil and Water Conservation District teaches about environmental preservation. Students enjoy participating in their poster contest each year. Fourth grade participates in the Douglas County Water Festival after completing the water unit in the regular curriculum. These programs embrace the South Elementary mission statement to “provide opportunities for all students.”

The support of our families, community members, partners and resources yields a strong connection to science programming.

## **5. Instructional Methods:**

South Elementary teachers strive to reach every learner and utilize teaching strategies to meet multiple intelligences, special needs, and advanced learners. Responsive Classroom activities and a wide-variety of instructional strategies create a climate of belonging and fun for each student regardless of economic background or academic capabilities. This positive approach encourages students to become engaged in their learning and school community. Other forms of instruction include cooperative learning groups, targeted interventions and individualized student modifications such as exercise ball chairs and sensory chair cushions. An important priority to teaching students organizational skills is using folders, planners and binders.

South Elementary relies on a wide variety of instructional methods and specialized programs to assist student subgroups. Traditional teaching methods, supportive instruction, technology, and partnerships with parents are commonly used. Traditional teaching strategies involve teacher-directed classrooms, cooperative group learning, and teacher modeling. More contemporary instructional strategies include peer instruction and partnering. Technology is widely used.

Specialized programs support struggling students with language concerns, learning disabilities, academic and behavioral support. These support programs are provided through Speech and Special Education Services. The Midwest Special Education Coop provides specialists for individual students needing services specific to their unique needs. A comprehensive multi-tiered reading “safety-net” for students below grade level is taught by many onsite teachers and paraprofessionals. Students needing social, emotional, behavioral or school success strategies receive support from an Elementary School Counselor. A Child Study Team is available to assist teachers in the RtI process by suggesting appropriate intervention techniques, data collection systems and routing students to appropriate specialized programs.

At South Elementary, it is of utmost importance for every child to maximize his or her potential. Parents, teachers, administrators, specialists, and community agencies work as a team to help children succeed. Common planning times and collaborative teaching provide effective teaching strategies for a wide range of student learning needs. Through these planning sessions, increased student learning and engagement opportunities occur.

Some of the creative intervention strategies used at our school reflect the need to attend to a child's basic needs for clothing, shelter, and food. Shoes, boots, coats, back-packs, and a snack-sharing system are

readily available to students who have these needs. After school programs provide safe opportunities for children. Our local programs include TRAKS and facility usage for community groups like Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts, Community Ed. Classes, and 4-H offerings.

## **6. Professional Development:**

Professional development is strongly encouraged and embraced in our schools. Many of our teachers have Master's degrees and special certifications. Opportunities for professional growth occur through many avenues. Locally, teacher in-services are held nine times during the school year. Speakers, grade level sharing, data review and goal-setting, curriculum review and preparation and state-mandated certifications occur during these in-services. Book studies and cohort study groups work together to learn as professional teams.

Ruby Paine's *Framework of Poverty* session was well-received by our staff and provided valuable insights about teaching our students. Trainings in reading instruction for every staff member has resulted in cross curricular support in teaching reading to every student. SMART Goal trainings encouraged district, building, and personal professional goal development and assessment.

These inservices have resulted in our students exceeding building, district and Adequate Yearly Progress goals. For example, when math scores indicated a lower performance score for one subgroup, the entire staff worked to incorporate math across the curriculum. As a result of this collaborative effort, math improvement has occurred and South Elementary is currently an improving group in the area of math.

Educators attend conferences and trainings away from the school district, including membership workshops in professional organizations. Additionally, teachers attend colleges and universities to further their studies.

The wide variety of professional development opportunities assist WCA staff members in developing sensitivity to achieve proficiency in academic standards.

## **7. School Leadership:**

During a time when budget constraints have stretched Minnesota schools to near breaking points, our administration and school board have remained committed to small class sizes and have consistently made decisions based on the litmus test, "What's best for kids?" Their strong focus on meeting student needs is exceptional as evidenced by a strong commitment to the Early Childhood Initiative, providing All-day, Every day kindergarten, maintaining small class sizes, and quality staff.

South Elementary utilizes a two-fold leadership model. One-fold is the Administration which consists of a shared K-12 Principal who serves all three building sites in the WCA district, and a Dean of Students for the two elementary sites. This administrative model is a creative response to fiscal constraints, while maintaining a level of administrative presence and support for both students and staff. The second fold of our leadership model is the entire South Elementary staff. The entire South Elementary staff works together as a leadership team to make decisions, problem-solve and support one another.

Administrators seek teacher input when decisions are being made. For example, teachers and administrators review curriculum materials, make recommendations, and visit other school sites to see how the curriculum functions. Administrators also provide direction and flexibility for teachers. By using the "Breakthrough Coaching" model, administrators observe and support teachers by providing positive feedback. Teachers appreciate this immediate feedback and positive support. Teachers are provided flexibility to shape rich classroom environments and develop creative lesson plans and special classroom activities.

Similarly, teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals and other support-staff have a common level of respect for one another. They provide leadership and open communication for a highly effective educational team approach in all aspects. It is common to work together as a team to support students, alter the schedule, and provide additional supervision when necessary.

The South Elementary leadership vision emphasizes programs, relationships, and resources to help improve student achievement. Policy and program development reflect positive steps to ensure school safety and success. Some of these policies include the Bullying Policy, Crisis Policy, Wellness Policy, and a Student Attendance Policy. Special programs include the breakfast program, free and reduced lunch program, scholarship program for Community Education course fees, immunization clinics, a fluoride program, and dental clinics.

Another significant priority for WCA's leadership has been communicating the need for a local referendum. Numerous community educational seminars about the school budget have been led by our superintendent, principals, and school board members. This team's positive partnership with community leaders has resulted in the passage of referendums. WCA school leadership is engaged with other child and family serving agencies and organizations as partners in the Grant County Child and Youth Council-a family services collaboration. These interagency efforts serve to ensure that every child reaches their potential and learns to the utmost of their ability; lives in a safe, nurturing environment; realizes their potential for physical and mental health; and experiences basic economic security. Key partnerships (with Public Health and local Emergency Management Departments) have been fostered which provide resources supports and services that bolster a child's overall well-being and subsequent academic achievement.

South Elementary represents a forward-thinking, supportive leadership team. Our principal and dean support staff and students whole-heartedly.

# PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3

Test: MCA II

Edition/Publication Year: Revised Annually Publisher: Minnesota Department of Education (Pearson)

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	88	100	86	74	87
Exceeds	56	44	24	21	23
Number of students tested	25	25	21	19	22
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	81		72		91
Exceeds	50		27		18
Number of students tested	12		11		11
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					

11MN5

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 3

Test: MCA II

Edition/Publication Year: Revised Annually Publisher: Minnesota Department Of Education (Pearson)

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	87	92	86	79	83
Exceeds	79	56	48	58	48
Number of students tested	24	25	21	19	23
Percent of total students tested	96	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	91		72		81
Exceeds	75		45		45
Number of students tested	12		11		11
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					

11MN5

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 4

Test: MCA II

Edition/Publication Year: Revised Annually Publisher: Minnesota Department of Education (Pearson)

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	100	90	72	50	62
Exceeds	48	24	39	9	14
Number of students tested	23	21	18	22	21
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds			60	45	50
Exceeds			30	0	10
Number of students tested			10	11	10
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					

11MN5

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 4

Test: MCA II

Edition/Publication Year: Revised Annually Publisher: Minnesota Department of Education (Pearson)

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	96	84	89	86	86
Exceeds	48	43	67	48	43
Number of students tested	23	21	18	21	21
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds			90	90	70
Exceeds			70	45	30
Number of students tested			10	11	10
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					

11MN5

# 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
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	94	83	73	65	76
Exceeds	50	27	26	21	21
Number of students tested	48	85	80	78	88
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	89	79	62	53	71
Exceeds	53	27	23	28	16
Number of students tested	19	33	37	32	43
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested			11	14	15
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					

11MN5

# 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
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	93	86	84	81	79
Exceeds	60	42	56	51	43
Number of students tested	48	85	80	77	89
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds	94	85	81	75	73
Exceeds	68	45	60	56	35
Number of students tested	19	33	35	32	43
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested			11	14	16
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meets plus Exceeds					
Exceeds					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					

11MN5