



Nixon Elementary School  
200 Nixon Drive  
Hiawatha, Iowa 52233

Nixon Families,

Let me be the first to welcome you to the 2022-2023 school year! My name is Jeni Goebel and I am the principal at Nixon Elementary School. I am starting my fifth year in this role and my twelfth year in the building. I have such a passion for the learners and families at Nixon and am eager to tell you more about our amazing school.

At Nixon, we provide learning experiences for children in kindergarten through fifth grade. We are home to the district's first elementary personalized competency based learning initiative, as well as one of two district Autism programs. In our school, all children are given the opportunity to master grade level skills with support from our Title 1 reading and math team, English language support for our EL Learners, and multi-categorical special education support for learners with IEPs. In addition, we have 17 classroom teachers, a school guidance counselor, a behavior response team consisting of our Engagement Specialist and two behavior technicians, an instructional coach, and an outstanding office team ready to support and serve our Nixon families. We provide a range of learning opportunities, both academic and social-emotional, to our learners and I am incredibly proud to share these with you.

For our new kindergarten families, we want to make you aware of how we introduce children to school and best meet their individual needs. At the start of the year, each kindergartener is placed into one of three kindergarten groups. Each day, learners rotate through the three kindergarten classrooms meeting the three teachers and three paraeducators who will be working with our team this year. As the first week progresses, we make slight adjustments to the groups finding the best fit for each individual child, socially, emotionally, and academically. After the first week of school, a letter will be sent home introducing your child's official kindergarten teacher and welcoming you to join us for our "First Day of Kindergarten" where parents can take photos, meet the teachers, and drop their children off at the classroom. We find that by maintaining flexible groups the first week of school we are able ensure each child is placed into a classroom that suits them best.

First grade learners at Nixon have already been placed into their classrooms, but that doesn't mean they miss out on personalized learning experiences of their own. Each child will receive academic instruction from their homeroom teacher, but will also be given the opportunity to find a best fit group for reading and math through flexible grouping within the grade level. Your child may receive small group instruction from any of our first grade team of teachers, including our Title 1 teacher, as a way to guarantee they are able to progress throughout the year on skills that are specific to them. We also have embedded social-emotional learning through daily community circle time dedicated to everything from tattling vs. reporting to how we make friends. We have an "all hands on deck" approach to teaching first grade and it has proved highly effective for our learners at Nixon.

Our 2nd-5th graders have the most innovative way of learning at school and it has given us the freedom to engage our learners in the most effective and impactful instruction we have ever experienced. Each child in 2nd-5th grade is placed onto one of our Nixon teams (Green Team, Gold Team, or Bobcat Team) and

into a multi-age homeroom. We find that by allowing for cross-age peers to engage, we are able to provide built-in leadership opportunities for our students along with the ability to grow friendship groups beyond a traditional classroom (and in case you're wondering, older students have not "ruined The Tooth Fairy or Santa" for any younger peer yet!). While in their team, the group moves through their schedule and rotates between a variety of teachers. Think of this like a middle school rotating model. A group moves from reading to math, to writing, to specials and so on as a group. Each teacher is placed into a content area (reading, math, science, social studies, writing) that they can specialize in and create meaningful learning opportunities in. Children start their day in homeroom, rotate through the different content areas throughout the day, and finish back in their homeroom before dismissal. It is definitely different from how we experienced elementary school, but we have found our learners are more independent, work better collaboratively, and engage in more targeted learning as a result of our process. We allow for self-pacing, voice, choice, and teach student agency as learners rotate throughout their day.

You might be asking, but where is the proof that this way of teaching and learning works? Why would I want my child to engage in schooling that is so different from what every other elementary school is doing across the district? Let me share some of our most current reading data to showcase just how impactful this work has been for our learners, in spite of the COVID closure in 2020 and the impact the pandemic has had over the last two years.

Below are tables with winter and spring 2022 FAST reading scores. Each table contains a school, the percent of proficient learners (students meeting the benchmark/expectation for that testing period), as well as a percentage of students in that building receiving Free & Reduced lunch (income based). This data is just one indicator that what we do at Nixon is working.

Winter Comparison Data (January 2022)		
School	% Proficient	% F/R Lunch
School A	81%	12%
School B	75%	26%
School C	75%	35%
School D	73%	50%
<b>Nixon</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>71%</b>

Spring Comparison Data (May 2022)		
School	% Proficient	% F/R Lunch
School A	82%	12%
<b>Nixon</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>71%</b>
School D	76%	50%
School B	75%	26%
School C	74%	35%

It is my extreme pleasure to be the first to welcome you to Nixon and to share more about our programming with you. I am eager to meet your child and support your family as I welcome you to our community. Please reach out with any questions you may have. I look forward to working with you and your child in the year ahead.

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