About a year ago, Mr. Dennis met with the elementary teachers and told us that Elgin Elementary had been nominated for the Blue Ribbon Award. According to the website, The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle and high schools where students perform at very high levels or where significant improvements are being made in students' levels of academic achievement. Since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has honored America's most successful public and private elementary, middle, and high schools. In its 30 year history, the U. S. Department of Education has bestowed this coveted award on nearly 7,000 of America's schools. Last year only six schools in Nebraska and 241 in the Nation were given the award. We were also told we were nominated because Elgin Public students had great test scores the past few years. We were nominated by the Chief State School Officer for ***Exemplary High Performing Schools*** and according to the website that means: **Schools that are ranked among the state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or assessments referenced against national norms in both reading (English language arts) and mathematics in at least the most recent year tested.** It is noted that all nominated public schools must have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in each of the two years prior to nomination and must also make AYP for the year in which they are nominated. And while it is an honor just being nominated the teachers had high expectations and we wanted to win the award. However the teachers were told they would have to take some time to fill out the application, which included ten different narratives plus filling out data. In early January the Elementary Staff including all teachers for the elementary students had a meeting and divided up the different components of the application.

The first part of the application was to write a summary or a snapshot of the school, to tell our mission statement and describe our traditions here in Elgin. The next component included indicators of academic success which really comes down to our assessment results and how we use that data to drive our teaching. Within this section we discussed how Elgin being a part of the Northern Tier and a member of ESU#8 helps our students. However it is not just the school that has to work hard; but the students and families and the whole community of Elgin has helped our students excel in the classroom. In the next section of the application, we needed to give an overview of our curriculum and how it addresses our state standards. We discussed our two different reading programs for the elementary. We started Reading Mastery in 2008 and that has helped our younger students learn to read and our 4th-6th grade students read to learn. Our application also discussed our math and science curriculum along with how we differentiate our instruction to meet the needs of all students. The last piece of the submission was to describe Elgin Public’s professional development approach for the teachers and our leadership philosophy for our school.

As you can see winning a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award doesn’t just happen in one day, one month, or even one school year. It took years of everyone involved working hard. From the students to the community to the staff here at Elgin Public School; together we are all building a tradition and having high expectations for every student that walks through our doors. We all want our students to excel on our state tests but we also want them to be ready to succeed in the world.