For years, Cindy Cook has served as principal of Sunnyside Elementary, a K-5 school where over 65 percent of students receive free or reduced-price meals. Recognizing a need for increased support for students living in poverty, Cook has leveraged her impressive grant writing skills to improve Sunnyside’s capacity to serve an increasingly transient student population. Over the course of her tenure, she has secured over two million dollars in grants, funding numerous instrumental support staff, including a reading specialist, an instruction coach, and a school social worker, as well as resources for enrichment, such as programing for family art nights and violins for second grade music instruction. Using her development skills to practice her “learn by doing” philosophy, Cook has led Sunnyside in piloting numerous programs, many of which have been adopted at the district level, including the Reading First Initiative, RTI, and Backpack Buddy weekend food bags. While she leads her staff in taking an experimental and open approach to program development, Cook leads by the dictum “people before programs,” with one teacher noting her skill at building rapport with parents as her single greatest achievement. A passionate advocate for arts education and an accomplished musician herself, Principal Cook is a longtime member of the Minot Symphony Orchestra. She holds an M.A. from North Dakota State University and a B.A. and B.S. from Minot State University.