

U.S. Department of Education
2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Lauren Votruba
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Swink Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 610 Columbia Avenue PO Box 487
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Swink State CO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 81077-0000

County Otero

Telephone (719) 384-8103 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.swinkk12.net E-mail lauren.votruba@swink.k12.co.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Kyle Hebbard E-mail kyle.hebbard@swink.k12.co.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Swink School District 33 Tel. (719) 384-8103

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Fred Grantham
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

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

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The 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.
10. 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.
11. 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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 2 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	11	13	24
1	13	13	26
2	13	16	29
3	5	13	18
4	9	18	27
5	11	14	25
6	4	15	19
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	66	102	168

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1.8 % Asian
 - 0.6 % Black or African American
 - 25 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 72.6 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report 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.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 5%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	178
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 40 %

Total number students who qualify: 67

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %

11 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 14:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	94%	95%	95%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2019.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

The relentless pursuit of excellence in a safe environment, one student at a time.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

PART III - SUMMARY

Located in the little town of Swink in southeast Colorado, Swink Elementary School, home of the Lions, was established in 1907, named after George Swink who helped develop the agriculture industry in the Arkansas Valley by planting watermelon and cantaloupes, forming an irrigation system, and founding the Swink Sugar Factory. The first graduating class consisted of four students in 1923. Although the original building is no longer standing, our elementary building houses students in grades Kindergarten through 6th grade, but is connected to our secondary building. District-wide we serve a community of 314 students, 169 elementary students, half of which select to attend Swink from other surrounding towns. Our student enrollment is a reflection of our community with 69% White and 28% Hispanic, with 47% of our students receiving free or reduced meals. Swink School is a proud recipient of the John Irwin School of Excellence award for five out of the last seven years, was Accredited with Distinction in 2018, and received the ESEA Distinguished School Award in 2019.

Swink Elementary School has established a tradition of academic excellence. Our highly skilled and trained staff consist of thirteen classroom teachers, seven of which are either Swink alumni or graduates of surrounding Arkansas Valley schools, three support staff, and specials teachers to include art, music, and physical education. We also have a school nurse, one school counselor, and a school health professional who provide social, emotional, and academic support beyond the classroom curriculum. Being on staff feels like being around family. Cooperation, brainstorming, and problem solving occur regularly throughout grade levels, within classrooms, and across grade levels. Grade level teacher leaders participate in a Building Level Team which addresses needs, concerns, and wishes for our staff and students on a monthly basis. Our Health Referral Team meets weekly to discuss specific students, supports available, and accessible resources. Our students are seen as individuals and our mission, the relentless pursuit of excellence, in a safe environment, one student at a time, ensures that all students are reached and equipped with the skills they need to be engaged members of society.

Continuous improvement drives our desire to develop change and exceed the status quo. Teachers have been trained in a four stage problem-solving model used for improving a process or carrying out a change idea. Although this process started off small and slowly, now students are involved in setting their own goals, tracking their own growth, addressing their learning styles, and taking ownership of their learning.

Swink Elementary School exhibits a variety of strengths. We have a culture of high expectations for staff and students. We provide a learning environment where staff and students feel they can take risks, incorporate innovative ideas, and express their individuality and reach their full potential. We address the social, emotional, and wellness needs of our students by teaching Second Step or LifeSkills lessons to all grade levels, while also carrying out community circles daily. We continue to improve partnerships with local community members and families through outreach events, guest speakers, and community service. We regularly have high school students, community members, and families in our classrooms daily.

We are committed to effectively reach all students, and our methods to accomplish this goal continue to evolve as our student population grows and changes. Students are provided extra supports for reading, small group interventions, and before school tutoring services. Our dedicated staff recognize that all students can learn and reach high expectations when given the opportunity.

Being part of a K-12 school provides many unique opportunities for our students. Seniors have Kindergarten buddies who come monthly to read books and lead activities. Our fourth graders participate in a Cooking Club where high school students are mentors. During advisory at the end of the day, secondary students provide tutoring services for elementary students. Our elementary students get to participate in the Homecoming Parade, often creating a sign or dressing up to match the theme. We sing carols during the week leading up to Christmas break, stand in the halls to support athletes heading to state tournaments, and give high-fives to the seniors who parade in the elementary halls in their caps and gowns.

Swink School may be small, but we are mighty. Located in a rural, under-resourced area, our consistently high-achieving academic scores provide a strong foundation for our students as they enter their career or post-secondary pathways. As we enter each new day we encourage our students to Grow, Believe, and Achieve.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

Swink School District 33 is a district of high expectations, exceptional academics, and continuous improvement. Our mission is the relentless pursuit of excellence, one child at a time. Swink Elementary School understands the connection and value of social emotional academic development and strives to meet students' needs in all areas. Following the Colorado Academic Standards in all subject areas, teachers collaborate to provide the best education to all students through the utilization of several resources that allow for differentiation and engagement. Students take ownership of their learning by tracking their own data, verbalizing their learning needs, and setting goals. Recognizing the increase of technology in our society, our school has been a one-to-one device school for the past three years. Providing every student with a device has provided another means to instruction but also increases technology literacy in our students. Swink School has small class sizes which create an atmosphere for building relationships and helps to increase student confidence as they have leadership roles in their classroom community.

1b. Reading/English language arts

Our language arts curriculum is composed of blended reading and writing instruction through Wonders (McGraw Hill). Although that is the district's adopted curriculum resource, teachers utilize various supplemental programs that allow them to offer a variety of support for students at all academic levels which meet the Colorado Academic Standards. Students are exposed to non-fiction and fictional texts and writing prompts, while also addressing grammar, sentence structure, comprehension, and vocabulary. Digital resources are also available and provide students with additional support while also helping them learn technology literacy and increase typing skills. The scope and sequence of skills provides ample opportunity for students to gain mastery before moving to more complex activities.

1c. Mathematics

Swink Elementary utilizes the Go Math! Curriculum Houghton Mifflin Harcourt which gives equal attention to conceptual, understanding, fluency, and application of math material. Students are using inquiry-based skills to solve real-life scenarios and problems to meet the Colorado Academic Standards. Students demonstrate several different ways to get to the answer and see math beyond a set of numbers. Students become proficient at basic math fact fluency and have an increase in foundational skills. In addition to the curriculum, our teachers use Orton Gillingam which combines visual, auditory, and kinetic tools to help students learn and retain math. Multiple other resources are used by teachers to reach all students and help them grow academically. Through a combination of whole group instruction, small group activities, and individual assessment, teachers can help students master specific skills and provide more lessons/training/support in specific areas.

1d. Science

Science standards are covered in our reading and math curriculum throughout the year. Students read texts about scientists, natural disasters on Earth, geological features, and inventions. The math curriculum uses real-life problems that include science concepts. Students and classes complete science projects which they can then enter at the local Science Fair. First grade completes projects with apples and pumpkins in the fall and fourth grade covers volcanoes. Each grade level goes on an educational field trip where students get to experience their annual content and standards in action. Our third graders visit the Cliff Dwellings, second graders go to the Cave of the Winds, and fifth and sixth graders ride the train to Mount Capulin. Students have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and learn firsthand about social studies, science, math, and English. All elementary students were able to participate in our Maker Space which was just created and utilizes the design thinking model to help students be creative, innovative, and have fun. Through our Health and Wellness Committee made up of students, staff, and parents, a school garden is in its beginning stages.

Each grade will have their own plot and be able to prepare, plant, sew, and harvest different vegetables and flowers.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Social studies curriculum is integrated into our other academic areas. Most of the stories and texts in our reading curriculum cover social studies standards and allow students to learn about history, geography, diversity, culture, and civics. Our curriculum integrates social studies into Reader's Theaters, field trips to visit local services in the area like the Post Office, the Library, and Police Department, and run a recycling program. Students are encouraged and provided opportunities for community service. Some of our grade levels participate in Project Based Learning. For example, fourth graders complete a project about Colorado History which integrates English, Science, Social Studies, Math, music, and art.

1f. For secondary schools:

1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Swink School recognizes that English, math, science, and social studies are important, but equally important are music, art, and physical education. Daily our students get physical education and then receive music and art education classes every other day. In physical education, students are asked to complete different tasks to keep their bodies moving and active.

Instruction is intentional to keep students engaged and meeting standards, while incorporating basic math and English skills into the lessons. Students are immersed in music from around the world, learn to read music, and perform two annual concerts. In addition to vocal music, fourth grade plays recorders. Fifth and sixth grade students have the opportunity to learn to play instruments and gain experience in band performance skills.

In art, students are introduced to many different mediums, share their art with the community, engage in student-centered choice-based activities, participate in district-wide art activities like the Post-it-Note Art Project, and are able to complete clay projects with the Junior Senior High School. Through lessons, art history is integrated and students learn about famous artists tied to different mediums and styles of art. These classes provide students a unique opportunity to be creative and innovative and get to know each other on a different level, creating stronger bonds and relationships.

In addition to specials, students also receive behavioral health support and skill building in important areas like empathy, communication, and conflict management through weekly Second Step and Life Skills lessons. Through the in-class partner work and role plays, students develop executive functioning skills, build common language, and learn to solve classroom and playground problems. Families and caregivers also receive weekly information about the skills being taught, and are able to use and reinforce the concepts at home.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Students who are performing below grade level are provided many resources to help them academically, while also meeting their social and emotional needs. Academic classroom instruction is differentiated to meet all learning styles and integration of technology, small groups, and individual support during instruction increase student understanding and mastery of specific concepts. In addition to the standard classroom curriculum, our school provides daily time for interventions and enrichments. During this time an increase of support personnel is provided to help facilitate different groups of students to help hone specific skills. These groups are designed to meet specific concepts related or unrelated to the curriculum, to help fill gaps in students' mastery of skills in the curriculum, and to teach concepts well beyond the grade level

content. Teachers utilize a variety of resources and tools to customize and differentiate instruction and activities for these specifically-designed small groups.

In addition to in class small group supports, we offer pull-out services for students who are well below grade level. Our literacy coach provides specific instruction for groups of no more than three students at a time. During these sessions students are explicitly working toward mastery of specific skills to help them reach and maintain grade level.

Swink School has a unique opportunity since our students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade are in the same building. Because of this, we are able to utilize the upper grade levels in the elementary school. Before-school tutors are available to help students in any grade level with homework or specific skills. High school students also enter classrooms during their advisory time to help mentor students who may be struggling academically. Many teachers also provide time before or after school to help students acquire skills taught through current curriculum or to fill gaps students may have. To help fifth and sixth grade students prepare for the transition to junior high, Homework Club was created to help students learn self-advocacy, self-regulation, and time management. During this time, students from the high school come and offer support.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Students performing above grade level are continuously challenged academically. The Gifted and Talented Program which is designed for the high achieving students provides many opportunities for students to engage in challenging tasks, extracurricular activities, contests, and programs. Students in the Gifted and Talented program have Advanced Learning Plans (ALP) which outline skills, subjects, and topics of interest and strength to students. These plans outline activities, programs, and extracurricular activities available to the student throughout the school year. Students in the upper level elementary grades can be placed in higher grade levels for math. Reading levels are varied for every student, but students who are above grade level may not only be assigned a higher reading level, but also a different genre or subject area.

They are also provided support through staff who help to facilitate ALP meetings, check-ins throughout the year, and an annual field trip. Students help set goals for their own advanced learning and then take extra steps to achieve those goals. This year students were also offered an opportunity to take an online class through Colorado Digital Learning Solutions on topics not covered in the classroom. These short classes provided students with another opportunity to challenge their learning and select a topic of their choice. In addition to in school opportunities, students engage in real world learning. Students participate in the STEM Fair offered through Colorado State University and take a trip to the Royal Gorge to ride the train and learn about the history of the area.

3c. Special education

Special Education covers a variety of student needs. At Swink Elementary, students in the Special Education program are offered support specific to their identified disability. There are several students at Swink Elementary who have one-on-one paraprofessional support throughout the day to help students stay focused, learn specific skills at their level, but still be in the same classroom with their peers. Some students have a specific time each day where they go to the Special Education teacher and receive an explicit and specialized curriculum to meet their goals. These goals are incorporated into the students Individualized Education Program (IEP), which is communicated to all stakeholders; parents, students, teachers, and special education staff. Swink School is part of the Sante Fe Trail Board Of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) which provides Occupational Therapy, Speech, Physical Therapy, and consultation with a Psychologist. Annual meetings are held to discuss students' IEPs, make any necessary changes to services or supports, provide a time where all stakeholders are in the room together to discuss needs, and create a plan for the following year.

In addition to the special education staff, the school nurse plays a vital role in assessing a student's physical needs to include annual vision and hearing screenings, administration of medicine, and medical accommodations as needed.

Students who are falling behind grade level but who are not yet in Special Education complete the Response to Intervention process which provides specific interventions for students based on skills which a student may be lacking. This process continues with different interventions occurring and eventually working to help the student be successful or the student being recommended for Special Education.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

For the past three years Swink School District has been investing in building connections and strengthening relationships within classrooms, staff interactions, and community outreach. Swink School believes that students can learn at high levels and can achieve high expectations. As each year begins, Swink School's Superintendent plays a song about family, reminding the staff that they are in this together and from that connection stems collaboration, innovation, accountability, and growth. Students engage in circle time daily where they answer questions and share experiences with each other to build strong relationships. These strong relationships help students meet high expectations and allow them to feel comfortable and confident. The relationships that are built help the students to have a shared accountability, independent of the teacher's expectations.

Weekly lessons from Second Step and Life Skills are taught to students and cover topics like empathy, problem solving, and constructively handling strong emotions. In all classrooms students are involved in individual and class goal setting and data tracking where they analyze the data to see if their goals are being met and what needs to change to meet or exceed them.

Because all thirteen grades (K-12) are in the same building, very unique opportunities occur for our students. An all school musical occurs every spring, where students from every grade level stay for practice, create costumes, and finish with a performance for their family and friends. Seniors are assigned Kindergarten Buddies and every month they get together and read books and do activities. Seniors also parade through the elementary wearing their cap and gown demonstrating what hard work and dedication achieve, and encouraging students to keep learning to meet their goals.

There are several opportunities outside of the classroom with which students can engage. Recreation sports are offered year long and provide another place for relationships to grow and students to meet other students. Our District Health and Wellness Committee has several elementary student members who provide input and opinions about topics covered in these monthly meetings. Through one of Swink School's partnerships, CSU-Extension provides opportunities for fourth graders to attend Cooking Club and high school students to be mentors to those students during that time.

Swink School understands the importance of recognition for academics and character. Each quarter students, families, and staff are invited to the Quarterly Award Assembly where students receive certificates for outstanding academic achievement and exceptional character. Every year, Swink hosts a Random Acts of Kindness Month where students look for opportunities to be kind to others in their classroom, school, and community. Different activities are suggested each day that allow students to look beyond themselves and make a difference in the life of someone else.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parents, caregivers, and community members are committed to supporting all Swink students academically and emotionally so that each student can learn to his or her fullest potential. For example, 32 parents have completed the necessary fingerprinting procedures and application process to be classroom volunteers. Many of them spend hours over the course of the semester reading with students and lending a helping hand during projects or activities. Every Swink athletic event, band concert, or drama production throughout the year is well attended by parents, students and community members. The twice-yearly Parent-Teacher conferences have maintained a 100% attendance rate for several years, with parents and teachers collaborating together and investing in the students' current and future success.

The District also recently partnered with the Colorado State University Extension Office to offer Strengthening Families, a research-based 7-week program where students and parents come and build communication skills, learn to resolve conflict, and have fun together. Other community partnerships include classroom visitation by international college students from nearby Otero Junior College, school

climate research through Colorado Education Initiative, and regular classroom visits and discussion with an officer from the Colorado State Patrol, who helps the students build positive connections with members of law enforcement from an early age.

Good communication is vital for parental and community engagement, so the school has a regularly updated website, Facebook page, and text message system that allows parents to have access to vital information on a timely basis. Teachers also communicate with parents via Remind.com and other classroom communication applications that simplify communication. The administrators have an open door policy, and parents can call, email, or meet in person with the Principal as needed. The school has hosted some evening presentations and provided free dinner to engage parents and students in topics like bullying and substance use prevention. Parents are regularly surveyed to determine if there are other needs that are not being met through the current outreach opportunities.

Each quarter the elementary school students receive recognition for both exemplary character development and academic achievement. This quarterly awards assembly is very well attended by parents and community members, and highly anticipated by students, who frequently value the character awards as highly as the academic awards.

Swink School's community outreach also extends to our local group of senior citizens, who come to eat lunch in the school cafeteria. They get their own special table, usually festively decorated, and are able to interact with the students while they enjoy lunch.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Staff at Swink School are encouraged and supported to be life-long learners. The joy of experiencing, learning, and teaching something new is thrilling and expands curiosity and creativity. Throughout the year several professional development opportunities are provided for staff members. Topics around mental health, social and emotional development of students, academic supports, classroom management, coaching lessons, and data dives are integrated into this time.

Over the past three years Swink School has dedicated professional development around social emotional academic development and reaching the whole child through a tiered system of support that meets each student where they are currently. Teachers are trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid, First Aid/ CPR/ AED, being a trauma-informed school, continuous improvement processes, coaching conversations, and student engagement. Through collaboration across grade level and school level meetings, conversations, data analysis, and action plans are created to continue to improve Swink School. We are committed to continuous improvement and streamlining systems at the classroom, school, and district level to make education equitable for all students.

Feedback and observations are a powerful tool to help teachers continue to improve their practice. The relationship between staff and administration is one of reciprocity, where trust, honesty, and respect are harnessed. Swink School works as a team with a united goal of providing our students with the skills they need for life after school. We want students to Grow, Believe, and Achieve, and it all starts with the teacher being prepared, equipped, and empowered to teach.

Professional development opportunities are available to teachers outside of those designated days. A Classroom Management Mini Class is hosted to provide extra resources and practice to teachers wanting support. The class meets monthly and completes activities and discussions around classroom management. The Sante Fe Trail BOCES also provides two weeks of professional learning called the Summer Professional Learning Opportunities for staff to attend. The trainings are free to staff and cover topics relevant to the teaching profession.

4. School Leadership:

Swink School is a family. Administration understands that teaching is a difficult job and is getting increasingly more challenging every year. The goal of administration is to provide the necessary support for

teachers to help them maintain a health work home balance while meeting the needs of the school family and their personal families. We encourage our teachers to prioritize their families by attending their children's events. Administration works to remove barriers that may be in place and clearly define new expectations, law, policies, and procedures when necessary. The servant leadership stance from administration helps create a team atmosphere and produces approachable, understanding, and supportive staff to help problem solve, have crucial conversations, and meet the needs of students. Decisions are made with input and ideas from those impacted. Everyone has a crucial role in the education system and we need to ensure that Swink School is a place where fun and joy can occur.

There are several leadership opportunities for our teachers. Teacher leaders from each grade level and a representative from the specials classes meet monthly to discuss topics specific to the elementary school, specific grade levels, upcoming events, and concerns. Those leaders talk with their grade level teams to collect information before the meeting and then disperse information after the meeting. The District Health and Wellness Committee is another area where teachers can be empowered. Meeting monthly, teachers can join the committee to discuss health and wellness topics which impact the district as a whole. The District Accountability Committee is a district wide committee made up of teachers, parents, and administration. Discussions around the district are completed and decisions about the projection of the school are then proposed to the School Board of Education.

As Administrators we believe in the importance of collaboration and giving teachers voice. Staff provides input on classroom schedules, master schedules, events, how funding is spent, and professional development. Swink School wants their teachers to be heard and empowered to make changes for the betterment of students.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Moving forward, Swink School is not content to just maintain the status quo. The school is continually using data to inform instructional approaches and curriculum choices. Each student has access to an iPad or Chromebook, and technology is woven into lessons in every subject. Technology alone, however, does not prepare a student for success.

In order to attain continuous growth, staff have been trained through an improvement cycle called PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act). This cycle is a tool that helps teachers, staff, and students pick an area, subject, lesson, unit, or procedure and improve it through implementing one idea or approach at a time and monitoring results. Data-based decision making is vital in improving schools and knowing which steps to take in order to have the most impact on growth and improvement. Using this cycle, students are trained by teachers to create goals, track data, and analyze effectiveness. From the results, new goals are created and the cycle continues until there is a product that is effective and efficient.

Prior to implementing the PDSA process, several teachers traveled to visit schools currently utilizing the continuous improvement cycle to see it in action, get ideas on how best to use it, and to ask questions about the process. All teachers received in-depth training about the PDSA cycle, including how to implement the cycle, how to help students take ownership of their learning and give productive feedback, and how to continually address needs in the classroom as they arise.

The continuous improvement process allows teachers to actively involve students, gain feedback about specifics in the classroom, empower students to take responsibility for their learning, and to use the data to provide different learning strategies in the classroom. Students and teachers collaborate to create plus/ delta charts which provide a visual check-in tool to evaluate learning. Together, teachers and students make classroom goals for units, tests, assignments, and projects. Pre-assessment and post-assessment results are posted and analyzed by the whole class. Students create individual goals for current units and year-long goals and complete reflections on those goals regularly. Changes are made as needed to help students and classrooms reach their goals through the use of the plus/ delta chart and other data monitoring tools.

The PDSA cycle provides a collaborative way for teachers and students to collect and analyze information and data. Teachers are able to make real-time changes and to proactively address specific needs in the classroom throughout the year. Then, at the conclusion of the school year, they can reflect on the data and interventions, and make changes for the following year.

Continuous improvement has provided a vehicle for change in our district and we have used this process to make changes not only to academic and differentiation strategies, but also to strengthen social and emotional support for students and staff, to increase connections with families and the community, and to enhance relationship building in the classroom through the integration of connection circles and frequent forums for student feedback. Continuous improvement has created a real growth mindset at Swink School.