

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Yolanda Luna-Mroz
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Decatur Classical School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 7030 North Sacramento Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Chicago State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60645-2848

County Cook County

Telephone (773) 534-2201 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://www.decaturclassical.org/ E-mail YELuna@cps.edu

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* Dr Janice Jackson E-mail ceo-jackson@cps.edu
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name City Of Chicago Sd 299 Tel. (773) 553-1000

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 Miguel del Valle
(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)

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
 - 477 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 165 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

642 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

- 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

- 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 | 20 | 8 | 28 |
| 1 | 32 | 24 | 56 |
| 2 | 11 | 18 | 29 |
| 3 | 13 | 15 | 28 |
| 4 | 24 | 34 | 58 |
| 5 | 12 | 10 | 22 |
| 6 | 23 | 33 | 56 |
| 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 | 135 | 142 | 277 |

*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
 - 31 % Asian
 - 4.2 % Black or African American
 - 14.8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.4 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 43.6 % White
 - 6 % 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: ≤1%

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 | 0 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year | 0 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 0 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018 | 0 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | <.01 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | <1 |

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: 14 %

Total number students who qualify: 40

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %
9 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>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>1</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>3</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 | 1 |
| Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 10 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 7 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 3 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 1 |

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 28:1

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 | 96% | 96% | 96% | 96% | 96% |
| 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.

We are a community of dedicated teachers and curious students who persevere in the exploration of learning.

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

Applicants for Classical Schools are selected based on an admissions exam score and in accordance with the tier system.

The classical school admissions exam is taken by all age appropriate students who are applying for entrance in grade kindergarten through grade 4. In order to be eligible for testing, general education students and students with a 504 Plan applying for grades 5-8 must score at or above the 60th percentile in both reading and math on NWEA MAP. Students with an IEP applying for grades 5-8 must score at or above the 50th percentile in one subject (reading or math), and at or above the 40th percentile in the other subject (reading or math) in order to be eligible for testing.

The Chicago Public Schools tier system uses socio-economic data as part of the selection process for Selective Enrollment schools. For the entry grade level for Selective Enrollment Elementary Schools like Decatur Classical School, the first 30% of available seats are filled strictly according to the student scores – also referred to as the “rank” score – the seats are filled by the top-scoring students. The remaining seats are equally distributed among the four tiers and are filled by the highest-scoring students in each tier. There is no sibling or proximity consideration for these schools. In non-entry level grades, students are selected on the basis of their admissions exam scores or final points alone; there is no tier consideration.

PART III - SUMMARY

Decatur Classical School is a K-6 selective enrollment public school on the north side of Chicago, IL. The school was founded in 1978 as a classical school and has been a stable part of the West Ridge community. It currently has 277 students. Decatur has flourished under new leadership in the last three years that brought in a more holistic approach to learning for the selective enrollment student.

Decatur has a diverse student population as students are bused from all over the north side of Chicago. The diversity of ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds are all celebrated and vital to the school identity and success. While all Decatur students are tested to enter the school, there are still varying degrees of academic readiness upon entrance. The school has a small population of students with special needs. These students are an important part of our inclusive model for education and are supported in the classroom by both the special education teacher and the classroom teacher. Decatur was originally built as a “starter school” to enroll only students from kindergarten through 2nd grade. However, as the school expanded beyond 2nd grade, the building remained the same for over 30 years causing overcrowding and the Decatur community pleading year after year for more space. Finally in July of 2018, Decatur was granted a program expansion to include an annex and space for 7th and 8th grade classes. This was a victory for the whole Decatur community: past, present and future.

The new administration drove a cultural shift to holistic learning by developing a new vision for the school and embedding those values in daily student life: At Decatur we celebrate the incredible ability children have to learn. We provide an unrivaled educational experience that is defined by a culture of positive social, cognitive, and individualized development. Decatur values academics and the arts equally, believing the two are inseparable in developing caring and empathetic human beings.

Decatur is characterized by traditions that embody the culture and values of our community. Students and families are welcomed into the community through summer orientations, a school block party, and fall festival. In-studio performances invite parents into the artistic classrooms to witness the growth of students’ learning and experience the dance, music, and visual art curriculums. Decatur traditions extend to leadership opportunities in the arts through student-led stage crews that design and run these productions and student congress that manages quarterly volunteer opportunities for the student body.

Academically – Teachers have created curriculum and subject frameworks that challenge students to approximately a year beyond their grade level. Vertical alignment and departmentalization in core subjects from second through sixth grade has been integral in enabling teachers to pace their curriculum at this rigorous level and to loop with their students. Teachers are trained in differentiation practices to meet the needs of all students at their level through whole group and small group instruction.

Physically – Students are active at Decatur with daily recess (25 minutes), daily Physical Education (30 minutes), and Dance instruction each week (60 minutes). This opportunity for students to have both structured and unstructured daily physical movement is an important part of Decatur’s belief in taking care of the whole child. Students having this type of physical education is not the norm in Chicago Public Schools.

Socially & Emotionally – At Decatur Classical School, we believe in a holistic approach to educating our students and we strive to nurture students' social, academic, and emotional growth. Social and emotional learning at Decatur Classical School is embedded into the school day through direct instruction, restorative practices, conflict resolution, and a caring climate for learning. Each student experiences the Second Step curriculum to acquire the tools for social-emotional proficiency, situational awareness, and academic achievement. Restorative Practices are used to build our healthy community, strengthen relationships, repair harm, and restore relationships. Decatur has two part time Restorative Practitioners that work with students, assist with conversations when needed, and coach teachers. Students learn mindfulness and yoga techniques each year and both are used strategically to improve attention, emotional regulation, compassion, and resilience.

Culturally – It is important at Decatur that students are celebrated for their strengths and graduate as multifaceted individuals. In order to develop students in this way, we have a team of teacher experts called the Essentials team. The name itself speaks to the value we place in their content and knowledge. The Essentials team is made up of teachers of visual arts, dance, makerspace, music, latin and physical education which students see weekly during their school day. This allows students to explore aptitude and interests outside of core academics and builds twenty-first century skills such as creativity, collaboration, and communication. These teachers work with our students from kindergarten until graduation which allows for meaningful relationships, long lasting mentorship, and the trust to encourage student risk-taking in a safe environment.

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

Decatur’s approach to curriculum and instruction is rooted in a holistic approach centered around experiential learning and the relationships created between students and teachers. Decatur teaches an accelerated curriculum for all core subjects. The emphasis is on creating a learning environment that attends to the whole development of the student intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, artistically, and creatively. Decatur believes in engaging students in a learning process that encourages personal and collective responsibility.

Decatur’s philosophy is based on creating more than just successful students. We also want to develop successful human beings. We value academics and the arts equally, believing that in core subjects students can make deeper connections due to their instruction in their Essential classes. The interconnectedness of our overall curriculum builds a growth mindset, self-confidence, self-awareness, communication, and improved cognition within our students.

While we do not have the typical range of students above and below grade level due to the nature of school where students test in for admission, Decatur sees each student as an individual. Teachers use and analyze multiple types of assessments including Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) and Illinois Readiness Assessment (IRA) to meet the needs of all the learners both above and below grade level at Decatur. Teachers have biannual days for deep data dives and work with a school data specialist to look at all the school and classroom data. Teachers use the data to drive instruction for the students each year for both whole group and small group instruction. Teachers and students are partners in allowing students to reach their growth goals each year. Students conference with teachers several times a year to set both long term and short term growth goals based on the data and other personal factors. While we continue to have high attainment year after year, Decatur believes it’s important to give students the tools to continue to challenge them to grow each and every year.

1b. Reading/English language arts

The Reading/Language Arts curriculum at Decatur Classical follows the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to engage students in an accelerated, high quality instructional reading program that enriches and supports the comprehensive development of all students. Teachers at the school collaborated to develop our reading framework. The vertical alignment of our framework provides a basic outline for each grade level which allows for differentiation to meet the needs of all students at all levels. Students work within this model to improve reading proficiency and comprehension, fluency, accuracy and vocabulary skills. Teachers at all grades use formative and summative assessment data to determine student needs for small group instruction. Teachers use formative assessments such as graphic organizers, exit slips, literature circle discussions, reading responses to monitor student progress. Summative assessments include novel projects, written reading responses, quizzes and tests to evaluate student mastery in reading and their ability to make literary connections.

Students in K-3 use Fountas and Pinell as a foundation. Students work in flexible groupings to develop the fundamental building blocks in reading. Students in Grades 4-6 use novel based units designed for small group instruction to focus on text analysis and critical thinking. Students also work with a variety of nonfiction texts, poetry and other short stories in addition to the novel studies. Teachers have autonomy to choose and use authentic literary and informational texts to best serve our students each year. We value exposing our students to rich, diverse texts to support their Social Emotional Learning. A variety of window books and mirror books are selected each year to help students make deeper connections by providing them the opportunities to empathize with the lives of others or see their diverse identities recognized in a book.

Rich texts also serve as models for our writing curriculum. Our reading program builds in work on language

mechanics including grammar, word work and phonemic awareness, and vocabulary. This provides students with authentic examples that aim to inspire them to develop original ideas and pieces, as well as the other necessary elements needed to improve writing and communication skills. Students create original narrative, informational, and opinion pieces throughout the year in grades K-3. In grades 4-6, the students explore the four main types of writing: narrative, expository, descriptive, and persuasive/argumentative. By integrating our language arts curriculum, we provide our students with a comprehensive and balanced approach to nurture lifelong readers and writers motivated to achieve.

1c. Mathematics

Math units and lessons at Decatur Classical are aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), using GOMath in Kindergarten through 4th grade and Illustrative Math in 5th through 6th grade as foundational materials. Our math curriculum is vertically aligned via CCSS, but also through a teacher developed scope and sequence focused on a progression of number strategies and procedural skills in the primary grades that serve as a basis for flexible thinking in problem solving in the upper grades.

A Math Workshop model is used throughout the school, which includes: teacher work stations, partner or small group work, as well as math games and extension activities. This model allows teachers to work with small groups and differentiate to meet student needs. Culminating projects for most units are paired with paper tests to also differentiate assessments of student mastery over concepts. At all grade levels there is an emphasis on the integration of accountable talk, used to teach students discussion techniques and vocabulary necessary to communicate effectively. Social emotional learning in math supports the development of students' self-awareness and self-regulation in the face of difficult problems. At the upper grades, recognition of students' emotional and physical states become an engaging application of data collection and analysis. It allows students to quantify their personal qualitative data as a means of informing choices in their learning and study habits.

The math program at Decatur aims to deepen students' understanding of math as a way of thinking. Our program focuses more on process, application, and explanation rather than answers and repetition. Assessments designed by the Mathematics Assessment Project like formative assessment lessons (FALs), Mathematics Assessment Resource Service(MARS) tasks, and exit slips are used to formatively assess student understanding. Summative assessments in the form of paper and pencil tests, and summative projects challenge students to apply and explain their thinking. The experience of mathematical thinking and process are the vehicle used to learn the concepts. Exposure to multiple procedures and strategies aims to provide students with multiple access points to connect to the larger concepts that help support their development into problem solvers who persevere in the exploration of their learning.

1d. Science

The Decatur Science curriculum uses the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Decatur students receive Science curriculum in a self-contained classroom in K and 1st grade, while students in 2nd - 6th grade receive instruction in a departmentalized setting. Kindergarten through 5th grade science classes follow the Amplify Science curriculum and 6th grade science classes use the SEPUP curriculum, both of which are aligned to NGSS. The Amplify curriculum, alongside teacher created resources, prepares students for science and engineering careers by presenting tasks similar to those that scientists and engineers encounter in the field. The SEPUP curriculum teaches science using real world contexts, allowing students to become the decision makers and apply evidence to create real world solutions.

In each science class, Decatur students use inquiry-based learning to create and test hypotheses and conduct experiments which help them gather data. Students use the data they collect as evidence to explain their solutions, decisions, and results. Technology is used by students primarily for scientific simulations, to conduct background research, and as a tool to communicate within the classroom community. In science classes, real world problems provide context for hands-on activities that provide foundations for a future career path in science and engineering.

check for understanding. Summative assessments in the form of experiments, essays, and tests are used to show student mastery and ability to apply scientific knowledge in context. Teachers use a combination of both curriculum provided resources as well as teacher developed resources, to keep assessments aligned with the Next Generation Science standards. Each component of Decatur's science curriculum works in tandem to provide a rigorous and engaging science experience for students at Decatur.

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

Social Studies/History at Decatur Classical aims to prepare students for life in a democracy through inquiry and interdisciplinary applications that integrate the arts and humanities. Guided by both Illinois Learning Standards and National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, the curriculum emphasizes learning about community, City and State history in the primary grades, and extends into World and US History in the intermediate grades.

Decatur Classical values using curricular resources that represent the diverse identities in history that are also reflected in our student body. Our approach integrates the Facing History and Ourselves pedagogy by building foundations for student learning through studies of identity and membership, linking how identity impacts decision-making and choices in history. From Kindergarten through 6th grade, our curriculum is aligned through the incorporation of social-emotional learning. We focus on the progression of skills and mindsets critical to the development of responsible students and citizens.

Students are challenged to develop a deep understanding of history through exposure to rich literature and reflective discussions. Discussions, reflective journaling, and constructed response questions are used as formative assessments to check understanding. Students at Decatur engage in thought provoking research projects that provide them the opportunities to develop questions, gather evidence, draw conclusions, and communicate their findings in multiple media. These research/multimedia projects, written essays, and tests are used as summative assessments to showcase our students' thinking and analysis of history. It is important that our students explore complex histories, but that they are able to move through that journey by making connections to current events, reflecting on the choices they are confronted with today, and recognizing their civic responsibility to actively participate.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Decatur Classical School uses a renaissance approach to learning so that well-rounded graduates actively solve problems, and empathize with others as they express creative solutions in novel ways. Social and emotional learning is the foundation of every Decatur classroom. Every week, every student at Decatur has 450 minutes of Essentials Instruction beyond the core curriculum. In addition to outdoor recess, students have 30 minutes of Physical Education every day. Students spend five hours every week working in Makerspace, Dance, Music, Visual Art, and Latin classes. These blended humanities provide even greater opportunity for Decatur's students to construct meaning as they connect classroom lessons to their unique experiences.

Decatur's Essentials team works to develop student voice in lessons aligned to National Standards. Decatur students hear unique voices of performance and visual artists in the local community. As these artists' stories come alive on field trips to Chicago's world-class theatres and museums, students learn that raw talent matters less than the patience, determination, and persistence of every successful artist.

Every student at Decatur participates in exhibitions and performances. Students rotate through the spotlight as artists, actors, singers, musicians, and dancers and learn to manage tasks to prepare performance events. Older students curate and produce school-wide events, gaining hands-on experience managing and directing peers, designing and running theatrical sets, lights, wardrobe, and sound, and engaging our community with invitations, posters, and websites. Teaching how the arts function in context provides students with multiple

pathways to success beyond elementary school.

Students at Decatur study Latin to learn about the language, culture and history of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Latin gives students a valuable base for expanding their vocabulary, deciphering unfamiliar words, and understanding the English language. Latin lays the foundation for graduates who seek further studies into any of the five romance languages.

Physical Education at Decatur teaches how to care for personal and community health. Every day, for half an hour, lessons support physical and cognitive growth in self-care, exercise, nutrition, positive risk-taking, and peer interaction. Moving beyond the rules of team sports, Physical Education at Decatur helps students track their own data to see how their potential develops as they grow.

Makerspace exposes every grade at Decatur to the engineering design process through a hands-on Project Lead the Way curriculum. Makerspace is a unique course for students to imagine, tinker, create, question, collaborate, experiment and invent in a safe environment. This flexible curriculum adapts to engage student interest and build pathways to lifelong success.

The music program inspires students to be creators of music. Students use a variety of instruments such as xylophones, recorder, ukulele, guitar; and electives such as songwriting, rock band, electronic music, Orff ensemble, and choir to express themselves. Music class actively collaborates with dance, art and core curriculum.

The Dance program covers both genre-specific and creative movement. Studies include the codified disciplines, student choreography to showcase their voices, and how the history of dance helped shape the world.

Decatur's visual art program helps students realize that seeing the world from different perspectives includes everyone in the fullest experience of humanity. Through a variety of materials, collaboration, and critique, students learn to exchange ideas and experiment with solutions to difficult problems.

Learning continues after school at Decatur. Students work with faculty and outside agencies to explore drawing, band, piano, chorus, curation, Latin, track and field, Chess and robotics.

Social-emotional learning extends beyond expectations and conflict resolution to curriculums in mindfulness and yoga. Each student participates in the Mindful Schools curriculum each year taught by a different staff member yearly. Fifty-percent of our teaching staff are trained in the Mindful Schools curriculum so that it can be embedded throughout the school day. At least one yoga unit is taught to each class yearly to practice self-awareness, community build, and emotional regulation. This mindful approach is the foundation for empathetic and engaged learning in a school community where students are equipped to express how they are all important to individual success at Decatur, in high school, and beyond.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Decatur uses the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process to identify any low performing students or students according to both standardized assessments and classroom data are showing a need for academic and/or social emotional support. The MTSS team reviews data with teachers every 6 weeks to set up additional interventions. Intervention time is built into the school day for teachers to do both small group or individual instruction. Progress for students is monitored through anecdotal notes, data tracking, and academic performance and communicated to parents.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Using data as a basis allows teachers to meet the needs of all students and align tasks tailored to their current level regardless of where they are at in the learning process. Decatur teachers and staff have partnered with

Northwestern Center for Talent Development on professional development to implement differentiation in the classroom. Teachers place an emphasis on process instead of product. This allows students to learn in a safe environment that provides choice, with products that allow them to best show their learning and understanding. The learning environment is set-up so students feel comfortable with tables, rugs, and flexible seating which invites collaboration with both peers and teachers.

3c. Special education

Special Education services are done through the inclusion model where the teachers work as a team with the classroom teacher to provide services for all students. This also allows the special education students to continue to be a valued part of the classroom throughout their entire day and have their needs met according to their IEP goals. Having all students learn in the classroom allows learners to prepare for our diverse world around them. This co-teaching model works best to support all students in the classroom and allows the students with special needs to feel connected to all the learning in the classroom. The special education teacher meets regularly with all classroom teachers and they work together to create weekly lesson plans and units.

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:

Decatur Classical School celebrates the incredible ability children have to learn. We lay the groundwork for an educational experience that is defined by a culture of positive social, cognitive, and individualized development.

The academic, social, and emotional culture of our school is anchored by three schoolwide expectations: be present, endure challenges, and take care of each other. Decatur utilizes these expectations to focus and build positive relationships between all members of our Decatur community. We display these expectations in each area of the building, explicitly teaching and re-teaching them throughout the year. Each year, teachers commit time to rotating students through the different spaces of the building to model and learn these expectations. We believe this facilitates student investment and commitment to be part of a caring community.

Teachers incorporate relationship building activities as a cornerstone of every classroom to nurture trust and to understand students as individuals who are valued members of our community. Teachers lead weekly circles that center on these connections, and take personal lunch time to provide small group academic or social-emotional support. The school Social-Emotional Committee administers a student social-emotional survey twice a year to understand students' needs and respond appropriately. This understanding of each student leads to teachers' ability to goal-set with each student and offer extra support when needed. Decatur uses a Multi-tiered Support System to provide targeted support for students with additional academic or social-emotional needs.

Decatur looks to grow citizens of the world who embrace their individuality and recognize their membership as part of a larger community. We work to proactively build age-appropriate student leadership, teach conflict resolution skills, and provide opportunities for student interaction across grade levels. Older students work with younger students to support schoolwide academic and social-emotional goals, nurturing each student's investment in our school community. We believe this fosters student initiative to take leadership roles like Student Congress, which has delegates from every classroom. Students help lead our morning drop off, voice announcements to kick off the school day, and hold classroom positions. Even with responsible student leaders, we know that conflict is inevitable so we have a specific conflict resolution plan that students can work through together to find common ground either in tandem or with the help of an adult. We offer additional calming techniques like a sensory walk, mindfulness, and classroom calm down spaces to support conflict resolution.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The strategy that Decatur has found to truly engage our parent body is to include them as partners through transparency, constant communication, and an open door.

Building transparency starts with allowing parents to see the work behind the curtain through open communication. The principal and teachers communicate weekly through our school website and newsletters. Social media platforms are a space to lift up exemplary student achievements as well as school information. Teachers meet with parents to communicate about student academic and social-emotional well-being in conferences, phone calls, and emails at the convenience of parents' schedules. The school principal gives a school tour with prospective parents four times a year and hosts "Coffee with the Principal" with current parents monthly. Parents are educated on Decatur philosophies through Decatur Parent University and Back to School Orientations which allow time and space for parents to ask questions and get to know the school vision. The Local School Council, Parent Teacher Association, School-Improvement Team, and Room Parents are examples of avenues for parents to get regularly involved with Decatur in addition to the near daily volunteer opportunities. Yearly school culture events are hosted to bring parents and students together and include four performing arts performances, a back-to-school picnic, an international picnic to celebrate our diverse families, dances, and fundraisers. Performing arts teachers regularly host open in-

studio shows which allow parents to attend informances of their student's work.

Decatur partners with the local community through quarterly school-wide fundraisers that are student chosen and driven. Projects span food drives, selling wristbands to support a non-profit organization, and collecting warm coats for neighbors. Our choir performs annually at our neighboring nursing home. Decatur partners with Northwestern's Center for Talent and Development to develop our school in the areas of Social-Emotional Learning, Psychosocial Skills, Creativity, and Differentiation for gifted learners. Another partner, DePaul University Family and Community Services, provides additional in-school support for our students regarding anxiety, depression, and executive functioning skills. We partner with various counselors, social workers, and family therapists to expand our offerings to our families.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The most important part of developing a professional culture for the Decatur staff is trusting that each teacher has the freedom to take risks and autonomy to choose curriculum, professional development, and programs for their classrooms.

This process starts with the Instructional Leadership Team which includes classroom teachers, the school counselor, arts teachers, and school administrators. This team together determines the areas of focus and timeline of the professional development for teachers. They also lead committees tied to the school's continuous improvement plan and report back to the ILT about progress on action items and specific goals.

Beyond whole-staff professional development, each teacher has the autonomy to choose other professional growth opportunities that will further them in their professional learning. This year, teachers have attended content-specific seminars, culture development workshops, and teacher leadership training. After teachers return from these experiences, they become the experts for the rest of our community and share out applicable information to elevate our staff's expertise. In addition, teachers choose their own curriculum, instructional materials, and supplies so that they can guide the learning in the classroom as the experts they are.

Teacher leader coaching contributes to a culture in which teachers are celebrated and supported. New teachers are paired with teacher mentors at the beginning of the school year. Two on-staff Restorative Practices Practitioners coach teachers in community building, conflict resolution, and classroom management. Teachers who need support in their content receive coaching specific to their area of teaching either within the school staff or administrators pair them with contacts who teach their content at another school. All teachers participate in observations of other teacher's classrooms to provide feedback and peer coaching.

Most importantly, Decatur models one of its school-wide expectations: Take Care of Each Other. Staff is given the tools and support to take care of themselves so that they can be healthy professionals because we know that their well-being will directly affect student achievement. Our monthly Wellness Emails include self-care tips, health class certificates to local studios, and community events such as a staff volunteer afternoon to make sandwiches for the local food pantry. The school's Restorative Practitioners work with teachers as well as students to resolve conflicts and build teacher trust in each other.

4. School Leadership:

Decatur Classical School has a strong leadership philosophy that is collaborative, progressive, and supportive. The school principal sets the tone for the school community, guiding with research-based practices focused on doing what is best for all students. The principal ensures that stakeholders understand the vision and creates shared values for the school. The principal works to model and encourage teachers to make personal connections with students to create a student-centered environment.

When schools have shared values as part of the leadership approach, teachers are treated as the experts in the classroom. The principal empowers teachers, provides resources, and feedback so that they can grow together as educators. Teachers at Decatur drive their own learning and practices. Teachers volunteer time to

join several committees focused on social emotional learning, differentiation, and fine arts, in addition to the traditional Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) that many schools have. This gives all teachers the space to provide and accept feedback, grow their expertise, have a voice and the courage to take more instructional risks in the classroom without fear of failure.

Decatur's principal collaborates with teachers, extending opportunities for staff to lead and give input on: creation and development of new programming, robust extra curricular offerings, budget, staffing plan, quality professional development and partnerships, and school improvement plans. The strong collaboration yields open communication that fosters equitable representation of teacher voice, greater buy-in, and ultimately stronger practices that benefit all students.

Leadership extends to parents and community members at Decatur. The principal works to establish clear structures that allow parents from all backgrounds to be involved based on their availability. Decatur's principal invests time in building relationships with parents to understand their needs and ways to best engage them in a collaborative practice. Parents offer ongoing feedback on programming, workload, school initiatives, community events, and more. The collaborative, dynamic, and strong culture of learning are illustrated in our 5 Essentials Data of our state report card which lists us as the highest ranking. The 5 Essentials survey is taken by students, staff, and parents to provide data and insight into the school's organizational strengths and areas of opportunity. The leadership encourages Decatur community members to be more progressive in our thinking and decisions, engaging deeper reflection about our collective work.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most meaningful practice that separates Decatur Classical School from other high-achieving schools is the consistent commitment and implementation of a holistic approach to educate children. All students need access to rich opportunities to develop the skills they need to cope with the world as it is while building the courage to improve it.

Decatur focuses on offering a balanced approach to teaching and learning through our academic programming, our social-emotional focus, and civic engagement. Decatur fully implements restorative practices schoolwide to set agreed upon norms for our students that center around empathy, personal and social responsibility. Evidence of restorative practices are weaved into the fabric of Decatur through classroom circles, social-emotional learning, mindfulness, and visible signage and common language. These practices teach students to value and accept their own learning preferences, recognize diversity as a strength, give students a voice, and teach our children how to be empathetic human beings.

Decatur's commitment to a holistic approach guides the high quality programming offered to students. Decatur offers a robust school day that promotes students to engage with a growth mindset across all disciplines. Students at Decatur all participate in Dance, Music, Latin, Makerspace, Visual arts, daily physical education, lunch and recess. In addition to the rich core academic curriculum, students at Decatur consistently develop and practice a combination of interpersonal and critical thinking skills as part of their regular school day. All staff members model the importance of these skills and explicitly share their own passions and moments of growth.

These practices offer many platforms for students to grow and succeed outside the traditional classroom setting. Decatur has a strong learning environment that is both responsive to the unique needs of gifted children, and creates a place that allows them to express critical, creative thoughts freely while synthesizing opposing views into new information. At Decatur, students can love academics and the arts equally. Students are highly engaged in curating art shows, participating in Math and Latin competitions, Lego Building League, Rock band, and many more. Decatur celebrates students taking risks, personal growth, failures, and resilience.

Decatur's holistic practice makes a case for better integration of a child's development to support cognitive and noncognitive skills. It fosters an environment where students are valued as individuals while learning to build their agency, value their identity, and accept social responsibility. Teachers focus on learning and goal setting rather than grades and test scores to instill a love of learning. Students learn empathy and how to deal with conflict in a way that extends grace and compassion. Students are given the intellectual space to reflect, recover, and have the resolve to keep learning, to persevere. Decatur's practice of teaching the whole child reminds us all that schools ultimately belong to children.