

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Wood Oaks Jr High School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1250 Sanders Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Northbrook State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60062-2900

County Cook County

Telephone (847) 272-1900 Fax (847) 480-4834

Web site/URL https://woodoaks.nb27.org/ E-mail mcelligott.r@nb27.org

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. John Deiter E-mail deiter.j@nb27.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Northbrook Educational Service District 27 Tel. (847) 498-2610

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. Alex Frum  
(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, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2016 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: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	85	81	166
7	91	68	159
8	71	82	153
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	247	231	478

\*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
  - 18.4 % Asian
  - 0.9 % Black or African American
  - 3.2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 74.1 % White
  - 3.4 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 4%

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

N/A

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	478
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Korean, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Assyrian, Turkish, Russian, Bosnian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
10 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3 %

Total number students who qualify: 13

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 14 %  
69 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. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>3</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>23</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>41</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>10</u> Emotional Disturbance  | <u>12</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: 10
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	33
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	13
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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.

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	98%	97%	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 2021.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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. 2011

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

Educating students to succeed in a changing world.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1638718130/nb27org/twz6bqa00a5ss2jpias2/0510-EqualEmploymentOpportunityandMinorityRecruitment.pdf>

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Wood Oaks Junior High serves a portion of the small suburban community of Northbrook, Illinois, just north of Chicago. Our mission, and the mission of Northbrook School District 27, is to educate students to succeed in a changing world. This mission is at the core of what we do to educate the whole child for the 472 students in our charge. We take pride in the services we provide to our students, such as the ongoing technology advances we implement, the high standards that our curriculum maintains, the caring staff that continually strives to put students' social-emotional needs of their students first, and the supportive and active parent community that consistently supports our work. The Blue Ribbon Program recognizes high-performing schools that consistently achieve exemplary performance. Wood Oaks and Northbrook District 27 have a long history of our students achieving far above state standards, but just as importantly we take pride in developing students that are respectful, responsible, and kind. Our students not only do well in our environment, but go on to be leaders in high school and beyond.

The Wood Oaks curriculum is a living breathing entity that keeps state and national standards at the foundation of its core. Teachers are consistently reviewing curricula to incorporate current authentic experiences for students to learn within the context of the greater world community. Students have opportunities to learn from experts in the field. We have developed strong relationships with experts such as Carl Wilkens, the last American to leave Rwanda during the genocide, and Kingston Reif, the Director of Disarmament and Threat Reduction at the Arms Control Association. Our students participate in the Illinois State Science Fair and continually perform at an exceptional level being recognized with the highest award of Best in Category. Wood Oaks students are also encouraged to explore interests beyond the proverbial textbook and are recognized for their accomplishments in the sports arena as well as the arts. Our Wind Ensemble has been invited 12 out of the last 15 years to perform at the Illinois Superstate Concert, considered one of the highest honors for Illinois bands.

Wood Oaks Junior High has been recognized as a Platinum school of excellence by the Midwest PBIS Network. This level of recognition helps us to work with other schools in our area to help them grow their PBIS systems of processes. Our students have benefited from our PBIS process as we have developed ongoing support for all of our students that address both academic and behavioral needs. Since becoming a PBIS school 11 years ago, we have consistently seen a decrease in overall behavioral issues and a continual increase in our support of academic needs. In a recent Satisfaction Survey, 75% of our student body agreed or strongly agreed that, on most days, they like their school. In this same survey, 96.2% of our parents stated that, on most days, their child enjoys going to school. Parents also indicated that their child is able to handle the emotional challenges of school (91.9% agree or strongly agree). These results are a direct link to the work our entire staff does to use the systems within PBIS, the ongoing support and the whole-child approach, to meet the needs of our students.

During recent challenges put forth by COVID-19, our staff and community united together to make the safest and most effective choices to keep our students learning. In March of 2020, when all schools were forced to go online, we were able to immediately pivot to online learning due to our 1:1 technology and programs that students and staff were already using on a regular basis. Staff quickly adapted to keep their curriculum moving forward with high standards of excellence that we maintain each and every day. Students and families supported learning by being present and focused during this tumultuous time. At the start of the 2020-2021 school year, we were able to open our doors to hybrid learning on the first day of school. Difficult financial decisions were made to ensure that students had ongoing access to in-person learning within a safe environment. Wood Oaks was able to have a successful and safe school year with no evidence of COVID transmission in our building. Our state testing data supports our efforts with minimal variation seen in our standardized testing data.

Our recognition as a Blue Ribbon School in 2011 has kept us moving forward in analyzing how we serve our students and community. Since receiving that recognition, we have only improved upon our use of technology to keep our students and community connected and informed. We have continued to grow our PBIS program by increasing the supports at each tier of our structure. We have kept our students' social-emotional well-being central by providing our staff with professional development focused on mindfulness,

gender differences, LGBTQ awareness and supports, emergency preparedness training provided by Navy SEALS, and a district-wide focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our commitment to educate students to succeed in a changing world is more than a statement; it is a true mission of our school and district.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

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

As an elementary school district, our key responsibility is to set a strong foundation for our students to become “globally competent” and to ensure that they are well-prepared to succeed at Glenbrook North High School. We recognize that the vast majority of students within each 8th grade class are only eight years from entering a workforce where some jobs have not been created. Students will likely use technology that has not yet been invented, and they will be called upon to solve and engage in global issues that have not yet been solved or have not yet surfaced. This emerging environment necessitates that our students have the skills, knowledge, and global mindset to succeed in a rapidly changing global environment. It is within this context that Northbrook District 27 develops and delivers its middle school educational programs and services.

All curricula are designed around standards and incorporate research on pedagogy relevant to each discipline. The faculty collaboratively build and refine curricula, which cultivates deep ownership and commitment to implementing the curriculum with fidelity. Regardless of teacher assignment, all students have very similar experiences across classes within the same subject area. We employ common assessments and projects, which allow the teachers to converse about student learning and identify areas within the curriculum for improvement.

We use Canvas as our learning management system, and the majority of class content is made available to students through Canvas. The pandemic challenged us to leverage technology so that we could engage students and have access to their thinking/work in real-time regardless of whether the student was physically present. As a result, we have developed competencies in a core set of technological tools, and our students regularly use technology in all of their classes.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

We developed our middle school reading/LA curriculum based on a strong belief that reading instruction must increase reading comprehension strategies/skills and build knowledge. Equally important, we believe middle school is an essential time for cultivating a joy for reading students will carry with them through the rest of their academic careers and personal lives. With these as our guiding philosophies, we provide an engaging, thematic-based reading/LA curriculum. The department worked collaboratively using a five-phase process to develop the entire curriculum. Our curriculum integrates fiction and non-fiction texts/works within units, anchored by overarching unit questions. The unit questions compel students to think deeply about the texts, their central messages, and the authors’ purposes and impacts. Every unit focuses on the literary aspects of the texts and larger ideas/themes, including complex societal issues such as racism and human rights. Throughout the units, students build their capacity to understand and analyze texts, make cross comparisons of texts, appreciate authors’ crafts, and see the world beyond themselves. Writing instruction is integrated within each unit, allowing students to study mentor texts and apply new knowledge and skills.

Every grade includes a year-long overarching theme and three to four units. The theme in sixth grade is “Strength of Character.” This unit focuses on relationships, heroes, and perseverance and determination. In seventh grade, the year-long theme is “The Individual and Society,” with units on self-identity, acceptance, and justice. Finally, in eighth grade the theme for the year is “The Power, Beauty, and Responsibility of an Individual’s Voice.” The units in eighth grade are author study, characters’ voices, the power of memoirs, and individual activism.

We enhanced the Illinois Learning Standards to ensure our students develop a deep understanding of literary concepts, which are necessary for navigating and understanding increasingly complex literature and

nonfiction texts. Instruction includes a combination of whole class explicit teaching, class and small group discussions/activities, and small group instruction. Our curriculum includes whole-class texts and choice texts, with students reading between five and seven extended texts in addition to their independent reading texts each year. Teachers continuously gather data about their students' learning through discussions, formative assessments, standardized assessments, and written work (text analyses and extended writing assignments--narrative, informative, and argumentative pieces). We developed our own middle school writing progressions, which allows students to identify their targets/goals and self-assess their growth. All extended writing pieces are evaluated using the writing progressions. Teachers differentiate instruction based on data and student interests. Technology, particularly our learning management system, is used daily.

Wood Oaks teachers continuously update the texts and concepts taught while remaining true to the overarching framework of the curriculum. We are in the process of developing and implementing plans for ensuring our student population is reflected in our texts. We seek to have diverse voices within our curriculum through the inclusion of more authors and characters from different cultures, backgrounds, and races. At Wood Oaks, we are examining our texts and supplemental reading materials in light of any stereotypes and misrepresentations they present. Our curriculum department is cognizant of the voices heard within a text which voices may not be represented. Through this work, we are building a more inclusive curriculum.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Our math program consists of three math course pathways that emphasize the mathematical practice standards and content standards. Instruction in all courses is driven by the standards. Over the past decade, instructional methods have shifted to increasingly more student-constructed knowledge balanced with direct instruction and guided practice. Additionally, classroom experiences include collaboration and dialogue between students. We believe learning is best achieved through a collaborative learning process, thereby allowing students to verbalize their mathematical thinking, process the mathematical thinking of others, construct mathematical arguments, and critique the reasoning of others. Within our curriculum, students grapple with context-rich problems, which provide relevancy and an opportunity to apply learning. All course pathways provide a rigorous program of learning for students that moves at an appropriate pace, allows for math discourse, challenges students, and ensures success.

The On-Level course pathway aligns with the Illinois grade level standards. Students build a deep mathematical foundation that prepares them for formal algebra as freshmen. Our Accelerated course pathway compresses three years of on-level mathematics into two years and concludes with an extremely rigorous, high school credit-bearing algebra course. Upon entering high school, students enroll in geometry, with many students taking Honors Geometry. Finally, our most advanced course pathway includes a high school credit-bearing algebra course in 7th grade and a high school credit-bearing geometry course in 8th grade. Upon entering high schools, students take Honors Advanced Algebra and eventually take AP Calculus as a junior. Approximately 55% of our students are enrolled in our Accelerated and Honors course pathways. Over the past several years we have developed multiple "entry points" to allow students to move into a more rigorous course pathway throughout their time at Wood Oaks.

Our teachers use formative assessments extensively to monitor student learning and inform their lessons for the next day. They leverage technology to gain real-time feedback about student learning and to provide instructional support for students when at home. Several courses use a robust personalized math program (MATHia) that provides further insight into student learning, allows students to guide and monitor their own learning, and delivers just-in-time instruction. Common assessments are administered at the conclusion of units, and the teachers along with support from the Math/Science Coordinator analyze the data to guide instructional decisions and future curriculum adjustments. This past year we implemented the Learning Renewal Interim Assessment (LRIA), a through-year assessment offered by the Illinois State Board of Education. Because the LRIA allows individual districts to select the standards assessed on each test, we have access to specific data that are highly relevant at that time of each assessment. Teachers deliver laser-focused instruction and activities to move students forward in their math learning.

#### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Over the past four years, we have revised our entire science curriculum to align with the Next Generation Science Standards/Illinois Standards. Because our prior curriculum was grounded in work by Project 2061, a key framework used to develop NGSS, we had a deep understanding of science curricula that builds content knowledge and science process skills. Our units prioritize student inquiry and experimentation. Through this process, students build their scientific knowledge of the natural and man-made world. By incorporating the three dimensions of NGSS (disciplinary core ideas, crosscutting concepts, and science/engineering practices), our students learn how to think and act like scientists. A key goal is for students to be able to apply their learning, particularly crosscutting concepts articulated by NGSS, when they encounter unfamiliar phenomena. By doing so, students are building lifetime habits of mind to observe, wonder, see patterns, and make connections as they go through their daily life as well as when they are engaged in specific scientific learning.

We use formative assessments, often in the form of exit slips, to monitor student learning, inform instruction, and differentiate. Summative assessment questions/tasks are aligned to the standards. Our curriculum includes a number of engaging projects, but the bulk of classroom time is spent doing science. Students design experiments, engage in pre-lab activities, conduct experiments, and analyze data. Every science classroom is a full-functioning lab, which allows multi-day lab experiences along with a high volume of labs throughout the school year. Digital simulations are an important component of our science curriculum. Students use a number of digital simulations to run experiments that are not feasible to do within the constraints of school due to safety, scale/size, time, and costs. Through technology, labs, discussions, and reading, students broaden their scientific knowledge and understanding of the world.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Our social studies curriculum emphasizes a comprehensive understanding of democracy and active citizenship, which is essential to our future as a nation. The Illinois Learning Standards were used to create enduring understandings that drive our curriculum. Throughout the units, students examine issues and history through the lens of geography, economics, culture, and government, with a particular emphasis on citizenship and rights. Learning experiences involve simulations, Socratic seminars, projects, study of primary sources, and document-based questions. Students learn to examine issues from multiple perspectives and see beyond their own personal experiences.

In sixth grade, students study the ways people organized and governed themselves throughout ancient and medieval history. The themes of power, rule of law, role of citizens and citizens' rights are universal threads explored throughout numerous units. We also include a World Religions unit. Students in seventh grade study American history. An important and unique approach within our curriculum is the application of the Constitution throughout every unit; thus, our students develop an appreciation of the relevance and importance of the Constitution. Students take the U.S. Constitution test at this time. Our pinnacle class is our 8th grade Global Studies course. We revise units every summer to ensure that the course reflects present day realities. Students examine global issues through a study of historical roots, which allows us to fulfill the Illinois world history standards in a meaningful way for students. The curriculum uses extensive resources from the high school Choices program by Brown University. Students engage in extensive projects and experiences, which have included working with Carl Wilkens (the last American in Rwanda during the genocide), interviewing immigrants as part of a summit, developing potential solutions to Israeli-Palestinian conflict under the guidance of an expert who has worked with the State department, and completing a service learning project.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

In addition to our core curriculum, we have a year-long physical education program at all levels and provide art, music and applied technology to all students each year. Additionally, students in grades 6 and 8 take a health class, and students in grade 7 take a public speaking course. We offer a robust electives curriculum in the area of STEM and performing arts that is included in the daily schedule. Lastly, our students have an advisory once a week and a weekly study skills class in sixth grade to support their transition to middle school.

Our physical education curriculum is based on the Sport Ed model. In addition to active involvement as players on teams, students assume leadership and instructional roles by serving as coaches, team managers, stats keepers, and referees. Our goal is for students to build their knowledge and skills across different types of sports so that they can be active participants and knowledgeable spectators throughout their lifetimes. Because we believe physical education and activity are essential, we provide health instruction outside of the PE classes.

Our applied technology curriculum expands students' knowledge and skills across many different applications. Students work on independent and collaborative projects, including 3D printing, movie making, coding, and large format printing. Our goal is for students to have a variety of experiences and a wide range of skills that allow them to discern an appropriate tech tool and have enough transferable skills to use any tech application deemed the best for any given project or school assignment. Additionally, we dedicate considerable time to internet safety and make it a priority to help students understand their digital footprint, scams, cyber security, privacy and safety, how to use social media safely, and internet etiquette.

We offer Spanish and French courses, with honors classes in seventh and eighth grade. Students successfully completing the honors program enter Honors Level III language courses at the high school. We focus on all aspects of language development and conduct 90% of the instruction and conversation in the target language, even in our beginning, sixth grade classes.

Our public speaking course is designed to build student confidence and ability to develop and deliver all different types of presentations. These skills become critically important for students as they enter 8th grade and engage in many collaborative, presentation-based activities, especially in social studies.

Within our electives program students can enroll in band, orchestra, chorus, and/or STEAM classes, which include 3D Modeling/Printing, Robotics I & II, Robotics Coding, and Creative Designs (using CAD). Within the STEAM classes, students cycle through the engineering design process as they work on authentic projects. The Robotics II course includes the opportunity to participate in regional, state, and world VEX competitions for qualifying teams. Our performing arts programs build serious and talented musicians who engage in many performances and competitions.

## **3. Academic Supports**

### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Wood Oaks offers a variety of supports for students performing below grade level. For students who are significantly below their peers, self-contained instruction is available at all three grade levels in reading, language arts, and math. If the achievement gap is not as significant, "lab" classes are offered in reading, writing, and math that will provide those students with extra support outside of their normal academic course. The support for writing and math is two days per week and takes place during the elective portion of a student's schedule. The Reading Lab course is offered five days a week and replaces the rotational classes of art, music, technology, and either public speaking or health, depending on grade level. The trade-off for reading lab support is not an insignificant one, but the only way our current schedule structure can provide a daily intensive support that is needed. We are currently looking at alternate ways to schedule that time so that those important courses are not missed.

Wood Oaks also has a multi-tiered system of supports in place for students who are either struggling at a

smaller level or have newly started to demonstrate some issues. Each grade level team meets multiple times each week to discuss student performance and determine if classroom interventions are needed. There is a Tier 1 Intervention Form that they use to document any accommodations or modifications they put in place to support the student and space to document their results. Twice per month, administration and support staff (psychologists, social workers, speech pathologist) meet with the teams to discuss these students and make determinations if any additional support is needed.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Wood Oaks is a very high performing school where a good percentage is performing above the national average at each grade level. Our baseline curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all of our students. With that in mind, there are still students whose performance stands out in comparison to the majority of their grade level peers. In the area of math, we have both an accelerated and double-accelerated pathway that will allow students to reach higher levels of math when they matriculate to high school. We offer a similar pathway in world languages where most students end up in level 2 when they reach high school, our accelerated world language program puts them into level 3 upon graduation.

For higher-level thinkers identified through standardized test scores, parent or teacher recommendations, and the Cognitive Abilities Test, Wood Oaks offers an advanced cohort group known as the Extended Learning Program. This humanities-based program integrates the reading, language arts, and social studies courses. The students meet with the gifted education teachers daily for these three class periods. The students read and discuss novels using the Common Core State Standards as related to the themes developed at each grade level. The students read outstanding literature and engage in small-group as well as whole-class discussions. In addition, students deepen their critical thinking and writing skills as related to the novels and the thematic units. While there is no separate program for students exhibiting higher level science skills, we do counsel those students to join our science fair course or enroll in one of our six STEAM classes to help to develop their engineering or scientific inquiry skills.

### **3c. Special education:**

For students who have qualified for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Wood Oaks has a wide range of services to support the unique needs of these students. For students who are functioning multiple grade levels below their peers, Wood Oaks has a self-contained classroom known as the Extended Resource Program (ERP). Students in the ERP room have a significantly smaller teacher to student ratio than even our other special education classrooms and receive core level academic instruction at their appropriate level. The lead teacher in this classroom creates individualized schedules for these students, allowing them to push into general education classrooms as much as possible throughout their day.

If a student is performing at a level that is only one or two years behind their peers, they will primarily attend general education courses with additional supports in place, but may attend self-contained reading, writing, and/or math classes, as needed. These courses fit into their schedule just as our general education courses do and allows them to seamlessly transition in and out of their special education classes.

Whether a student needs a self-contained classroom or not, a resource period is offered to IEP students that provides a daily 40 minute period where they meet with their case manager. This class is about 8-10 students working with the case manager and an instructional assistant on any of their coursework, IEP goals, or executive functioning skills. This resource period is also where students generally receive any support services like social work or speech.

### **3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

Wood Oaks Junior High School currently only has 10 students (~2%) receiving English Learner (EL) support. While the numbers in the district are a little higher at the younger ages, it is still not a larger number. Part of that is due to our low mobility rate. There is slightly higher mobility at the lower elementary grades, creating the somewhat larger EL population. Our programming at those ages does an excellent job of exiting students from EL support before they ever make it to the junior high school.

For the students who have not placed out of EL support via ACCESS testing, we do have a reading/language arts teacher, who is also certified as an EL teacher, who works with them. Part of that teachers contractual day is left unassigned so that she can provide EL support to those students. When the principal builds student schedules for the year, any student needing EL support is assigned to a reading/LA block first thing in the morning. When the master schedule is constructed, the EL teacher is free during that first and second period block so she can push into those reading classrooms. Students in one grade level are grouped together in one classroom to facilitate this process. At times, the teacher will work with the classroom teacher and pull those EL students out and bring them to her room so she can do more intensive work with them when needed.

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

Currently, Wood Oaks does not have any migrant or homeless students. As a support to our low income families, we do partner with the Village of Northbrook and some of the local businesses and places of worship to provide weekly deliveries of food. The businesses and houses of worship purchase goods and take in donations and then box or bag up those items. Those boxes and bags are then delivered to our school where they are then delivered to those families. It has been a wonderful partnership and a greatly appreciated service to those families.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

Wood Oaks Junior High School is a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) school and a part of the Midwest PBIS Network of schools. We focus on teaching students expected behaviors in all school settings and providing positive reinforcements for their demonstration of those behaviors. We use the acronym ROAR, which stands for respect, ownership, advocacy, and responsibility, to provide continuity across the school. There are signs posted in all public spaces (classrooms, lunchrooms, restrooms, hallways, gyms, etc.) spelling out what it looks like to demonstrate those expected behaviors in each of those spaces. When a staff member sees students demonstrating ROAR at school, they present them with a green ROAR slip. Students can place these in a box in the main office to enter a monthly drawing for gift cards or save them to use at the end of the year ROAR auction. At the end of the year, staff members donate items that we place up for auction, and students bid a number of ROARs to win that item. Over the years, this auction has grown into one of the most exciting events of the year.

With the shift to hybrid learning and then full attendance, but physically distanced, learning, we have adapted the ROAR matrix they are familiar with to be a SAFE matrix. Placing our COVID safety protocols into a visual format that students are used to seeing allowed us to more easily communicate our expectations to them. This is one significant contributing factor to Wood Oaks not having to deal with an outbreak at any time during the pandemic. In fact, there was no evidence that any transmission took place at school, but when students were together outside of school.

In each school year, pandemic or not, we review all of our ROAR expectations with students at the start of the school year in some of the key spaces they visit throughout their day. We also have refreshers after winter break and after spring break as we start the final weeks of the school year and students have a tendency to get a little restless. We have used panels of student leaders to do this on some occasions along with video announcements on our morning broadcast and also through homeroom classes.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

When it comes to establishing partnerships with organizations in the community, the first thing that comes to mind is our partnership with the Hunger Free Northbrook Community Support Organization. This program run through the Village of Northbrook utilizes a variety of resources across the Village to collect food for the low income families in our community. Our specific partner organization is a local place of worship that collects the food donations and bags them up for delivery. Since we have access to family records to know who is in most need for these goods, the school district ensures they are delivered to those who need it.

Wood Oaks and District 27 have been at the forefront of updating emergency preparedness training to the new guidelines established by federal emergency response agencies. We have partnered with a group known as Tier One Tactical who have helped us train our staff in how to respond in the event of an active shooter incident. Guidelines came out that mandated an options-based program and Tier One helped us train our staff on a sensitive topic and guided all of us through the emotions involved with this type of incident. After we received positive feedback from our local law enforcement agencies, we worked with Tier One in bringing our plan to other school districts, park districts, and places of worship. We have been commended by the Village of Northbrook for our work in this area and for sharing it with other organizations.

Prior to the pandemic, our 8th grade class spent time each year on a service trip to Feed My Starving Children. Students and teachers would spend three hours bagging up ingredients for food packs that are delivered to impoverished countries to feed some severely malnourished people. This trip has led to many students making this a more frequent service event through their families or religious organizations.

Wood Oaks administration has a wonderful partnership established with our Parent/Teacher Association (PTA). They are beyond generous in their support of our students and teachers with providing meals for

teachers at different points in the year, donating money to support our PBIS work with students, and providing a gift to the school each year to support our mission. We work with them to create fundraising opportunities by hosting their annual 5k race, coordinating with them to provide hot lunch days for students, and our advertising and attendance at their fundraising nights in the community.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

The main way that Wood Oaks administrators seek to ensure teachers feel valued and supported is by ensuring they have representation at the table as decisions are made so that they know their voice is heard. This was especially true over the past couple of years as we looked at the different learning modes that could get us through the pandemic and the safe return of a full student body to the building. Members of the teachers' union were always at the table as we discussed switching into and out of remote and/or hybrid learning, but panel discussions were also held with the general teaching population so that all teachers could express their concerns and ask questions.

On an ongoing basis, there is a committee at Wood Oaks called the Middle School Committee. This is a committee of staff members from across grades and departments that will study a topic and provide input to administrative decisions that need to be made for the building. In the past, we have studied the building schedule, best practices in grading, and the student handbook. Sometimes these studies span more than one school year. The investment of time spent with this committee of staff members has made any changes that are implemented go much smoother as the teachers on the committee are involved in that rollout.

Each year as we look to create a professional development plan for the following year, a committee is assembled with teachers from across the district along with administrators and curriculum specialists to develop our professional development focus. The teachers on this committee share some of the current areas of need within the school buildings while administrators share some of the topics that are in need of being addressed due to changes coming down from the State Board. The Professional Development Committee takes in all of that information and prioritizes the topics for administration to develop the full professional development plan. The District 27 Board of Education is generous in freeing up all District staff for seven professional development days throughout the year. Principals are also given 10 hours of professional development time after school through five separate PD sessions. It is all of this time combined that allows us to have a robust and timely professional development plan. Understanding the importance PD has in student achievement, we take the commitment to ongoing professional development very seriously.

### **4. School Leadership:**

Wood Oaks Junior High has one building principal and one assistant principal. Both administrators operate with a focus on visibility in the building, collaboration with the entire staff, and the use of data to improve student learning in both the academic and social emotional arenas. There is a commitment made by the administrators to be present in the school building as much as possible when students and/or parents are present. This includes the school day, during evening events, and at open houses and curriculum nights. Establishing collaborative relationships with both the staff and parent communities is a key factor in the ongoing success of our building. In addition to being present in the hallways as much as possible, both the principal and assistant principal frequently visit classrooms, not just as a part of the teacher evaluation process, but just to be present, to gain a better understanding of all that is taking place in the building, and to provide informal feedback to teachers.

Each grade level team and department has a teacher-leader in the role of Team Liaison. This individual runs their team meetings and keeps an agenda of items discussed, both for teachers who may not be able to attend at that time and to keep a record of items to discuss with building administrators. Every other week, the Team Liaisons meet with building administrators to debrief things that happened in the building recently and to prepare for upcoming events. Those veteran teachers are also equipped and empowered to handle many of the questions that come from their team that may not need additional information from the principals.

Twice each month, building administrators meet with the grade level teams and discuss students at that grade level who are in need of additional support. Those meetings, dubbed "SuperTeam," also include social

workers, speech therapists, and psychologists. The Team Liaisons work with the team to implement Tier 1 supports for their students. If those Tier 1 supports are not producing improved performance by those students, they are moved onto the SuperTeam agenda where we look at grades, test data, and the Tier 1 data and look for more intensive ways to support those students.

Throughout the pandemic, the principal and assistant principal roles have shifted in numerous ways. First, due to the dearth of substitute teachers, both of them end up covering classes in order for the building to run. Much more time has also been spent on ensuring that COVID safety protocols are being followed, becoming the primary role for them.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

One of the most powerful ways we help students understand and respect the diversity around them is by holding what has become “Accepting Differences Day.” On this day, students attend a number of 30 minute sessions designed to help them develop empathy. Sessions put students into simulated situations to help them better understand the challenges others face. Simulations include being in an environment where you don’t speak the language, facing visual impairments that impact coordination, and trying to focus amidst many distractions. The last part of the day has recently been a keynote address from paralympian Lloyd Bachrach who speaks about overcoming the challenges of significantly deformed legs to compete in gymnastics and medal in the paralympic games.

Another significant event held annually at Wood Oaks is the Immigration Summit. On this day, members of our school community come to the building and tell their story of emmigration to the U.S. Many of these stories involve layers of hardship and sacrifice. When students see the faces of people they know and hear these stories, it gives them an excellent perspective into how fortunate they are. Similar lessons are taught in our weekly advisory class that all Wood Oaks students take each year. Included along with the many social emotional learning topics, students learn about the importance of being respectful of all individuals and to remember that everyone has their own burden to bear.

While Wood Oaks staff members attempt to avoid many of the hot button issues that become part of the political process, we do understand the importance of helping students find the truth in what they hear. The past five or six years has been an especially difficult time to walk the line of neutrality in the political arena. Specifically, the social studies department does an excellent job of navigating those conversations. Great lengths are taken to present both sides of any social issue and help students not only understand their own developing beliefs, but to be respectful to those with different beliefs. One of the most powerful ways they do this is through Socratic seminars, allowing students to speak freely and represent the facts around the issue and find a way to coexist with different opinions.

When a specific situation presents itself that has an adverse impact on a group in our school community, Wood Oaks will try to serve as a conduit for information and guide that group to ways they can get the support they need.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The one practice that has been most instrumental to the success Wood Oaks has enjoyed would have to be our commitment to embracing the PBIS structures in all that we do. This has been a substantial addition to our culture since the last time we were honored with this recognition, and we are a better school now than we were at that time. PBIS makes it a priority to explicitly teach students the desired expectations and reward them when those behaviors are observed. With those structures now being ingrained in our culture, students have come to expect having desired outcomes laid out for them so they know how to achieve success. Having those structures in place across all environments not only helps with the school climate and culture, but academically as well. As a direct result of implementing PBIS within our school, we have expanded our support for students by offering structured homework support, social-academic instructional groups for students needing executive functioning intervention, and transition support for students new to our school. These additional academic supports have added to the overall success of all our students.

The familiarity with the PBIS structures also helped both our staff and students maintain our high learning standards through the COVID-19 pandemic. We created our COVID safety protocols and communicated them in the same format as our existing PBIS expectations. Doing this provided some familiarity for both staff and students and allowed everyone to understand their responsibilities in running a safe school. Having clear communication of these safety protocols allowed us to have students in the building for significantly more time than many of our surrounding districts and to not deal with any COVID outbreaks during the pandemic.

Most importantly, as we currently deal locally and nationally with a growing number of students who are facing mental health challenges, the PBIS structures at Wood Oaks lets students know they have an environment that cares for them and that they can count on. The strong, caring environment created through clear expectations and positive reinforcement provides students with a safe space to explore and learn. Even as the nation worked its way through the pandemic, Wood Oaks students knew they were in a place where they were cared for and appreciated. We have had multiple outside speakers come to Wood Oaks to present over the years. Almost without fail, they comment on how obvious the positive culture is in our building. They visit so many places that they share they can pick up quickly on the culture in the building and that Wood Oaks is unlike other places they visit.