

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Minnetonka West Middle School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6421 Hazeltine Boulevard
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Excelsior State MN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 55331-8028

County Carver County

Telephone (952) 401-5300 Fax n/a

Web site/URL
<https://www.minnetonkaschools.org/schools/middle-schools/mmw> E-mail freya.schirmacher@minnetonkaschools.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. Dennis Peterson E-mail dennis.peterson@minnetonkaschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Minnetonka School District Tel. (952) 401-5000

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. Chris Vitale
(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

The electronic signature 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 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not 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 as of October 1, 2020 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	211	204	415
7	191	200	391
8	235	207	442
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	637	611	1248

*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):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3.5 % Asian
 - 2.8 % Black or African American
 - 5.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 82.8 % White
 - 5.2 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 2%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	15
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	23
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	1254
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

Arabic, Cambodian/Khmer, Chinese, Finnish, Korean, Liberian/Krio, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
14 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4 %

Total number students who qualify: 50

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %

164 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 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

33 Autism

35 Multiple Disabilities

5 Deafness

3 Orthopedic Impairment

0 Deaf-Blindness

47 Other Health Impaired

0 Developmental Delay

46 Specific Learning Disability

25 Emotional Disturbance

26 Speech or Language Impairment

0 Hearing Impairment

0 Traumatic Brain Injury

4 Intellectual Disability

1 Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1

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.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	51
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	23
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	25
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	7

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 22:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	91%	91%	91%	91%
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 2020.

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.

At Minnetonka Middle School West, each and every student will experience belonging, connection, and challenge; inspiring extraordinary achievement in the classroom and in life.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

We started the year with a Hybrid Program (students in-person twice a week) and a separate, optional eLearning program. When COVID cases rose in November, we transitioned to full eLearning for all students. We resumed Hybrid learning in January and moved to full in-person (4 days per week) in March of 2021. Wednesdays are eLearning days for all, with an adjusted schedule and time for academic support. Throughout all of the transitions, we have maintained the separate eLearning program. The eLearning program has dedicated teachers and a separate schedule.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

Minnetonka Middle School West (MMW) is situated in the city of Excelsior, located in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. We draw students from the ten municipalities within our district boundaries, which range from the Lake Minnetonka area to more rural Carver County. Through open enrollment, we also draw one-third of our students from the broader Twin Cities area, establishing a student body with a diverse range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Unifying our physical and individual diversities, we maintain strong community relations by focusing on our core beliefs of high expectations, enriching opportunities, and focused support. We are fortunate to partner with engaged and active families that share this philosophy.

Our school community is characterized by an unapologetic commitment to the comprehensive success of each and every student. At MMW, we embody the district's commitment to a school experience that "transcends traditional definitions of excellence." We recognize that excellence is not just about test scores and grades: Our mission is to inspire and support the individual student, to build up their strengths, support their passions, and intervene where academic scaffolding is needed.

The MMW community is invested in this mission. Parents, students, and staff demonstrate a remarkable amount of care in all that we do. Our goal is to ensure that all students feel included and experience a strong sense of belonging. We know that high achievement is rooted in strong and intentional teacher/student relationships where students feel seen, valued, and capable. As you will note throughout this application, MMW's story is one of partnership with families, teachers, and staff, characterized by a no-excuses approach to each student's individual success and school-wide excellence.

We believe in offering a wide range of curricular and extracurricular opportunities so that students can explore their interests and discover their strengths. Students are able to pursue their appropriate level of challenge in math, English language arts, social studies, and science classes. In these core areas, we offer grade-level, honors, and accelerated options, as well as alternative programming if needed. Students have elective options including coding, Family and Consumer Science (FACS), music, technology education, and Spanish and Chinese Immersion. We support innovation in our building with our Maker Space resources, Student Innovation Teams, and Design for Learning, where teachers work with students and the Human Centered Design process to reimagine the learning environment.

We are committed to maintaining high expectations and providing high levels of support. These supports include a staffed testing center, morning teacher-facilitated tutoring sessions, as well as weekly Minnetonka Academic Support Time (MAST) where students can get targeted help from their teachers. For those students needing additional support in reading and math, we build time for focused instruction into their schedules. We have an Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) Learning Lab that focuses specifically on building up organizational and executive functioning skills. We also provide Wilson Reading Intervention, including Just Words to build up students' foundational reading skills. Knowing that these supports remove barriers to learning, we continue to work hard to ensure that these options are fully available in both virtual and in-person formats.

Throughout this unprecedented pandemic, MMW students and staff have modeled flexibility and creativity to keep connected. Students have created a live news show which promotes and celebrates our community and builds common school culture, even when learning from home. MMW offers twenty-six different extracurricular opportunities, most of which have adapted to virtual or hybrid settings, including sports like Tennis, Track, and Golf as well as Theater, Baking, Minecraft Club, and Mathletes. For students learning at home, Student Government has initiated lunch-time social groups, where students can choose to join a GoogleMeet to build connections with students that have similar interests. Some student leadership opportunities include Student Government, MMW VIBE team (Valuing Inclusion, Belonging, and Equity), Junior First Mates, and the Student Ambassador program, which provides opportunities for students to support and mentor new students.

In summary, our work is grounded in the core belief that learning is rooted in strong and nurturing relationships, especially important during these challenging times. These foundational relationships ensure

that students, teachers, and families feel and stay connected to our school community throughout the changes that this year has brought. As we have pivoted between e-learning, hybrid, and in-person learning, teachers have continued to hold students accountable to high standards, while at the same time demonstrating flexibility and offering multiple supports to meet the complex student needs which have emerged during COVID-19. This year has been humbling. We have made many mid-stream adjustments, but continue to learn from one another and model resilience, grit, innovation, and problem solving so that our students continue to be challenged, nurtured, and supported.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Minnetonka Middle School West is proud to offer a wide variety of learning opportunities for our students. Our goal is to provide rigorous academic options so that students are appropriately challenged, and highly supported so that they experience success. We adhere to academic standards developed by the Minnesota Department of Education and use the backward-mapping “Understanding by Design” process to focus on essential learning, common performance-based assessments, and engaging learning experiences.

Teachers utilize the Minnetonka Instructional Framework to design learning experiences specifically tailored for their individual students. Collaborative groups of teachers use Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to consider assessment data and devise student learning goals to answer “What do we want students to learn? and How will we know when they have learned?” PLCs collaborate to analyze student work, common assessments, and evidence of student engagement.

We use varied assessments including nationally normed assessments, statewide assessments, and world language immersion testing to monitor progress of our students as they move from elementary schools to high school. Used in tandem with common performance-based assessments, the data obtained informs educators about what students know and are ready to learn next.

Our consistent focus remains on providing world-class academics, arts, and authentic learning experiences to all our students. Core course content is personalized with tiered instruction commensurate with each student’s zone of proximal development in mind.

Our Spanish and Chinese immersion students receive instruction in the targeted language during two core classes. In addition to an immersion language arts course, each grade level social studies course is taught in Spanish and Chinese.

Mathematics classes are aligned with student learning readiness. Placement is determined by standardized assessment results and classroom performance. Students may be on grade level, single, double, or triple accelerated through their mathematics courses.

In addition to our traditional core courses, each content area offers an honors level. Our Advanced Learner program provides courses to challenge and engage students in greater depth of knowledge and complexity while developing critical thinking skills. Honors English Language Arts students read classical and modern literature, develop robust vocabulary, and practice speaking and writing for diverse audiences.

Our three-year accelerated science program allows students to focus on inquiry and project-based learning while studying chemistry, physics, and life and earth science. MMW’s Honors Integrated Humanities programs is designed to meet the unique needs of exceptional readers and critical thinkers. Students learn about ancient and current civilizations, Minnesota and United States history, literature, and philosophy.

Similarly student-centered, our support courses provide small group direct instruction to students needing additional support in language arts, mathematics, and study skills. MMW staff have been working tirelessly to adapt and improve the experiences of all learners during the challenges of distance learning. In March of 2020, the school moved to an e-learning model. Students connected to daily courses by joining Schoology meetings and Google Meets on district-issued iPads. The community responded quickly to ensure all staff and students had reliable access to internet connection.

We learned by surveying our stakeholders in the Spring of 2020 how we might improve our distance learning model. Feedback indicated that switching to a block schedule with longer periods and fewer transitions provides greater opportunities for students while minimizing stress. Similarly, we identified tools and techniques such as developing consistent Google Meet codes and predictable Schoology pages, to mitigate challenges. During the summer, we refined our practice of working with families and staff to develop a menu of supports ready for the return of students in August.

In August, we offered our families the option of learning online or participating in a hybrid learning model. MMW students who select online learning attend classes led by instructors who are expressly interested and trained in providing online students with optimal experiences. The hybrid learning plan includes two teams of students with each team attending classes both in person for two days a week and remotely via streaming instruction for the other two days. One day a week, all classes are taught online with a “skinny schedule” which allows everyone an extra hour of academic support. Online classroom experiences for e-learners and hybrid learners often include small breakout rooms where students can learn with each other in a collaborative virtual environment.

Teachers in all disciplines leverage instructional technology tools. Using formative assessment tools allow teachers to make timely instructional decisions. A myriad of iPad curated applications such as Pear Deck, Class Kick and Padlet, allow teachers to engage students in personalized authentic assessments and provide feedback whether they are in person or learning from home.

Training for all staff in best practices for online and hybrid instruction improved teacher efficacy in delivering curriculum. Technology support specialists routinely conduct intensive and ongoing training and one-on-one support for all staff. Teachers modify learning activities and assessments to best suit the learning model. Counselors create support services for students who experience learning difficulties during distance learning. Teachers have collaborated with their PLCs to develop assessments that allow students to demonstrate their learning in new and engaging ways, including creating menus of options for personalized projects with common rubrics demonstrating essential learnings.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

MMW takes great care to develop college and career readiness experiences that focus on personal discovery and opening pathways for students. The curriculum includes personalized assessments, lessons, and opportunities to discover oneself, spark leadership skills, and make connections to potential careers. In 2020-2021, we committed to not only continue to excel in career readiness, but use the challenge of the pandemic to expand how to connect and share this information.

Each grade level focuses on a developmental area of exploration using Naviance Student to build personalized electronic portfolios. Self-reflection begins in grade six with the Learning Styles Inventory and discovering how each student learns best. In grade seven, the Strengths Explorer helps students see their unique value and recognize how that benefits the world and themselves. Grade eight culminates with the Career Key assessment, career research, high school and post-secondary planning activities, and meetings with both middle and high school counselors.

Counseling and technology integration staff collaborated to create experiences for all students that expanded these activities during the COVID pandemic. Using tools such as FlipGrid, EdPuzzle, Kahoot!, and Schoology, these activities became virtual with near 100% engagement and rewarding feedback. The final experience is large-scale Career Day that asks students to explore and actively reflect on potential pathways and how those relate to high school courses. This year’s Career Day became a day long virtual event with almost 50 speakers and wonderful feedback from the students and community.

Running parallel to the curriculum are opportunities to develop civic responsibilities that align with careers. Student Ambassadors, Junior First Mates, Student Government, Service Club, VIBE (Valuing Inclusion Belonging & Equity), and the News Show showcase emerging leadership. Care is taken to empower students to thoughtfully select courses. Honors/accelerated courses and electives in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), FACS, arts, health, and world languages, also allow students to personalize their journey and spark avocations.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

MMW is committed to providing students multiple opportunities to pursue their passions through a variety of academic programs beyond the core subject areas. We offer our students a broad range of curricular experiences including world language, physical education and health, fine arts and drama, family and consumer science, computer science, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) courses. These options have remained in place throughout the changes due to COVID-19.

MMW values our comprehensive exposure to the fine arts. Students can pursue interests in band, orchestra, choir, classroom/general music, drama, and visual arts. All sixth and seventh grade students select a music elective and each student has one quarter of visual arts. Eighth grade students have the additional opportunity to take a full semester of art electives, including Art and Design, 3D Art and Design, and Drawing and Painting, Introduction to Drama and Creative Writing.

We also recognize the importance of health and physical education as a lifelong learning skill. We require a grade level physical education course for all students at least every other day. These courses are designed to enhance students' interest and participation in lifetime fitness activities and a variety of lifetime sports. All students also participate in required health classes. These courses are designed to empower students to make healthy life-long decisions that influence self, family, and community.

In addition to our core Language Immersion programs in Chinese and Spanish, we also offer a range of language acquisition options. Seventh grade students can choose to take a quarter-length course which provides a basic introduction to German, French or Spanish. Following this, students can choose to take French I, German I, or Spanish I in eighth grade. These courses are designed to provide a solid foundation for more intensive language study in high school.

From the first year of middle school, we ignite students' interest in STEM through our highly interactive, hands-on, project-based STEM course. Each learning activity is designed to emphasize collaborative learning, critical and analytical thinking, problem solving, creativity and effective experimental design. In addition to 6th grade STEM and Tech Ed in seventh grade, we offer STEM related electives including Physical Computing, Woods, App Development, Games and Animation and Computer Science Foundations.

Each of these courses has made adaptations to accommodate adjustments related to COVID-19. For example, instrumental music students at home play along to a recorded track to stay in sync. For Robotics, e-learning students have checked out their own Lego Robots to take home so they can follow along with in-person students. For foods, we have had to redesign our food labs to accommodate six foot spacing and reduce shared materials. Online Foods students can pick up meal "kits" to make at home and follow along with their in-person counterparts. For the Woods class, we pre-cut pieces for students to assemble and work on at home. In all courses, we have had to reexamine what performance means, how we assess, and how we measure authentic learning. These adjustments have been made at every "pivot" in our learning models. Teachers have commented that they have surprised themselves with their flexibility and creative problem solving.

3. Academic Supports:

We believe that optimal learning takes place when students are appropriately challenged and appropriately supported. MMW uses multiple data points including the NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association), MCA (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments), and formal writing prompts, to help personalize instruction for students' academic needs.

Individual students who need additional support can take specialized courses in targeted reading, math and study skills. To determine need, we review all students who score below 50% on a standardized test. Comprehensive Language Arts and Comprehensive Math classes support students who are not projected to meet state standards and/or have identified emerging skills. Study Skills provides support in mastering foundational success skills including organization, test taking,

and self-advocacy. We also offer Just Words, a Tier 2 reading decoding and spelling intervention and the Wilson Reading System as an intervention for students with word-level deficits who need a more explicit reading program.

Students who need additional rigor and challenge are placed in criteria-based advanced learning courses including Accelerated/Honors Science, Honors Language Arts/Humanities, Honors Global Studies and Advanced Math. Additionally, identified Advanced Learners participate in a Seminar designed to engage gifted learners' critical and creative thinking skills.

Additional interventions meeting diverse learning needs include the following: drop-in math support, small group testing, targeted homework support during lunches and non-school days, MAST time on Wednesdays, ADHD Learning Lab, Learning Ally benefiting students with dyslexia, Newsela, IXL and Study Island, Brightwatch (after-school study session) and counselor supports.

To close the achievement gap of the sixth grade Black, non-Hispanic subgroup, counselors reviewed data for each student at or below grade level and made sure each individual had a targeted intervention. This may have been an academic intervention/plan, and/or students were included in our relationship focused Student-Teacher mentoring program.

To close the achievement gap of the special education subgroup, the Alternative Math and Reading courses target students with math and reading disabilities and/or those who are significantly performing below grade level. Math and literacy instruction is tailored to fill learning gaps while aligning with MN grade-level standards. Additional academic support classes offered based on IEP goals to address academic gaps include Writing, Reading and Math Skills.

To close the achievement gap of the ELL subgroup, all ELL students enroll in English language resource class. This course builds language acquisition through listening, speaking, reading, and writing and supports students in their content area classes. ELL staff modify lessons, assignments, and assessments to appropriate English levels for each student's proficiency. In addition, ELL students with ACCESS 2.0 reading proficiency scores of 4.5 or below receive accommodations on the NWEA and MCA math and science tests.

Minnetonka's homeless student liaison works with Student Support to identify students. The district provides transportation to/from school and free lunches for these students. MMW offers extra food at school and weekend bags of sundries, clothing, hygiene, and school supplies. We also connect families to free/low cost doctor's visits, eyeglasses, dental work, and therapy (including transportation). MMW works with agencies that help highly mobile families find stable housing. During the pandemic, MMW offered free childcare for any student during mandatory distance learning.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Relational academic support is critical to students' academic, social, and emotional growth. MMW builds in layers of safety nets so that no student slips through the cracks. Every student has a staff advisor with whom they check-in weekly.

Counselors also identify students who need additional support with class work to Study Lunch sessions, which take place both in-person and online. Minnetonka Academic Support Time (MAST) provides weekly time so students can get focused instruction or help from teachers. Targeted students are invited to complete work in-person or on-line with 30+ paraprofessionals on Wednesday afternoons and non-school days. We offer drop-in math tutoring every morning. The ADHD Learning Lab supports executive functioning skills. The testing center provides online and in-person accommodations for our students with anxiety. Finally, during full eLearning, MMW offered childcare to any student needing in-person support. More than 80 students were at school, working in supervised learning pods.

During COVID-19, students need new ways to engage, motivate, and grow while acknowledging feelings of isolation and worry. Friendship, grief, and emotional support groups meet virtually, co-located therapy blooms online, and adult-student mentoring programs continue. Student Government hosts a virtual connections lobby, and extracurriculars meet in-person and online. Our administration, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), Women of Color club, counselors, and climate paraprofessionals partner to highlight diversity through student-led educational and creative arts celebrations. The VIBE (Valuing Inclusion Belonging & Equity) advisory team meets with students and parents to seek feedback and brainstorm improvements in our climate and inclusion. Finally, this year we launched the MMW Full Sail Awards honoring students for kindness, tenacity, positivity, humor, growth, and leadership.

School counselors are spearheading support for emotional well-being, including online drop-in times, in-person and virtual calm rooms, a student-focused mental health repository, and materials to address attendance, stress-reduction, social media norms. They developed targeted advisory lessons focused on anti-bullying, belonging, and reducing the stigma around mental health and self-care.

We added to our daily schedule a 15-minute Check & Connect time focused on community and connection. This time each morning nurtures in-person student-teacher relationships. The e-learning team also facilitates a virtual live check and connect time focused on positive mindset, physical stretching, humor. Student Ambassadors provide tours and connections for new students. Our peer mentoring program includes Student Ambassadors, who partner with new students, and our Junior First Mates, eighth grade leaders who mentor incoming sixth grade students.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Research and experience confirm that students do better in school when families and the community are engaged and actively committed to student success. MMW's approach to building and maintaining these relationships is grounded in frequent and open two-way communication with families and offering multiple opportunities for service and connection with community partners.

One example of this partnership is the MMW Parent-Teacher Organization (MMW PTO). The MMW PTO is composed of parent volunteers who partner with the school to support teachers and students. The PTO sponsors multiple fundraisers and works closely with the school to disperse these funds to support multiple school activities, including special teacher projects or grants. For example, for Black History Month this year, the PTO sponsored a virtual Creative Arts Exhibition and purchased close to 100 books for our media center. Adjusting to COVID-19 limitations, the PTO has adapted live events, such as the PTO-sponsored eighth grade Career day, to an all virtual event so that our e-learners and hybrid learners could fully participate.

Additionally, MMW has a strong history of prioritizing community service. Each year, middle school students demonstrate their commitment to the community through volunteer service, many earning honors through the President's Volunteer Service Award program. The MMW Service Club is an extra-curricular offering for students who want to give back to our community and beyond. With COVID, this group now meets virtually. Despite the limitations of social distancing, this group has led incredible projects this year. For example, this group partnered with a local organization, Resource West, to provide holiday gifts to many families experiencing need. When students are giving back to the community, they become more invested in the experiences of others and they are empowered to seek out ways to make their world a better place.

MMW also values our close relationships with student well-being community partners. In order to provide necessary mental health support for students who may otherwise have barriers to access, we maintain ongoing partnerships with student-centered organization, such as Relate Counseling Services and Tree House. Although many of these services are now virtual, they are an essential connection point for students needing social and emotional support. MMW also works closely with the district-community collaborative organization, Tonka Cares. Tonka Cares promotes student health and well-being education and awareness. This year, it has sponsored many educational webinars and events designed for middle school students and parents, covering the topics of student mental health, anxiety, and health and well-being.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Minnetonka Middle School West's approach to professional growth and development is intended to model approaches that work best for learning. It is flexible and supportive of teachers' varying needs and experiences. This starts with incoming teachers and the support systems that they can count on when starting or continuing their careers here. We accommodate our teachers' needs and goals, and when it comes to professional learning, we emphasize teacher choice and meaningful learning opportunities, and teachers have responded by developing new and exciting learning opportunities for students.

MMW welcomes new staff every year with a support network intended to ensure their first year is successful. Though the support network varies depending on teachers' past experiences, all teachers are paired with one-to-one mentors, and enjoy the support of a building mentor, administrators, as well as extremely collaborative colleagues from around the building. The induction process for most new teachers lasts three years.

Our approach to professional learning was developed by our Building Instructional Leadership Team based on months of research, discussion, and planning. We call our model "Personalized Professional Learning." In this model, teachers are put in the driver's seat in determining what they need to learn to improve their students' learning experiences and outcomes. Each year, teachers plan what they will learn and how this will impact their students' learning and well-being. Teachers' learning goals range from culturally responsive teaching to social emotional learning to use of technologies in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with colleagues with similar goals and plans; and, the school supports teachers with resources, time, and space to learn, collaborate, strategize, and reflect on their growth throughout the year. We celebrate that growth in May in a large share out, which additionally serves as a springboard for the following year.

With such a robust and flexible model for professional learning, MMW was up to the challenge as we were forced to quickly change our models to a distance learning model and then to a hybrid model. With the support of technology instructional leaders, administrators, and our instructional leadership team, we quickly set up learning experiences, ranging from workshops to networking opportunities to learn and practice the new technologies we would require and to collaborate on troubleshooting problems faced by the new teaching models. Key to all this was guaranteeing teachers had time to collaborate and adapt to their new situations, and administrators made that possible.

4. School Leadership:

At Minnetonka Middle School West, we are committed to a culture of student-centered, distributive leadership that is focused on the academic achievement and social-emotional development of each and every student. The heart of our leadership model resides in the classroom, where teachers are the front-line leaders of classroom learning. All other leadership structures exist to ensure that this learning is ultimately successful.

At MMW, our leadership structure starts with a building principal and assistant principal. The principal's role is that of the "learning leader" of the building. She oversees the staffing, professional development and growth, and evaluation of teachers, and is ultimately responsible for the academic achievement of all students. The principal also develops and leads communication to teachers and staff and with families and the community. She oversees academic programming, innovation and is the direct liaison to the district central office and the superintendent.

The assistant principal's primary responsibility is that of the operation of the building. This includes overseeing registration and student and teacher scheduling. The assistant principal ensures the safety and security of the building. She leads the counseling department and special services, and addresses student management issues. The assistant principal manages any student behavior issues and leads our team of supervisory paras who all act to support and promote positive student behavior and a safe and supportive school climate throughout the school day.

MMW is also supported by several teams of teacher-leaders with specialized roles. Teacher Instructional Coaches observe teacher lessons and support the teacher's growth and development. The Technology coach leads the implementation of classroom instructional technology by providing building professional development and 1:1 training and coaching. Our Department Chairs serve on the Building Instructional Leadership Team, guiding decisions on assessment practices, professional development, and building problem-solving. Other building leadership teams include our Operations Committee and the Minnetonka Teachers' Association leadership team.

In light of the changes due to COVID-19, our leadership theme this year has been "Clear is Kind and Consistency is Key." In all our staff meetings, emails, communications, and conversations, we have focused on being as clear as possible about what we know, what to expect, and also what we do not know yet. Actively seeking out the concerns and ideas of teachers and staff has also been crucial in understanding what we are all experiencing and what adaptations we need to make to ensure a safe and successful learning experience for everyone. We are all still learning, and this year we are continuously modeling humility, flexibility, patience, and care.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

All students know they are welcome and honored as essential members of Minnetonka Middle School West. All adults share this commitment, from our teaching and paraprofessional staff to our PTO, to activities leaders. This commitment starts with incoming students and their families and extends throughout their careers with us and in all aspects of their school experience.

MMW sets a high standard for the respect and inclusion of all members of our school community, and students learn about these expectations starting when they first arrive at MMW. Our induction process for students is carried out by staff and student volunteers. Student volunteers, MMW Junior First Mates, work with incoming sixth graders before school starts, using team building activities and reflections to help students feel more prepared for middle school; these lessons continue throughout the year.

Advisory is used for setting expectations by our staff for all students. With the help of a team of curriculum writers, teachers are able to hold weekly lessons focused on student wellbeing, anti-bullying, and citizenship lessons.

Our teachers are dedicated to making sure all students feel seen in our curriculum. As a school, we have held opportunities to learn more about and reflect on our biases and how we can be more aware of these to improve our instructional practices. In department meetings, teachers examine how to make the curriculum more inclusive, share ideas, and collaborate on learning opportunities in which students can learn from multiple perspectives from around the community and beyond. Teachers have opportunities to collaborate and receive support from administrators on how to address current events and social movements around the world, from celebrations of underrepresented people and histories to the challenges we face as a nation.

Our cultural responsiveness extends into our co-curricular activities. MMW students have opportunities to join a variety of clubs, including student government which has moved to a model that promotes inclusion by giving more students from diverse backgrounds opportunities to lead our school. Students are also encouraged to propose new clubs to address their interests and passions. In all clubs, students are able to take part in supporting our school's inclusiveness. Initiatives clubs have included working to help all students feel welcome and accepted by peers and celebrating our diverse student population during officially recognized commemorations. Other clubs create spaces for students to share their experiences and support each other and to advocate for themselves and others.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At MMW, we believe that Personalization is the primary practice that enables us to successfully navigate the challenges facing students and families during COVID-19.

Strong personal relationships with all students and families is the foundational element of all that we do, especially in these unprecedented times. This core value provides the ability to adapt and develop additional layers of proactive support based on student needs. Each student is seen, heard, and supported; this ensures all of our students' success.

We are proud of our response to the ever-evolving COVID-related circumstances by pivoting quickly and adapting existing interventions to meet students' individual and unique needs. Our first priority was to connect with students who we were not engaging virtually. Our building leaned into innovative thinking and connected staff support for students who had fallen behind. Paraprofessionals worked with small groups in-person and virtually to support student learning and help them organize and stay motivated. Other personalized interventions include study lunch, advisory grade checks, comp and study skills classes, the testing center, and open teacher time where students can get individual support. All of this is done with a focus on building student relationships so that we know them as individuals and can proactively respond to their needs.

Our staff has been able to personalize the student experience through the use of technology in new and innovative ways. This would not have been possible without the intentional integration of new tools, such as video conferencing, screencasting, and real-time formative assessment tools. We leveraged Schoology (LMS) with a focus on the user experience and consistency as important elements of equitable access for all. The instructional technology team provided formal and informal learning opportunities as well as consistent drop-in tutoring, which works to ensure our teachers were ready and equipped to support all students.

Knowing the difficulties we have all faced this year, our staff has learned to look out and care for one another, becoming a truly supportive and caring community. Several staff groups support our mutual wellbeing. Virtual Staff meetings allow space to questions, get updates, and connect with one another. Sunshine Club continues to celebrate staff milestone events and promote positive social opportunities, such as Virtual Trivia Night and Morale Pals. In addition to these social wellness initiatives, our Wellness Committee engages staff by providing online exercise classes, virtual team walking challenge, recipes, and healthy snacks. Staff well-being and connectedness are critically important to our learning success at MMW. We are able to guide students through their middle school life with a personalized pathway that includes social emotional growth, academic experiences, and opportunities to inspire the best version of themselves.