

U.S. Department of Education
2023 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. Lynn Baldus
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name St. Ansgar High School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 206 East 8th Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City St. Ansgar State IA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 50472-1462

County Mitchell

Telephone (641) 713-4720 Fax (641) 713-2449

Web site/URL https://www.stacsd.org E-mail lbaldus@stacsd.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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Michael Crozier E-mail mcrozier@stacsd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name St Ansgar Community School District Tel. (641) 713-4720

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Steve Groth
(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.

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

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 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 2023 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 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) 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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
1 Middle/Junior high schools
1 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, 2022 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 Students |
|----------------|---------------|
| PreK | 0 |
| K | 0 |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 |
| 6 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 |
| 8 | 0 |
| 9 | 45 |
| 10 | 41 |
| 11 | 42 |
| 12 or higher | 37 |
| Total Students | 165 |

*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):
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90 % White
 - 1 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: ≤1%

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

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

| Steps For Determining Mobility Rate | Answer |
|--|--------|
| (1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year | 0 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year | 1 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 1 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 | 159 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | <.01 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | <1 |

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

Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 26 %

Total number students who qualify: 43

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 9 %
Total number of students served 15

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 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>4</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>14</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 2 %
Total number of students served: 4

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 10

11. 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 | 1 |
| Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 17 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 2 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 3 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 2 |

12. 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 10:1

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

| Required Information | 2021-2022 | 2020-2021 | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance | 96% | 97% | 96% | 96% | 96% |
| High school graduation rate | 100% | 100% | 93% | 100% | 100% |

14. **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 2022.

| Post-Secondary Status | |
|---|-----|
| Graduating class size | 37 |
| Enrolled in a 4-year college or university | 30% |
| Enrolled in a community college | 58% |
| Enrolled in career/technical training program | 2% |
| Found employment | 5% |
| Joined the military or other public service | 5% |
| Other | 0% |

15. 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.

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

To provide the highest quality education in a secure, positive, and challenging environment, empowering all students to reach their full potential.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.stacsd.org>

(Located at the bottom of the school web page.)

18. **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

Demographically, St. Ansgar is a small town in northern Iowa, with a population of approximately 1,100 people. Our public school district covers approximately 229 square miles and includes students from many small, surrounding communities. We are a rural community with a strong agricultural link, and as is the case in many rural areas, the school is the hub of our community.

Even with a broad school district encompassing several small towns, the community rallies around the school. Academic and extracurricular events are well attended. We travel well, bringing large crowds on the road. Community members routinely show up in droves to support school projects. If we are hosting a home track meet, dozens of community members volunteer their time to help the event run smoothly. In recent years, we have been updating school facilities. We have had dozens of community members show up for projects that range from moving and assembling bleachers to laying sod to helping build new dugouts.

There are many small districts with similar demographics, but it is difficult to describe to others what makes our community so special. As a community, we rally around those around us in need. Picture a whole gym packed with people wearing pink when one of our teachers gets diagnosed with cancer. When one of our students has an illness where she has to move out of state to get treatment, families step in to donate money, create meal trains, and send weekly cards to remind this student that her St. Ansgar family cares. We look out for one another. When the school closed temporarily at the end of the 2020 school year due to COVID-19, we, as a school district, found ways to help our local families. We provided meals at no cost to the students, and even offered a delivery system for those unable to travel. We know and care about our families, and our families support us in turn.

A large part of what makes our school district successful is we focus on the whole student. We have high expectations for academic achievement and citizenship. We recognize the importance of social-emotional development, and we provide necessary scaffolding in all areas. Our Success Center coordinator does a terrific job working with teachers to support students at risk of failing. He finds students and holds them accountable for their learning, offering support and working to meet subject area standards. We partner with a local community college for students eager for postsecondary-level learning. We utilize a social-emotional learning curriculum, and our students have become accustomed to discussing social-emotional topics. We have a group therapy session for students, and our students feel comfortable going to the school counselor.

Because we are a small school, everyone wears a lot of “hats.” Our students are often multi-sport athletes, and the captain of the football team might also be the lead in the school play. Our teachers have multiple preps and see students in a number of capacities outside of the regular classroom. They step up and volunteer to lead activities because they want to provide students with the best possible opportunities. Student learning does not begin and end with the classroom; athletics, fine arts, FCCLA, FFA, Battle of the Books, Physics Olympics, State Economics Challenge, all contribute to the whole student, and that list goes on and on. Any event or activity that our students are involved in is a chance for our students and staff to work together to grow our learning.

We understand we share a responsibility with the home and the community for the educational, physical, emotional, and social development of each child in our district. With graduation rates of 99-100%, St. Ansgar Community School District is committed to preparing graduates who are well prepared to expand their abilities at institutions of higher education or in today's technologically advanced workplace. That is what makes St. Ansgar such a great school. Students who feel safe and connected to school are more likely to succeed and grow to their fullest potential, which is what we strive for each and every day.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Our high school English language arts curriculum encourages students to build upon their existing knowledge of language and literature to improve their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

Students have the opportunity to read various types of literature throughout their schooling at St. Ansgar High School. Our first three years of English courses are required and divided by grade level. In English 9 & 10, students read a combination of short stories, whole-class novels, poetry, and Shakespearean plays, emphasizing literary devices, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension. Our English 11 class emphasizes American Literature from authors including Lorraine Hansberry, Toni Morrison, Arthur Miller, John Steinbeck, and others, and combines fictional selections with non-fiction sources (such as John Hersey's *Hiroshima*) to encourage students to apply their knowledge of literature to other contexts. For example, while reading *Hiroshima*, students analyze multiple perspectives and resources to determine the ethics of the use of atomic weapons in World War II, aligning with the corresponding U.S. History curricular unit. Students are assessed through writing and public speaking, where we hold a formal class debate over the topic.

In addition to our required courses, students are encouraged to strengthen their English skills through our elective courses: Novels, Film & Literature, Character Education & Leadership, English 12, Speech, Graphic Novels, and Yearbook/Journalism. We also offer two dual-enrollment courses through North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC): Composition I and II. These dual-enrollment courses improve students' writing skills, teach multiple composition formats, and prepare students for college and beyond, all while allowing the students to earn both high school and college credit.

Because reading and writing skills are so intertwined, much of our writing curriculum is based on our reading. This gives students the opportunity to write about what they know (showing us mastery of the state standards), while building confidence in their writing skills. Our writing instruction relies heavily on the formative assessment process, where feedback is given on rough drafts to encourage students to apply the feedback and learn from their mistakes. There also is a gradual release of responsibility throughout our program, where students focus on fundamentals and eventually construct extensive argumentative papers. In English 9, students learn to construct strong paragraphs with textual evidence. Students learn about topic sentences, transitions, and incorporating text evidence, with the final goal of mastering the five-paragraph model. By their sophomore year, students write a research paper and learn to incorporate multiple sources to support their opinions. Throughout their junior year, the writing instruction emphasizes creativity, voice, and individualizing the writing process with narrative writing. Literary analyses are also incorporated to demonstrate mastery of the standards and comprehension of literature. As students progress through the system, the writing assessments evolve, depending on the class. For example, in English 12, students focus on real-world writing skills, such as scholarship essays, résumés, and cover letters. For those students eager for the challenge of college-level writing, Composition I and II are available and culminate with an extensive, eight-page argumentative essay.

Above all, we want our students to learn to love to read and write. While that sounds idealistic (and to some degree, it is), that happens through our relationships with our students, by modeling reading and writing ourselves as teachers, and by providing students with choices in their reading selections and forms of written response. Together we aim to provide students with a strong foundation in language and literature to prepare them for success in college, the workforce, and life.

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Our high school mathematics curriculum seeks for students to utilize their existing skills in mathematics to improve their problem-solving skills. The curriculum covers the following areas of mathematics: Algebra,

Geometry, Trigonometry, Calculus, and Career Applications of Mathematics.

Students are required to take three years of mathematics in high school. To a certain extent, these three years are determined by whether or not students are advanced to Algebra 1 in middle school. The typical progression of courses is Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, and Pre-Calculus, if a student wants/needs to reach that level.

Algebra 1 expands a student's previous learning of algebraic expressions, equations, functions, and graphing. Algebra 1 can be completed in one of three ways. First, students who are advanced in middle school can take Algebra 1 in eighth grade. They will then enter high school as ninth graders prepared for Geometry. The second option is for students to complete Algebra 1 in their ninth grade year. Or, third, they can take Algebra 1 at a slower pace, spread over two years, with Algebra 1-A as ninth graders and Algebra 1-B as tenth graders.

Students in Geometry will engage in a comprehensive study of geometric reasoning, coordinate geometry, triangle congruence, similarity, properties of polygons and circles, right triangle trigonometry, area, and volume. Geometry is typically completed in ninth or tenth grade, depending on when Algebra 1 is completed (with the exception of students who take Algebra 1-A and Algebra 1-B, who would take Geometry during eleventh grade).

Algebra 2 expands on the basic algebraic concepts of Algebra 1 and explores other advanced algebraic concepts such as polynomials, quadratics and complex numbers, as well as a study of trigonometry. Algebra 2 is taken by approximately two-thirds of our high school students after they have completed Geometry. Some students will have completed their required three years already and choose not to continue on to Algebra 2. Some students will choose another of our math courses to complete their third required year.

Pre-Calculus contains an in-depth coverage of trigonometry, logarithms, analytic geometry, and upper-level algebraic concepts. Pre-Calculus follows Algebra 2 and is designed to teach the concepts and skills necessary for students to succeed in calculus and in disciplines that are mathematically-based, such as chemistry and physics.

In addition to the common path through the above courses, we offer two other course options for those who choose not to take Algebra 2, or for those who want to take a fourth year of math but do not need the higher-level classes. These courses are Intermediate Math and Career Math. Intermediate Math is similar to a basic college-level Algebra course. It provides a review of the concepts taught in Algebra 1, as well as a few topics at a more advanced algebra level. It is taken by those who still need Algebra for college but not at the faster pace of Algebra 2. Career Math provides the practical mathematics skills needed in a wide variety of trade, technical, and other occupational areas. Students who are interested in attending trade schools have the opportunity to practice their basic math skills in areas of interest.

As a mathematics department, our goal is for all students to learn to communicate and reason mathematically. Regardless of the courses taken, all students will be given the opportunity to become skilled mathematical problem solvers, and our objective is, along the way, students will build confidence in their mathematical skills and learn to value mathematics.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Students at St. Ansgar are enriched with a diverse array of science topics and experiences that prepare them for both postsecondary education and skilled trades, while giving them creative thinking and problem solving skills. Courses include biology, ecology, and human anatomy and physiology in the area of life science and integrated science, advanced integrated science, chemistry, and physics in the area of physical science that are linked to the NGSS standards.

In our state of the art science classrooms, kids experience almost all content from the laboratory setting. The students are always able to experience science in practical ways. A few activities students participate in include seining fish, collecting plants, and GPS in ecology. Hands-on projects like engineering design,

cardboard boat races, and physics olympics are just a few of the ways students demonstrate learning on the physical science spectrum. Human anatomy students complete multiple dissections of a cat throughout the year, while biology and chemistry kids are enhanced with a wealth of lab activities and model experiences. Our curriculum not only benefits students but also directly benefits our local communities. We have a school greenhouse where students work to produce native prairie plugs that get sold and planted in adjacent county natural areas. St. Ansgar also has a walking arboretum that students planted and have been tracking for the last ten years next to the community walking trail. The arboretum is extremely unique, because it contains over thirty different tree species, of which over twenty are native to Iowa. A small, reconstructed, native-to-Iowa prairie planting is also located along this arboretum.

With this many different activities and experiences, we have created multiple types of assessments. We use a wide range of assessments from paper and pencil to performance assessments, while solidifying learning with daily formative assessments. All assessments are either formative or summative and always satisfy one or more Iowa Core science standards.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The St. Ansgar High School social studies curriculum actively encourages students to study the human experience across time. The curriculum covers a range of topics over a selection of required and elective courses. Students are given the opportunity to become well versed in history, psychology, sociology, government, economics, and current events. The National Council for Social Studies themes are used to guide our approach towards teaching and assessing social studies. The themes are as follows: 1. Culture, 2. Time, Continuity, and Change, 3. People, Places, and Environments, 4. Individual Development and Identity, 5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, 6. Power, Authority, and Governance, 7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption, 8. Science, Technology, and Society, 9. Global Connections, 10. Civic Ideals and Practices.

Our students are required to take four courses, divided by grade level, in their sophomore (World History), junior (United States History), and senior (United States Government and Economics) years. We offer Psychology, Sociology, and Current Events as elective courses that can be taken anytime over the course of four years.

Because social studies has such real world application, we allow students to engage as such. Our students participated in the Iowa Youth Straw Poll sponsored by the Iowa Secretary of State office. We regularly invite our state Senator, state House of Representatives member, and a member of the Iowa Utilities Board into our classrooms to speak with our students. Our seniors annually participate in the Know Your Constitution competition that is sponsored by the Iowa Bar Association. St. Ansgar High School was one of few schools in the state to be awarded the Carrie Chapman Catt Award given to schools for voter registration. The social studies department led the effort in getting our juniors and seniors registered to vote.

The primary driver of our social studies curriculum is to provide our students with the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. Students are continually encouraged to explore the curricula for their classes, apply their skills, develop new ideas, ask inquisitive questions, and use technology.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

The St. Ansgar Community School District offers career and technical programs in the following service areas: Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; Business, Finance, Marketing and Management; Applied Science, Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing; and Human Services. St. Ansgar Career and Technical teachers work closely with local community college representatives and community business representatives to create curriculum to fit the needs of industry in our area. These representatives advise the instructors on the direction of the program and equipment used in their businesses. While working with local community colleges, students have the opportunity to take dual credit courses with our local community college in the areas of Welding and Animal Science. In each area, the students are taught locally and follow the community college curriculum, and the college credits can be transferred to any college or

university. During their senior year, students also have the opportunity to participate in one of the following career academies for a half-day at our local community college: Diesel; Heating and Air Conditioning; Tool and Die; Welding; Auto; and Building Trades.

Career and Technical areas have been progressive to give students access to many computer programmable machines such as laser engravers, 3D printers, a CNC wood router, and a CNC plasma cutter. Through these technological machines, the students get to work with a variety of materials and computer programs. The computer programs allow the students to work with basic computer programming skills that they will need while working in industry. Currently St. Ansgar Schools has partnered with local businesses and a local school district to purchase heavy equipment simulators, which will allow students to have real life experiences of dirt excavation. We have also purchased a food truck, which students enrolled in our Advanced Foods class have the opportunity to learn to operate.

In addition to the technological advancements, St. Ansgar developed a Work-Based Learning class in 2019 to meet the needs of our career-focused students. The school and local businesses work closely to provide students authentic job based skills while working on the job during the school day. Before students are placed, they are interviewed by the instructor to find a career interest and to work on basic interview skills. At the conclusion of interviews, the instructor matches the students with a local business in their general field of interest. Students have been placed in areas of nursing, financial management, veterinary science, animal science, agronomy, electrical, plumbing, teaching, manufacturing, welding, website design, logistics, laboratory research, and taxidermy. Currently 43% of the graduating seniors are participating in our work-based learning program.

Students at St. Ansgar High School also have the opportunity to take a class called Manufacturing & Design, which encompasses career readiness skills, financial literacy, and basic business skills. Students run their own entrepreneurial business by designing, fabricating, marketing, and selling their products, while building financial skills through developing break-even and profit and loss statements. Students will also develop a wholesale business and work with local businesses to sell a product. Through this unit, students develop a sales and marketing pitch, product display and price points for themselves as well as the business.

Our CTE programs utilize a mix of computer skills and hands-on working to give students a well-rounded learning experience. As technology evolves, so does our classroom, and the career and technical programs are continually looking to give students opportunities to learn authentic skills that will transfer into a career pathway.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

The Saint Ansgar arts programs are visual arts, band, and choir. All programs are provided to middle school and high school students. In middle school, all students take visual arts as part of their exploratory course rotation. Middle school students are also required to take at least some form of music education every year. In the middle school classes, students are exposed to many different techniques and media in order to promote a general interest in the arts and develop fundamental skills.

The high school classes are all elective courses. The visual arts program is broken down into fundamental and advanced courses. Fundamental Visual Arts is the course for all freshmen and first-year high school art students. Students build upon the skills established in middle school. After completing the Fundamental Visual Arts course, students can choose to sign up for Advanced Visual Arts and/or Advanced Graphic Design. Students can take the advanced courses up to three times to keep earning credit and developing

artistic skills.

Band and Choir are progressive and performance-based, and all arts programs are designed to align with National Core Art Standards. Instruction is delivered during eighty-minute block periods, presented every other day. Students have the opportunity to participate all four years of high school.

In addition to classroom instruction, students in the fine arts programs have several opportunities to participate in additional activities including small and large group music contests, All-State music, marching and jazz bands, show choir, honor bands and choirs, art contests, singing and playing at community events, painting murals and other projects for the community. All of these activities give students the opportunity to showcase their talents and skills outside of the classroom.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

All students participate in physical education classes throughout high school, in addition to a required health/nutrition class during their freshman year. Additional health and food/nutrition classes are offered as electives. The focus of all of these classes is for students to learn about proper nutrition and wellness (both physical and emotional), assess their current levels of health and fitness, and develop and implement a plan to improve their personal wellness both now and in the future.

Physical education classes consist of time for fitness and time for learning various activities that students can participate in throughout their lives including ping pong, archery, bowling, roller blading, swimming, scuba diving, rappelling, pickleball, fishing, dance, and CPR/Stop the Bleed training. Health classes are designed to enable students to make healthy choices concerning their lifestyle. Information is presented to stimulate thinking in regard to healthy living now and in the future. Students are encouraged to carefully evaluate information regarding good health habits, healthful living, and decision making, in regard to their own style of living. Areas of study include concepts of wellness, nutrition, mental and emotional health, maintenance and promotion of personal health, and sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases. Our nutrition classes consist of the elective sequence of Fall Foods, Spring Foods and Advanced Foods. These classes include units on nutrition, kitchen principles, recipe skills, cooking methods, food and fitness, planning daily meals, meal time customs, shopping for meals, meal preparation, and operation of a food truck.

Our goal is to help students develop good skills, habits, and knowledge about physical fitness, mental and physical health, and nutrition that they can utilize to live healthy, productive lives.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

Students have the opportunity to choose between two foreign languages at St. Ansgar High School: Spanish and German. We offer four years of each language and provide students with the chance to learn more about other cultures and strengthen their communication skills in the target language.

In both subjects, students are taught language fundamentals, with emphasis on vocabulary acquisition, grammar, and basic communication skills. In addition, we also focus on understanding the differences between cultures to help students understand that while people from other countries may do things differently, it doesn't mean one way is necessarily better or worse. Knowing both the language and understanding the culture will equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to work and live in another country and to be leaders in an ever-expanding global society.

Our German program is unique in the fact that we participate in a German American Partnership Program (GAPP), where students can travel to Germany every other year to live with a host family and experience the language and culture firsthand. Our partnership school (located in Bad Zwischenahn, Lower Saxony, Germany) comes on alternating years to allow our students to make lifelong connections around the globe.

2d. Technology/library/media

At Saint Ansgar, students have the opportunity to explore many forms of technology. In sixth through eighth grade, all students take computer science classes. In these classes students learn to code through game design, web design with HTML, and app design with Java or block coding.

In high school, students have a variety of elective courses centered around using technology. In our computer science courses, students continue to program more sophisticated apps. They also begin programming with robotics, explore cyber security and artificial intelligence as well as explore and create using virtual reality. In industrial technology courses, students are able to practice with a virtual welder, design and create projects with a 3D printer, as well as utilize the CNC plasma cutter, CNC wood router, and laser engravers. We also offer a Mac Lab class that allows students to continue with web design, design with 3D printers, and have the opportunity to operate a drone.

Through the technology courses offered at Saint Ansgar, students have many opportunities to work with and experience new technology. The goal of these courses is to expose students to potential career paths as well as broaden their options for postsecondary education.

Finally, high school students at St. Ansgar have the opportunity to participate in our esports program. Competitions are held year-round, utilizing various programs and platforms. Former students have received college scholarships from various postsecondary institutions allowing them to continue their education and pursue their interests in gaming.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Instructionally, the teachers at St. Ansgar utilize the formative assessment model, which allows staff to quickly and easily identify students' learning gaps. Once these specific gaps are identified, teachers are then able to provide targeted instruction, descriptive feedback, and other forms of support to address the identified learning needs.

This instruction will often take place in the classroom when the gaps are small and related to new content. However, when we are talking about larger gaps or gaps from previous years, the teachers and students will often work during seminar time, which is an 80-minute period during the middle of the day. This time is split into three lunch periods where students eat one period and have the other two periods to work on any of their academic needs. Students may be assigned to different teachers throughout the year based on their academic needs, and students are able to sign out of an assigned seminar to meet with teachers or students they need to work with for the day. If Tier III interventions are needed, students are then assigned to a study skills period, where teachers utilize research-based strategies to work with small groups of students to help them meet their specific academic goals.

The Success Center is also an excellent place for students to receive assistance. This is a before-, during-, and after-school program designed to assist students with whatever academic or motivation needs they may have. Students can voluntarily see the Success coordinator for help, or in some cases, they are required to attend to receive the support they need to reach their academic goals.

For assessment, our district has started to utilize the standards-based grading approach of allowing retests. This process can change from chapter to chapter and subject to subject but follows a basic framework of correcting previous tests and showing work or explanations for the correct answers, as well as completing a tailored study process to ensure learning gaps have been addressed. These steps are all done within a five- to seven-day time period to ensure students are receiving assistance in a timely manner, so they can continue to make academic progress. Again, for students who may be struggling to find their motivation, teachers will

pull them into their seminar, and/or students will attend the Success Center to receive assistance. Once these steps are taken, students are then able to retest.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Once again, the formative assessment model is used to identify students' progress in meeting the learning goals and mastering the academic standards. When pre-testing indicates that students are already demonstrating mastery, teachers are then able to engage students in enrichment activities or activities at a higher Depth of Knowledge (DOK) level. This has been an excellent strategy for two reasons. First, it keeps the students in the classroom working together on the same standard(s). Secondly, students who demonstrate deeper understanding of the standard aren't given extra work, they are simply given the work that matches their level of learning.

For assessments, we again utilize the standards-based grading system which provides students a clear understanding of the skills and knowledge they are expected to know/demonstrate at each grade level, allowing students to take ownership of their learning. One of our math teachers frequently utilizes partner instruction and assessments. Partners are rotated as much as possible but are always chosen based on ability. This allows students to think and vocalize with a like-level peer which has allowed for clear conversations on students' progress and concerns, which the teacher is able to observe and then assist as needed during the instructional process.

Students showing advanced ability in a subject(s) may also be referred for possible identification for our Talented and Gifted (TAG) program. If identified, a personal education plan (PEP) is written, identifying a student's area(s) of giftedness along with the differentiated educational plan to meet both the student's cognitive and affective needs. Students meet weekly with the TAG teacher to address their progress. The TAG teacher also designs and delivers professional development to staff members to assist them in delivering instruction to meet the needs of our gifted students.

3c. Students with disabilities:

When it comes to working with special education students, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team writes each individual's IEP to address the unique needs of that student. Instruction is specially designed to focus on helping students meet both their IEP goals and the standards for each of their classes. Depending on the student, this usually involves accommodations and/or modifications that are written and implemented to help the student access the curriculum and demonstrate what he/she knows on various assessments. One period of each student's eight-period schedule is used to meet with the special education teacher for what we call Study Skills class. During this class, a variety of activities may occur including the delivery of specially designed instruction, assistance with assignments, incorporation of assistive technology, goal progress monitoring, reteaching, providing alternate assessments, etc. Most importantly, this is a time for the teacher to develop a closer relationship with the students by developing an understanding of each student's needs, barriers that may exist in their lives, and each student's strengths, interests, and preferences.

When it comes to closing achievement gaps, we focus more on the individual growth of each student than the difference in students' scores. We work hard to assist our students in meeting their IEP goals, with the ultimate goal of seeing students exited from special education services.

In addition to helping students meet their academic goals, teachers often work with students on other skills including social-emotional learning, behavior goals, study habits, self-advocacy skills, and transition skills. No matter what learning gaps or skill deficits that may exist, our goal is always to enable every student to successfully transition to whatever comes next in his/her life after high school graduation.

3d. English Language Learners:

Typically, our English Language Learner (ELL) population at the high school ranges from zero to four students. Currently, we have two ELL students at the high school, and one ELL teacher who serves them.

Our ELL teacher provides professional development training to our teachers, sharing strategies to help students be successful in their classes and meeting with individual teachers to address specific questions and concerns. Our entire staff also participates in online training for working with ELL students.

The services, accommodations, and modifications that each ELL student receives are individualized to meet the unique needs of the student. Textbooks and materials are provided to students in both English and Spanish when needed. Our ELL teacher does an excellent job of helping students achieve academic success, while also providing them with opportunities to better understand our culture and traditions. One summer, she developed a program that included outings to various businesses and attractions in our surrounding communities to help students feel comfortable and be successful in everyday life situations.

Looking at past ELPA21 scores, we know that speaking is often the section of the exam where students score the lowest. When students arrive, we try to get them to speak English as much as possible. This also takes place outside the classroom, for students are often more talkative (and less conscientious) during extracurricular activities and daily conversations with our school administrative assistant and peers.

Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities to help them feel more connected to school and develop friendships with other students. Attending various school activities often helps families feel more connected, as well. Translators and translated documents are provided to families when needed. Various translator apps are also used to help facilitate better communication between school personnel and students and their families.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Our district works to engage students in all facets of the high school experience. Students enroll in eight classes each semester. We do our best to offer a wide variety of classes and continue to adjust curricular offerings based on student interest and future career outlook. Students also have the opportunity to enroll in numerous concurrent enrollment classes through our local community college as well as other postsecondary enrollment options (PSEO). During their senior year, students also have the opportunity to participate in one of the following career academies for a half-day at our local community college: Diesel; Heating and Air Conditioning; Tool and Die; Welding; Auto; and Building Trades. Students may participate in job shadows, career and college fairs, apprenticeships, and college visits throughout high school. Our guidance counselor also meets with students every year to revise their four-year high school plans and select classes best suited to their needs and interests. We find many opportunities to highlight academic achievement throughout the year, including our Student of the Month and Academic Letter Winner programs.

Our school also does a lot to address the climate and culture of the building. We have our own social-emotional learning program called Family Time that addresses a different social-emotional learning target each week. Several counseling services come to our school, utilizing an office to meet with students needing services. This helps students not have to miss as much school to attend appointments, and parents do not need to miss work to get their children to appointments. We also have a school social worker who meets with students once a week. Each spring we give our students the Conditions for Learning survey. The results of this survey are carefully analyzed, and we develop an action plan to improve our school climate and culture based on our data.

Every year, well over 90% of our students participate in some extracurricular activity. We offer a wide range of sports, service organizations, music groups, speech, drama, dance, and other school clubs that students may join. We host Iowa's only Engineering Design challenge. Our students also participate in numerous academic competitions including a cardboard boat design challenge, Physics Olympics, Battle of the Books, the Iowa Economics and Finance challenges, art shows, etc. Our industrial technology students compete in welding and building competitions, and our agriculture students participate in several Future Farmers of America (FFA) contests throughout the year. We try to find many ways to recognize students and their achievements.

Starting in middle school, our students begin working with the MAP program from Iowa State University. This online program provides numerous activities to help students develop self-understanding of their strengths, values and interests and provides them with career information including future employment outlooks, training and education requirements, state and national wage earnings, career exploration (in conjunction with college and career fairs, job shadows and apprenticeships), postsecondary exploration (including campus visits, visits with recruiters and vocational rehabilitation workers. This leads to a final career and postsecondary decision. Our guidance counselor meets several times a year with each student, organizes opportunities for students to complete the FAFSA, arranges job shadows and college visits, helps students register for required entrance exams, shares information regarding scholarships and grants, and provides students with information regarding various employment opportunities.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We are fortunate to have tremendous community support in our schools. A number of community members volunteer their time to enrich the education of our students. In our career and technical classes, students work alongside community members through various work experience courses, and the industrial technology classes regularly take on work to improve the local community (such as rebuilding a shelter house at the city park following a storm). Our Personal Finance class brings in officials from our two local banks to discuss loans and other financial decisions. Our agriculture classes and FFA program work with the community to hold Farm Safety and agricultural fairs for our county youth. Our speech class holds mock interviews with business leaders in our community as part of their final assessment. In addition to their in-

person assistance, local businesses donate money to the Saints Legacy Fund, a local non-profit, to provide financial assistance via grants to local teachers and classrooms. Not only do our community members support our school academically, but they offer strong support for our extracurricular activities. One look at the parent-run concession stand during a music concert, or the football stands on a Friday evening in fall, shows our community support for our students.

Because our student population is small, we know our students and their families well. If our students are struggling in their personal lives, we often know about it and work to address what we are able. We participate in the Backpack Program to provide food to students, receive donations from community members to help families with their lunch account balances, provide clothing to students who are in need, as well as offer the opportunity to have clothes washed at school. Staff and community members contribute money, clothing items, food, gifts, and their time to help students/families in need. In addition to meeting the basic survival needs of students, we also provide students and their families access to counseling, vocational rehabilitation services, a social worker, and other community support services. We partner with local businesses to make sure students have presents to open at Christmas, and through the generosity of our staff and many local community members and organizations, local scholarships are available to support students in pursuing their postsecondary dreams.

What sets St. Ansgar apart from other schools is also the commitment of our staff to our local communities. Many of our staff members live and raise their own children in the district. They are highly invested in the success of the school, not only as teachers/staff members in the school but also as parents and community members. Working at St. Ansgar High School is more than just a job; it is a responsibility to the local community and a role many assume with pride, dedication, and commitment.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

It is very clear to all who work at St. Ansgar High School that they are part of a family. When we experience success, we celebrate as a team and acknowledge individual accomplishments. When we experience failure or loss, we put our heads together and develop a plan to move forward. When someone needs help, people go out of their way to assist them. Most importantly, we hold ourselves accountable and continuously work at improving our collective efficacy.

We have taken a sensible approach to professional development (PD), wherein we systematically work into new initiatives. Over the past several years, we have established strong professional learning communities and use them as vehicles to do the work that is needed. This work includes the alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment in conjunction with curriculum alignment and articulation to best serve students in a meaningful way. For the past five years, we have been working to apply the formative assessment and instructional process in a collaborative learning environment to improve instruction and assist our students in taking ownership of their learning. Recent PD has focused on standards-based or standards-referenced learning and grading. We have taken our time, so teachers don't feel the whiplash of new teaching initiatives that sometimes turn professional learning into a chore.

Our administration wants to make our professional learning meaningful, and everything we do is focused on students. Teachers and staff members feel respected and are able to express their opinions. Everyone is heard, and even when disagreements occur, there is an understanding that everything is done in an attempt to reach even one more student.

Teachers complete surveys at the conclusion of each PD day, and the feedback we receive is utilized in the planning of future PD opportunities. We want our teachers and administrators to model what it means to be lifelong learners. Therefore, as we work on developing our PD schedule for next year, we have listened to the feedback from our teachers and are designing our PD days to allow teachers the opportunity to have time to work on their own specific learning goals for half of the day and on our building initiatives for the other half. We want to support teachers in their work and continue to recognize that they understand best what they need in terms of their own growth and learning.

Education Agency (AEA) staff to address needs they have identified. Much of this work centers around strategies to address student behaviors and working with students to develop better 21st century skills.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership is essential to the success of any organization. Good leaders provide direction and guidance by establishing clear goals and creating a positive work environment that inspires others to achieve greatness for themselves as well as the organization. At St. Ansgar, we emphasize “the why.” It’s important to be clear about why we do the things we do, and it always circles back to what is best for our students.

We work in content-based Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to improve teacher collaboration and focus on improving student achievement. Throughout the year, our PLC’s meet weekly on Wednesday mornings to collaborate on curriculum, instruction and assessment, analyze data, and share ideas on how to improve learning in the classroom. Each PLC has a teacher-leader, called an Activator, and all Activators meet throughout the year to help structure professional development time to best meet the needs of our teachers and students.

Instructional Coaches and administrators design professional development to meet state requirements, teacher needs, and our building/district goals. Most recently, our building goal has been focused on transitioning to a standards-based grading system. Teacher feedback is collected through the use of Google Forms and used to pace the progress of our journey.

For our new teachers, our Mentoring and Induction Coach serves an invaluable role. He meets with new teachers prior to the start of the school year, arranges mentors to assist them, observes new teachers, provides them with actionable feedback, meets with both new teachers and their mentors throughout the year to address various topics and concerns, and communicates with administration. The work of the Mentoring and Induction Coach is essential to help our new teachers get off to a successful start, learn the climate and culture of the building, address any concerns or issues that arise, provide support and guidance, and serve as a valuable resource as they grow as teachers.

Our Instructional Coaches assist teachers with their implementation of research-based strategies, providing feedback and support, and collaborating with teachers to improve student learning. Our Instructional Coaches also meet with our administrators to share their insight into what we need in our professional development to improve the collective efficacy of our teachers and, consequently, the performance of our students.

While our leadership positions have not changed much over the past couple of years, the work these people do continues to shift to meet our ever-changing needs and challenges. For example, during and after the pandemic, our administration and instructional coaches had to shift to focus on distance learning, followed by closing any learning gaps caused by not being in the classroom, to helping our students and staff deal with the many social and emotional challenges caused by the pandemic. No matter what the challenge, we feel lucky to have leadership team members who are committed to the students that they serve everyday.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

As a small, rural school district with approximately 165 high school students, and a principal and eight teachers who graduated from St. Ansgar High School, we are at an incredible advantage when it comes to knowing about the backgrounds of our students, families, and staff. While we may not appear to be a culturally diverse district with regards to demographic information collected in surveys and standardized tests, we recognize that every student is a unique individual with unique needs. The only way to truly meet diverse needs is through the pursuit of empathy.

Our teachers, staff, coaches, and administrators work to really get to know the students in our building and form strong professional relationships with them. Every person in our building has a story. Too many students come into the classroom with pain and trauma. We utilize direct social-emotional instruction in school in our work to serve the whole student. That’s a little cliché teacher speak, but it’s true. We recognize

that it's all important, that a student with trauma at home may not prioritize the math lesson of the day. We have to work with referent power built through strong relationships, and that's done by showing up and being present with our students. The adults in our building want to be here every day. They support their students and work to really know them. And, when the students feel understood and supported, they are willing to meet our high expectations.

When it comes to equity, we set the same high expectations for all of our students; however, we understand that we may need to be flexible when it comes to the amount of support students need, accommodations or modifications that may be utilized, timelines that may need to be adjusted, the way that students demonstrate their mastery of a standard, etc. Teachers do all they can to help each individual student succeed, and students clearly understand what is expected of them.

Cultural awareness is achieved through communication and by getting to know the backgrounds of our students and families. Through our student exchange with our partner school in Germany, our students get the opportunity to live with German families and learn about their everyday lives. They are not just tourists. When the students from Germany come here, all of our students get the opportunity to interact with them at school and learn about their culture. We currently have two students in our high school who were born in Puerto Rico. While working to increase their English skills, we also utilize interpreters and translation apps to improve our communication with families, answer questions, and learn more about each other.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

We feel that the one thing that makes us a successful school is our culture here at St. Ansgar High School. Culture trumps strategy in all arenas. Culture is an abstract concept, and in schools, we always want measurable, actionable data. That's good. We continuously work to align curriculum and assessment. We're adamant about meeting standards and finding ways to measure learning, but there is no single educational practice that can correct a dysfunctional school culture. Our success in academics and extracurricular activities is a product of our culture.

If someone asks our students what makes a Saint Ansgar Saint, themes typically appear. Students talk about accepting and embracing others. They talk about being tough and working hard. They talk about support and accountability. That is our culture. We expect our students to be kind. We're not perfect. We have problems like any other school, but we don't tolerate bullying. We believe in empowering others. We dedicate time to social-emotional learning. We take our Conditions for Learning Survey results seriously. We constantly preach our goal to have all students feel "safe and connected" to school. It's gotten to a point where students will joke about that slogan, but that's the point. Our administrators, our teachers, our staff, and our coaches are all on the same page. We're pulling in the same direction, and our students have clear expectations for behavior.

That's how culture is built. It has to be consistent and ever-present. We expect our students to be kind, but we also expect them to be hard-working and disciplined. Our students will sometimes scoff at the behavior of students from other schools, not that we want to pass judgment on anyone; but there is a way we do things here at St. Ansgar. Our students understand the way, and that is only possible because every adult in our building genuinely cares about each student who walks through the door. We see potential in all our students and want to see them succeed in all facets of their lives.

When you come to our school, you will see signs on our campus that say, "Tradition never graduates" and "Those who work will stay. Those who stay will be champions." We show up, work hard, care for each other, and feel lucky to be a part of the rich tradition that exists here at St. Ansgar. We are proud to call ourselves Saints.