

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Northbrook Junior High School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1475 Maple Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Northbrook State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60062-5418

County Cook County

Telephone (847) 498-7920 Fax (847) 656-1712

Web site/URL

<https://www.northbrook28.net/site/Default.aspx?PageID=301>

E-mail smeek@northbrook28.net

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\* Dr. Jason Pearson E-mail jpearson@northbrook28.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Northbrook School District 28 Tel. (847) 498-7900

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 Mrs. Jennifer Gallinson  
(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

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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

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**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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
1 Middle/Junior high schools  
0 High schools  
0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	213
7	216
8	194
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	623

\*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):
- 0.5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 15.6 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 2.8 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 75.4 % White
  - 4.7 % 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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	7
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	627
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

Albanian, Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, English, French, Georgian, Greek, Gujarati, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Mongolian, Persian, Pilipino, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %

18 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 5 %

Total number students who qualify: 32

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 14 %  
Total number of students served 85

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>19</u> Autism	<u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>27</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>27</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>22</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>5</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 10 %  
Total number of students served: 62

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 15

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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	38
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.	21
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	8

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 16:1

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	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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	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%

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. 1992

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

Northbrook Junior High School empowers every learner to be an engaged, confident, caring, and inspired citizen.

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

<https://www.northbrook28.net/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=351&dataid=943&FileName=filedownload.ashx.pdf>

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

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Northbrook Junior High School is located in the close-knit community of Northbrook, Illinois, a suburb located 25 miles north of Chicago. The Northbrook area attracts a global workforce with a variety of international companies. Combined with the close proximity of Chicago and a convenient Metra stop, our community population is culturally diverse. The district is home to lifelong residents and District 28 alumni as well as first-generation families predominantly from Asia and Eastern Europe. Northbrook families place a high value on their children's education and are both supportive and appreciative of the various educational programs offered by our district. District 28 has three elementary schools that feed into Northbrook Junior High (NBHJ). NBHJ is one of four local middle schools whose students feed into Glenbrook North High School in District 225.

While academic growth is paramount, NBHJ and District 28 equally value developing students' physical, social, and emotional skills. The NBHJ community strives to set a welcoming tone even before school starts. Volunteer 8th-grade student ambassadors welcome 6th-grade families and assist them as they tour the school and set up lockers prior to opening day. We kick off the first week of school with an all-school assembly that includes engaging activities and emphasizes the importance of working together to create an inclusive and purposeful learning environment. We strive to offer our students the opportunity to pursue personal interests and self-discovery with a variety of athletics, clubs, and extracurricular activities. Our robust instrumental music and choir program enjoy a 30 percent participation rate. The school also offers an extensive electives program in which all students have choices built into their school day.

We ensure students are supported to foster both their academic and social-emotional growth. We have developed an 8th-grade mentor program in which two to three 8th-grade students lead activities with a homeroom of 6th-grade students throughout the year. Following a team-building activity, 6th-grade students have the opportunity to visit with the mentors and ask questions about school and academic life. Social emotional literacy (SEL) lessons are developed at each grade level to match students' specific needs and are delivered weekly during X-block (homeroom). Students have access to daily academic support before and after school as well as during their X-Block period.

At NBHJ, our goal is to provide a safe and supportive learning environment where students feel empowered to take risks and challenge themselves in and out of the classroom. We are always looking for new ways to involve students in planning activities and making decisions. Students are instrumental when planning assembly activities and fundraising activities; they help organize Spirit Week activities; and they collaborate with our food service provider to select a week of lunch menu choices. All students have the opportunity to work on producing the daily news broadcasts. A committee of students works with the librarian to read and help select the NBHJ Book Awards. The school also offers extracurricular academic pursuits by engaging in Mathalon, AMC8, and Scholastic Bowl competitions.

Special half-day events, field trips, and service projects are grounded in engaging students and extending their learning. We strive to empower students to be positive contributors to the school, the district, and Northbrook community. This is exemplified through the school's charity and service work. The student Builder's Club takes the lead in several local charity drives, including the holiday gift drive for Youth Services of Glenview/Northbrook and the holiday food drive for the Northfield Township Food Pantry. All four district schools also participate in the Northbrook Rotary Club's annual coat drive. Our annual Charity of Choice program gives students an active role in shaping the school environment. At the start of each school year, students are invited to nominate a charity worthy of fund-raising activities by preparing video presentations that are aired on our daily school news broadcast. Students cast votes based on the presentations, and a Charity of Choice is selected for the school year. All proceeds from organized events – from a dodgeball tournament and 3-on-3 basketball tournament, to dine-in sales at local restaurants and school sales like Val-a-grams on Valentine's Day and colored beads for Spirit Week – are donated to the Charity of Choice, often a local organization, at the end of the school year. Last year, approximately \$4,000 was donated to Alex's Lemonade Stand.



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

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

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

Reading/ELA - what is taught, how it is taught, and assessment (500 words)

Our English Language Arts (ELA) classes are held daily with alternating 80-minute and 40-minute periods of instruction. Teachers utilize an integrated reader's and writer's workshop model where students experience mini lessons coupled with shared and independent practice. Grammar study, vocabulary, and opportunities for choice reading are also incorporated into daily practice.

All units of study are standards-aligned, have appropriate text complexity, and ensure a balance of fiction and nonfiction texts using the workshop model. Teachers incorporate a blend of a primary digital resource and district-created units. Units emphasize student engagement through rich text, choice, and differentiation. The workshop model includes the structure of crafting sessions, composing sessions, and reflection time.

Formative assessments such as conferences, exit tickets, and short responses are routinely implemented to inform future instruction. Summative assessments at the end of units provide opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of narrative, informational and argumentative writing. Additional summative assessments measure students' reading comprehension with a focus on specific grade level standards. NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading is administered three times a year as another data point to help provide a comprehensive lens through which to assess student learning and to assist in determining next steps for students.

Advanced ELA classes are offered at all three grade levels. These are separate courses that are faster paced, provide access to some above-grade-level units of study, and offer a greater variety of open-ended research opportunities throughout the year.

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

NBJH has three strands of course offerings at each grade level – core, single accelerated and double accelerated. In 7th grade, a high school Algebra I course is offered, while in 8th grade two high school courses – Algebra I and Geometry – are offered. All math classes are held daily with alternating 80-minute and 40-minute periods of instruction.

After a recent curriculum review process, NBJH adopted Big Ideas as its primary curricular resource due to its balanced focus on conceptual knowledge and procedural fluency. Classroom lessons within each unit of study are designed to focus on students acquiring skills and knowledge that can be applied to real world situations through collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Our curriculum is aligned to state learning outcomes in terms of the language used and the manner in which the math topics are modeled in the classroom. Each chapter/unit addresses multiple state standards. The resources used identify where students should expect to be according to the specific standards being addressed (i.e. exposure, mastery, etc.).

All math classrooms at NBJH utilize a similar instructional approach. Daily warm-ups incorporate elements of a spiral review or a quick review of recent topics. Launch lessons are incorporated in an exploratory fashion so students are immersed in a hands-on investigation that builds conceptual understanding and fosters classroom discussions.

Another instructional strategy utilized across all grade levels are mathematical tasks. These are low floor, high ceiling thinking tasks that enhance problem-solving skills and foster student conversations about the topic. Students are assigned to small groups and tasked with devising an approach to solving the problem.

and then sharing their strategy with the larger group.

On a weekly basis learning teams (grade level and content area PLC's) review classroom formative data to inform future instruction, determine small groups, and decide the level of support to provide individual students. Teams review standardized assessment data (NWEA MAP) three times each year to determine small group interventions that occur outside of the classroom, and they also reflect on the assessment data to determine topics that will be reintroduced in weekly spiral review activities.

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

The purpose of science curriculum is to support students in the development of their content knowledge and skills to ask and define questions, investigate, analyze data, construct explanations, design solutions, and to support their findings with evidence.

All students are enrolled in a daily 40-minute period of science. The 6th-grade curriculum focuses on earth science; the 7th-grade curriculum focuses on life science and biology; and the 8th-grade curriculum focuses on physics and chemistry.

The overall approach to the teaching and learning process is 5E – to Engage and Explore before Explaining, followed by Elaborating and Evaluating. This allows students to experience hands-on learning tasks as they investigate a topic, and then they can build upon their new learning before making assumptions and drawing conclusions.

The curriculum is aligned to Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and incorporates the 3-dimensional approach of these standards. Although the Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI's) vary for each grade level, the cross-cutting concepts and science and engineering practices are similar. They are woven into the learning standards and units of study across all three grade levels.

Our science classrooms focus on having students model their work; generate scientific questions; develop and use models; analyze and interpret data; use mathematics and computations thinking; construct explanations and design solutions; engage in argument from evidence; and obtain, evaluate and communicate information. Our science teachers are adept at supporting ELA and math classrooms as they incorporate the reading and annotating of nonfiction texts, and students are consistently asked to analyze data and interpret charts and graphs.

Learning teams/PLC's use weekly team time to review both formative and summative assessment data to identify students who require differentiated support. Teachers have adopted a protocol for analyzing student work where they categorize students' work samples into groups that are meeting expectations, require additional support, or are in need of enrichment or challenge. They develop action plans based on this information.

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

The purpose of social studies in District 28 is to develop curious global citizens who think deeply about the world, can take multiple perspectives, and are inspired to take action. All students are enrolled in a daily 40-minute period of social studies. The 6th-grade curriculum focuses on ancient civilizations; the 7th-grade curriculum focuses on American history; and the 8th-grade curriculum focuses on global studies and current events.

The curriculum is designed so each unit of study has an overarching essential question with accompanying standards and learning targets that are at Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) level 3 and 4. The underlying guiding discussion questions help determine whether teachers and students are ready to move on or whether they should devote additional time to reteach some of the core concepts. The Inquiry Design Model promotes the use of projects that are in-depth explorations. These inquiry projects occur at the beginning, middle, or end of a unit of study.

Teachers are able to create vertical alignment within the department by incorporating underlying themes that span across all grade level classes. These topics include economics, geography, discrimination, democracy, globalization, innovation, and more. Student learning is less about rote memorization and more about making connections. Class conversations focus on the cultural decisions that were made in the past that have a lasting impact on future generations and how human interactions with the environment and technology help shape our world. The hope is to create citizens who are contributing members of society and are aware of how the past influences the present.

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

Many of our “upperclassmen” have the opportunity to develop their skills and interests in secondary education coursework or in local government activities. Our advanced level math and world language course offerings allow students to enroll in high school level classes while still in middle school.

Students who have completed three years of a world language earn credit for high school Level 1 world language and are able to enroll in a Level 2 world language course in high school. In math, students who are on one of the two accelerated tracks are able to enroll in a high school math course.

Other curricular opportunities including STEM, Journalism, and Independent Science Research prepare students for secondary education and beyond.

The Village of Northbrook hosts an annual Student Government Day each spring where 8th-grade students from Northbrook public and private middle schools have the chance to assume the role of a local government official. The day allows students to learn about the various elected officials and their responsibilities during planned sessions throughout the day. The evening culminates with a mock Village Board meeting at the Northbrook Village Hall. Each year 6-8 8th graders participate in this community event.

In cooperation with our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), we host a bi-annual Career Day where students choose to attend three sessions from more than 30 presenters who share their lived experiences in their respective fields of work.

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

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

### **2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

NBJH is proud to offer an extensive selection of exploratory and elective classes to all students. Sixth-grade students rotate through six different mini courses every six weeks. These classes include: Art, Design and Construction (STEM), Drama, Journalism, Music, and Woodworking. Seventh-grade students also rotate through six different courses every six weeks, yet they have a few additional choices including: Art, Computer Programming, Creative Writing, Drama, Music, Peer Mentor, Robotics, and Woodworking. When students enter 8th grade, they have the opportunity to select their classes from a vast array of options across six different disciplines. Students can take courses in art, drama, literacy, music, STEM and woodworking with a very specific focus within each content area. For example, four different art classes are offered ranging from painting to drawing to sculpture to computer art. Within the STEM field, students can choose from Design and Construction, Computer Coding, and Forensics. Other course offerings include Guitar, Performance Studies, Literature and Film, Graphic Novels, and Woodworking. Eighth-grade students enroll in five elective mini courses throughout their final year.

### **2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

During each school year NBJH students enroll in three quarters (9 weeks each) of Physical Education (PE) and one quarter of Health, Wellness and Fitness. The PE/Health department has made a commitment to prepare students to live healthy, productive, and physically active lives. All PE and Health classes operate on a modified block schedule. Classes meet four days each week – three 40-minute classes and one 80-minute block of time. PE classes incorporate a mix of lesson days that include fitness, sports, team building, and wellness activities. Units of study include arena games, net games, and racquet games. Our four PE teachers utilize a team teaching approach where they rotate teaching partners every 2-3 weeks.

Our Health, Wellness and Fitness class focuses on strengthening students' attitudes and practicing skills necessary to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors throughout their lives. Curricular units of study include safety and first aid, healthy eating habits, mental health, self advocacy, substance abuse, and sexuality education. Topics that span across all three grade levels are: stress and anxiety management, healthy relationships, showing respect for self and others, and fostering independence. On a weekly basis students enrolled in Health, Wellness and Fitness utilize the school's fitness room to engage in cardiovascular activity and strength training exercises.

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

All students who do not have a resource or support period on their schedule are enrolled in a world language course. Students are offered the choice between French or Spanish when they enter our building and are encouraged to remain with that language throughout their time at NBJH. World language courses are considered core academic classes that meet daily for 40-minute periods for the entire school year.

Beginning in 7th grade, students who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in their coursework have the option to enroll in honors level classes. The identification and selection process occurs at the end of 6th grade as well as at the end of 7th grade. Students who successfully complete three years of a world language – core level or honors level – receive high school credit recognition for one year and may enroll in a level two course as a freshman.

Teachers utilize the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) world readiness standards during the instructional planning process. They incorporate the 5 “C” goal areas – Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities – in order to develop the language and cultural skills of our learners. Units of study are thematically organized around the Advanced Placement (AP) themes and aligned both vertically and horizontally.

### **2d. Technology/library/media**

The district has implemented a 1:1 technology initiative – Learning First – where each student is provided with an iPad for instructional purposes. The focus for students and staff is that learning comes first, technology is second. Staff have participated in training to help determine when technology can be incorporated into instructional practices to engage students, enhance a lesson, or extend learning. Students participate in six Digital Citizenship lessons throughout the year focusing on topics such as Privacy and Security, News and Media Literacy, and Relationships and Communication.

We are proud to utilize our television studio as a primary communication tool for students and staff. At the start of each school day we air a student-produced news broadcast to the entire school. Daily broadcasts include the announcement of the day's lunch menu as well as student birthdays. We share important information about meetings and deadlines, our librarian prepares a Book of the Week segment, and we always infuse a little humor!

Our 6th-grade Journalism classes create a digital school newsletter three times each year. Each publication includes sports and lifestyle sections, spotlights on staff and students, and editorials.

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

Our Independent Science Research (ISR) class is offered to eligible 7th- and 8th-grade students who have demonstrated high academic achievement in reading and writing, possess solid organizational skills, and have expressed interest in science. In lieu of two consecutive exploratory classes, these students enroll in a course that allows them to develop a science project that takes them through the scientific method.

For weeks leading up to the local science fair, students define a question to explore, complete extensive research, make a hypothesis, conduct an experiment, analyze the data, and draw conclusions. Along the way they are provided with a number of resources to guide them through the process. Students are assigned one of three science teachers as their mentor. During the early phases, students take a field trip to conduct research at a local college library. The school's librarian and gifted and talented coordinator support the classes during the research and writing process.

At the end of the semester students present their projects to judges at the local science fair in January. Students are scored against a rubric and awarded gold, silver, or bronze medals based on the quality of their project and their presentation of information. Students earning gold medals are eligible to continue at the Regional Science Fair in March, and students earning gold medals at the Regional Science Fair qualify to advance to the Illinois Junior Academy of Science State Fair in April or May. The ISR program has a longstanding tradition of excellence; as a result, NBJH has earned Best in Class for its middle school division for ten consecutive years.

### **3. Academic Supports**

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

Teachers tri-annually review standardized assessment data to reflect on the effectiveness of tier 1 instruction and to identify any potential gaps. This is also a time to pair standardized assessments data (e.g. NWEA MAP) with classroom performance data to determine small groups of students who would benefit from tier 2 support in literacy and math. Interventionists at each grade level work with identified groups of students for approximately six weeks to remediate skills and bolster confidence.

Grade level teams meet weekly to discuss the academic and behavioral needs of individual students. A weekly meeting consisting of core academic teachers, student services team members, and administration review student progress data and share observations, address concerns, and develop an action plan.

Frequent formative assessments determine next steps for the teacher and students in the teaching and learning process. Practice opportunities of varying degrees of challenge (e.g. Webb's Depth of Knowledge continuum) are offered each week so students can either receive more individualized support and/or enrichment and extension activities.

Mathematical tasks – curricular and non-curricular – are incorporated multiple times each week as a way to tie in mathematical practices such as modeling with math, constructing viable arguments, and critiquing others' reasoning. These are low floor, high ceiling tasks that create multiple ways to solve a problem and varied opportunities for students to share their strategies with peers.

Classroom teachers utilize classroom formative data to determine small groups for literacy lab support that is offered 3 to 4 days a week during a non-academic class period. Individual writing supports such as graphic organizers and sentence starters are provided for students who require specific accommodations in order to successfully access the core curriculum. Reteaching opportunities, invitational groups, and/or additional mini lessons are offered to students as needed.

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

NBJH offers separate courses with alternative curricula in language arts, math, and world language. Students are identified using multiple data points that establish a need for extensive differentiation beyond what is offered in the core academic classes.

In math, two of the three pathways are accelerated. One is single accelerated where students take Algebra their final year of middle school, and the other pathway is double accelerated where students take Geometry during their final year.

In language arts and world language, identified students are able to enroll in advanced or honors level courses where the core curriculum has been enriched to provide additional depth and complexity. These courses incorporate additional units of study at an accelerated pace.

In the general education classes, teachers use pre-assessment and formative assessment data to differentiate instruction for students who need additional challenge. Examples include tiered assignments, alternative projects, and small group instruction. The Instructional Support Team, including two instructional coaches and the Gifted and Talented Coordinator, assists teachers in accommodating students who have mastered content quicker than their peers.

### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Our student services team offers a continuum of services to support the academic, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. Considering the levels of functioning of individual students as well as the goal of maintaining the least restrictive classroom placement, students may enroll in foundational, instructional, modified, or core classes. Resource classes are offered to all students eligible for special education services and are designed to provide students the time and resources to work on IEP goals. Foundational, instructional, and modified ELA and math classes are taught by a special education teacher and an instructional assistant(s). For students who are able to access the core curriculum in the general education setting, a special education teacher or instructional assistant provides additional classroom support.

Each grade level has two special education teachers. Social work and counseling services are provided by a team of specialists that includes three social workers, one psychologist, and one speech pathologist. We also have an occupational therapist, a physical therapist and an adaptive PE teacher on site for students with more challenging physical needs.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

NBJH has a supportive English Language (EL) program which provides pull-out and push-in services to students whose second language is English. We have an EL teacher and classroom assistant as well as a district EL Coach who support this program. They utilize ACCESS testing data to determine the levels of support needed in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Small group classes are offered in language arts, and a resource class is also offered at each grade level. The EL teacher and classroom assistant partner with general education teachers to ensure students can access the general education curriculum and make adequate growth toward the grade level learning expectations.

The Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) meets monthly and is organized by the Director of Student Services, district EL staff, and parents and meets bi-monthly. The focus is to give families a voice in their child's education by promoting their interests as well as providing a forum for parents to ask questions and connect with other families in the district.

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

All students have access to before- and after-school study halls as well as opportunities to work on class assignments during lunch period. A unique opportunity for NBJH students is the ability to attend morning "tutorial" four days a week. For approximately 20 minutes prior to the start of school, all teachers are available in their classrooms to support students who may need it. Similar to a college professor's office hours, tutorial offers an optional drop-in session for students to ask questions about a lesson, review before an assessment, or find out what was missed during an absence. Students may also secure a pass to meet with a teacher during their daily 30-minute X-Block class. This is another opportunity for reteaching, reviewing, or clarifying instruction in the various content area classes.



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

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

In addition to the many extracurricular clubs, activities, and sports we offer to students, another way to motivate and engage students is by weaving experiential learning opportunities into the curriculum. We believe students can learn a great deal within the classroom walls, yet they can apply their learning and solidify their understanding of essential topics through field trips and excursions in the community.

Each grade level selects external learning opportunities that align with their respective curriculum and the applicable learning standards. Our 6th grade has used a half day of school to develop a Maker Day that offers a set of rotating stations where kids can display their creativity and innovation. Early in the 6th grade school year we bring the entire grade of students and staff – as well as two dozen alumni who attend our feeder high school – for a three-day, two-night Outdoor Education trip in Wisconsin. Students have the opportunity to participate in “challenge by choice” activities such as canoeing, rock climbing, archery, and ziplining while they also learn about animals and how to build a fire. Perhaps most importantly, students begin the process of developing new friendships and learning how to become more independent as middle school students.

Our 7th grade incorporates a museum trip, guest speaker, and a field experience as ways to enrich some core curriculum units of study. As an extension of the science curriculum, our staff partners with the Northbrook Park District to host an Ecology Day in the fall. Students and staff walk to Techny Prairie and Fields to test the local water quality, examine water samples for macroinvertebrates, and cut down invasive species as part of local conservation efforts. Additionally, as part of the study of genocides – specifically the Holocaust unit of study – students take a trip to the Holocaust Museum and also hear a presentation from a Holocaust survivor.

Eighth grade excursions have included trips to the Steppenwolf Theater to view live performances that tie into the Language Arts curriculum as well as an opportunity for 15 to 20 students to attend a Futures Unlimited trip to a local community college. This trip includes sessions from female professionals in the STEM field discussing career opportunities in various science, technology, engineering, and math fields. Finally, our 8th graders annually participate in a Physics Day event sponsored by Six Flags Great America for area middle schools and high schools.

Our instrumental music department performs concerts three times each year, but they also take trips into the community to perform to audiences outside of our own school community. Our groups have performed for our three elementary schools, for local nursing homes, and at Chicago Wolves hockey games.

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

We help our students and families prepare for middle school with an incoming 6th grade Orientation Night, Incoming 6th Grade Special Education Night, and Incoming 6th grade IEP Parent Night. For all grade levels, we offer annual curriculum nights at the beginning of the school year, and parent-teacher conferences are offered by teaching teams for all grade levels in the fall. There are also several informational nights for 8th-grade families preparing for high school.

We send weekly communication to our families to keep them informed of important events, celebrations of achievement, and happenings at school. Our website and mobile app offer parents access to information in multiple ways. Our social media accounts provide snapshots of daily and weekly happenings inside the school.

Our strong PTO organizes a variety of special events that boost morale for our staff and enhance the school experience for students. The PTO helps coordinate a Dance Assembly program for 6th grade students, a 7th-grade field trip to the state capital – Springfield, Illinois – and an 8th-grade trip to Washington D.C. Periodically throughout the year the PTO will host special “treat days” as a way to boost morale and give



thanks to staff and students.

In order to provide additional social and emotional support to our students this past year, we partnered with two local agencies. Community Action Together for Children's Health (CATCH) is a non-profit organization in Northbrook that focuses on programming and resources to support mental health and emotional wellness. CATCH provided coping kits to our entire 6th grade along with a virtual session on healthy coping strategies during challenging times. Additionally, we connected with Youth Services of Glenview/Northbrook for virtual professional development sessions with our staff to learn how to best support students struggling with issues related to gender identity.

We celebrate creativity with an annual Art Show featuring work from every student enrolled in an art class. Families are invited to view the hundreds of pieces of art and to read the artist statements that accompany each work. In alternating years, the PTO helps the school host a Career Day.

Prior to winter and spring breaks our librarian creates a form for parents to complete about their child's reading interests. Based on this information, and coupled with recent book checkouts, our librarian generates a list of book recommendations for families as they head into an upcoming school break.

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

The foundation of our school's professional culture is in our learning teams. Learning teams are our Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) that are made up of grade level and content area job-alikes. The master schedule is created so grade-level teams have similar plan periods each day. This allows for weekly team meetings and provides opportunities for learning teams to meet multiple times each week. Learning team meetings are utilized to create curricular consistency among teachers, to reflect on the effectiveness of daily lessons, and to discuss instructional supports for students who may need them.

Monthly staff meetings always include Kudos – ways for staff members to recognize colleagues who go above and beyond to help others be more successful at their jobs. Staff meetings also include samples of non-curricular thinking tasks or highlights of instructional practices that successfully engage students in the learning process.

Institute Days and other professional development sessions focus on identified needs based on student data and staff feedback. The template for these days includes opportunities to build community within our staff, allocated time for learning teams and departments to work on relevant tasks related to their instructional practices, and sessions focused on staff and/or student social emotional well-being. Based on our professional learning needs, we have coordinated efforts at different times with organizations such as Youth Services of Glenview/Northbrook and TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804 (NSSD) to provide specialized instructional support.

Each year, a day of professional learning occurs between our 8th-grade teachers and colleagues in the same content area at other Northbrook middle schools and at Glenbrook North High School. The goal is to share instructional practices and tighten the vertical alignment of the skills and knowledge that best prepare students for their secondary education.

Each school year, our librarian requests a list of favorite book titles from all staff members. She also maintains a list of staff birthdays. When the month arrives, she curates a list of book recommendations from those staff members whose birthdays we celebrate that month. She creates a display in the staff lounge with baked treats, a list of staff birthdays, and a display of recommended books. We call it Books, Bakes, and Birthdays.

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

Our school leadership team focuses on an inclusive and collaborative leadership approach that uses data and stakeholder feedback to inform the decision-making process and drive future change. One recent example involves a major shift in the master schedule to create larger blocks of instructional time to enhance math

and ELA instruction while maintaining the same amount of instructional time for other content areas. This shift was driven by data and feedback from area districts' instructional practices. This change demonstrated a positive impact on student achievement within two years.

To ensure consistent, effective instructional practices that focus on student growth, a leadership group composed of representatives from different content areas and all three grade levels meets on a weekly basis. The team focuses on problem-solving various challenges that arise, enhancing communication between the staff and administration, and ensuring our practices are aligned with our core values.

Another example is the school's approach to improving our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). We formed two small committees to focus on specific areas for improvement. One group focuses on expanding tier 2 academic supports for students, improving how staff analyzes and utilizes student data to make decisions, and equipping colleagues with strategies and tools to enhance student learning. The second committee focuses on creative ways to positively impact tier 1 student behaviors. They collect student and staff survey data and review behavioral data to identify target areas for the building. They communicate tier 1 supports to the entire school, develop behavior goals for grade levels, coordinate rewards and incentives, and share progress with students and staff.

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

Northbrook Junior High has a priority of welcoming new families to the district. Prior to the start of school all new families have a meeting with the principal to learn more about the school, go on a building tour to explore the grounds, and have a grade-level peer assist the new student the first week of school. For families arriving mid-year, the principal will personally meet with the family and provide school tours and explain the education process, with the support of translators when needed.

We offer translation services to families requiring language support for in-person meetings and trimester report cards. Our website also includes translation options for all key information.

The school works to meet the unique needs of all of our families. We participate in the Hunger Free Northbrook program to deliver groceries each month to NBJH families in need. We connect new-to-the-country families with local agencies and resources.

The district has a Bilingual Parent Advisory Council that focuses on ensuring all families are informed about district practices and procedures and that they have access to available district resources. Our library purchased books written in Polish for a student who enrolled in our school and is living in the United States for the first time. Instructional materials are selected with intention to offer diverse narratives and points of view.

Our band and orchestra directors ensure an equitable selection of concert music from diverse and underrepresented composers at each of their concerts..

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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One of the most influential practices that separates NBJH from other middle schools is its singular focus on what is best for kids. This may be a phrase that is a bit overused in the field of education, but it truly exemplifies the collective mindset of our staff. We accept students for who they are and appreciate them for their unique talents. We are willing to think outside the box to help each student be successful.

Visitors to Northbrook Junior High School often share that they feel welcomed by staff and students and that the halls are filled with positive energy. Students are polite and respectful, willing to hold the door for the next person or quick to return a misplaced item to the office. Staff members demonstrate genuine care for one another by chipping in when a colleague is in need and making sure to recognize a deserving peer. They take tremendous pride in their work, care deeply about the success of their students, and work diligently to uphold the values of the District.

Families often share that they moved to Northbrook for the quality of the schools. Time and again we hear stories of families who left previous schools because their child's needs were not met and that the services and supports offered were not what they hoped for. As they searched for a new setting, they were looking for a school/district that truly valued the unique learning needs of their child.

Our staff demonstrates patience and empathy with our most challenging students and they are willing to engage in creative problem-solving in order to find the appropriate support for individual kids. We ensure that our students with the most significant needs have access to the same opportunities as everyone else. The drama teacher partners with student leaders to create a play for students in our life skills program. The basketball and volleyball coaches have offered opportunities for students with special needs to be team managers. The musical directors ensured a student with Down's Syndrome was cast in the ensemble for the school musical.

Students and staff feel welcomed at NBJH because they feel a sense of belonging. They are recognized for their accomplishments, and they are supported when they experience disappointment. They feel valued when they are granted permission to take risks, and they feel trusted to make decisions that support their education. The NBJH experience is about helping one another discover who they are and how they can become the best version of themselves.