

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 Mr. Daniel Harold
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Lake Middle/High School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 709 Market Avenue SW
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Uniontown State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 44685-9462

County Stark County

Telephone (330) 877-4282 Fax (330) 877-0853

Web site/URL <https://www.lakelocal.org/> E-mail harolddan@lakelocal.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Kevin Tobin E-mail tobinkevin@lakelocal.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Lake Local Tel. (330) 877-9383

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Adam Doane
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

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

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The 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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
0 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	270
8	250
9	274
10	289
11	231
12 or higher	286
Total Students	1600

*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):
- 0.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.7 % Asian
 - 2.2 % Black or African American
 - 0.2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 96.6 % White
 - 0.1 % 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: 9%

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

n/a

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

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	93
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	56
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	149
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	1573
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Spanish, Thai, Ukrainian, Chinese, Portuguese

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 13 %

Total number students who qualify: 204

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 12 %
Total number of students served 193

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>30</u> Autism	<u>11</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>1</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>2</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>51</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>100</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 8 %
Total number of students served: 120

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 7

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	5
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	79
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	21
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	24
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	99%	95%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	98%	98%	99%	99%	97%

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	283
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	42%
Enrolled in a community college	6%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	23%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	28%

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.

Educating generations, serving our community. The core values of the Lake Local School District are Respect, Integrity, Citizenship, Honesty, Engagement, and Responsibility. By making a commitment to these values, we will build, grow and nurture the relationships with each other, our district and our community.

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

Nondiscrimination policy: <http://go.boarddocs.com/oh/lakelocal/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BFJP2E6270B4>

Nondiscrimination on the basis of sex:

<http://go.boarddocs.com/oh/lakelocal/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BFJP2F6270B5>

Nondiscrimination on the basis of disability:

<http://go.boarddocs.com/oh/lakelocal/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BFJP2N6270BA>

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

This is Lake.

We hear it from the students and teachers who walk our hallways, spend hours in our classrooms, and who wear our school colors as athletes and coaches and musicians and scholars. We hear it from the parents who were born and raised in Lake whose loyalty and appreciation for their roots has made raising their own families in this environment a priority. And we also hear it from those who have chosen to live in our community and attend our schools where a reputation for excellence is well-deserved, and where the more traditional definitions of respect, kindness, gratitude, and service to others are still evident. There is a feeling, a culture, that is evident the moment you step through our doors and is solidified within moments when a stranger welcomes you with a genuine smile or pleasant greeting. To describe it before experiencing it is nearly impossible, and to escape it with the hope of experiencing something better would only lead to disappointment. There is no place like Lake.

Although a priority of any educational institution should be to instill the knowledge, habits, and skills that align to the district and state educational standards, Lake Middle High School and our Lake community also place a substantial importance on developing students who are persons of integrity and character whose approaches to their everyday lives align with our district core values. We have earned the trust of parents and families who allow us to place an additional emphasis on being responsible citizens who serve others. While our district and school have consistently led our county in performance while also being included among the top districts in the state of Ohio, our greatest achievements and our most prized assets will always be our people – our teachers, staff, parents and families, community members, local businesses and, without question, tremendous students who come to school each day with an eagerness to learn, a fierce determination to succeed, and an intense desire to make a difference.

Where else will you find a throng of students who will spend a Friday night cheering on their football team, cheerleaders, and band who will then, win or lose, home or away, pull the nearest trash cans closer so that they can clean up their student section, leaving it better than they found it? I would challenge other schools to match what our seniors in the National Honor Society do for their individual service projects, serving lunch and dinner to the first responders in a local hospital, collecting gently used clothes and personal items for a battered women’s shelter or a local elementary school with an overabundance of students in poverty, or hosting a basketball game between two Special Olympics basketball teams to raise money for our own Buddy Program. I invite anyone who questions what is wrong with our youth of today to attend one of our band, orchestra, or choir concerts, or perhaps the 7th and 8th grade play or Spring musical and see every type of student – those in the top 25 and those on IEP’s, the extremely motivated and the terribly shy, and our most valued students with special needs – all on one stage putting aside any differences or inhibitions and summoning each of their strengths to create beautiful music or a moment of magic. This is most certainly Lake.

And if someone were to point to the reason why the kids are the way they are and why Lake is the way it is, look no further than our teachers, aides, secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, those who are counselors and so many who go beyond their job descriptions to counsel. There is instruction and engagement and collaboration and, heaven forbid, laughter in our classrooms. But there are also those moments out of sight or out of earshot, when our teachers and staff are moved to tears or, perhaps, brought to tears out of worry or concern. Ask those who have been other places and in other schools what makes Lake so different, and the answer is so simple: “Because they care about me.”

The Lake Local School District completed an extensive renovation of our school buildings and facilities within the past five years. One distinctive change to our educational landscape resulted with LMHS transforming from a grades 9-12 building to a newly reconfigured and remodeled grades 7-12 complex that includes collaborative spaces, extended learning areas, flexible furniture, and upgrades in technology. Laptops were issued to each student and teacher, a student management system, Canvas, was implemented, and teachers were equipped with the tools, techniques, and instructional strategies that would take advantage of our new spaces. The more traditional teacher-led approaches to instruction are now a rarity, being

replaced with strategies that are more collaborative, hands on, and relevant. Our hallways, stairs, and common areas are now extensions of our classrooms, and it's not unusual to see smaller groups of students working together on benches and floors and the garage doors between classrooms being flung open so that two classes become one, with student-produced art work and projects serving as a backdrop to the conversations, banter, and debates between and among engaged learners.

After enduring the disruptions of a building project, the challenges of meshing two buildings into one, and the anxiety that was inevitable when you are asking successful professionals to teach differently, think differently, and to never hesitate to take chances and try what has never been tried or do what has never been done, it has been most comforting to watch us continue to do what we have always done best. We are Lake.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Through continual grade-level and department-wide collaboration between our Middle and High School teachers, the English department has developed a curriculum that addresses the learning standards articulated by the state of Ohio while also meeting the individual needs of our students.

The middle school English Language Arts curriculum has been developed using the backward design model. Using both the Ohio Learning Standards and the Ohio State Test blueprints as a starting point, power standards were selected. Units and resources were then developed to focus on those standards reflecting the percentage of fiction/nonfiction text as closely as possible. We chose several units from Engage NY and sought out other resources that offered the rigor and stretch needed as a starting point. Lessons were added or deleted based on our students' needs and efforts in order to engage students and give them the best opportunities for achievement. Teachers worked collaboratively to break units down into smaller sections and to develop common summative assessments for each section. For example, using a class novel, we focused a smaller section of the unit on point of view and perspective. Quarterly checkpoints were created to test the power standards with cold passages and test questions using the language directly from the learning standards while also requiring students to complete tasks that mirrored what they would see on the state test. Formative assessments were further created in a variety of forms to further differentiate the instruction and expectations with consideration for the accelerated, regular ed, and intervention students.

We have found that among the most important steps in our processes are the weekly meetings spent analyzing the data from each assessment and using that data to drive our instruction. As we see students struggling with a 70% or lower on an assessment question, we reflect on our practice, on the specific questions that have proven to be more challenging, or on the overall formative/summative assessments to see where the disconnect is in student achievement. Any necessary changes are made and any necessary intervention is provided as needed for students. Implementing these processes has significantly bolstered overall achievement in our middle school grades.

The curriculum in the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior levels has been chosen and designed by our teachers and reflects an effort to present diverse and progressively more challenging literary texts. For example, freshman classes read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, sophomore classes read *Fahrenheit 451*, junior classes study *A Raisin in the Sun*, and senior classes read *1984*. The study of these titles, among many others at each grade level, focuses on more than merely comprehending the text. Students are challenged to explore the historical context of what they read along with analyzing it in the context of current issues. Formative and summative assessments are used by all grade levels throughout learning units to gauge student understanding and, after analyzing the resulting data, specific concepts or areas of concern are retaught or addressed, if necessary. For example, at the sophomore level students practice numerous skills of literary analysis that they will encounter on the state's end of course assessment. Regular "checkpoint" assessments are given on the "Performance Matters" testing platform to gauge where students' skills appear to be strong or weak. Teachers collaborate to examine this data and address areas of concern as they are revealed. This process is indicative of what has contributed most to the entire English department's success: common planning and collaboration focused on our students' needs.

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

The Mathematics curriculum for grades 7 through 12 is organized and designed using the guidance and expectations outlined in the Ohio Learning Standards. The standards based instruction helps teachers create lessons that meet the needs of all students. A typical lesson begins on the smartboard and has a learning target that exemplifies the goals for the lesson. Students work through a problem of the day that is developed from a released itemized data analysis taken from the previous year's state end of course assessments. Think-pair-share is an often-used technique which allows students time to solve problems and share

individual thoughts on obtaining the correct answer. Discussion is welcomed by teachers and several methods are shared on how the problem was solved. Concepts directly aligned to the standards are consistently spiraled throughout the year to improve student and school performance. There are opportunities for students in all grade levels to take courses that are accelerated, honors, college credit plus, and advanced placement, as well as courses that are on a more basic level that require a more deliberate approach. We also offer a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) elective course for upper class students.

The types of teaching methods used in math include lecture-based instruction, differentiated instruction, technology-based learning, individual and small group learning, inquiry-based learning and kinesthetic learning. Lessons are often created in a choice board format, giving students the opportunity to work at their own pace, decide the pace, path, and direction for their learning, all while having elements of technology, group work, individual work, and teacher lead small groups.

Homework is one formative assessment given to students and self-checked with a teacher key each day. White boards are also used to illustrate learning during classroom instruction to obtain immediate feedback on whether the targeted skill is being understood, while online quizzes and games are another form of assessment used in class. Task cards are implemented to differentiate instruction, provide feedback and assess student performance during partner work or small group learning. Inquiry-based learning is achieved through student choice mastery boards during review.

The Performance Matters platform has been utilized by all grade levels to assist with developing both formative and summative common assessments. Quick Checks are a less time invasive yet effective tool used quarterly to assess data and analyze student performance. Teachers have the opportunity to reteach lessons or provide intervention during an Academic Assist period at the 7th and 8th grade levels if students fail to master a given standard, and students in grades 9-12 can seek extra help from our Math Lab or by arranging an agreeable time with their teacher.

Common planning and common assessments involving grade level colleagues or teachers of specific courses helps maintain a level of accountability and consistency in what is being taught and evaluated. Methods of teaching are always being tweaked. New strategies obtained from sharing best practices with colleagues are welcomed and utilized to create a positive learning environment for all students. Quarterly checkpoints focusing on the power standards are created by instructors with common courses along with our Director of Data and Assessment using Performance Matters. These checkpoints given at the midpoint of each grading period have proven to be invaluable as the data is gathered and reviewed by each team, who will then evaluate which standards could use additional review or be retaught, whether or not a reassessment is appropriate, and if any additional adjustments might need to be made to the content, delivery, or pace of instruction going forward.

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

Our Science curriculum content is derived from the Ohio Department of Education Science Standards. These standards are collaboratively broken down into specific units of instruction and used to create our formative, summative, and common assessments. Instructional strategies and data analysis of assessments go hand-in-hand when working to be sure that each student is working toward mastering the standards. Using these assessments and state tests, we utilize a backwards design approach breaking down the knowledge and skills needed to be successful on all assessments. Pre-assessments are developed and used to determine the levels of experience and prior knowledge of our students and to guide instructional planning and delivery. We use any resulting data to drive our instruction, differentiate, and meet the needs of each student as they grow and stretch their knowledge and skill. Our science teachers employ a variety of instructional strategies including direct instruction, building vocabulary, engaging videos, interactive technology, hands-on learning (labs, microscopes, etc.) cooperative learning, blended learning, 21st century skills, application and evaluation of science knowledge. A variety of assessment approaches and instruments (formative, summative, cumulative) are utilized on a frequent basis to measure how well each student mastered the standards, while additional labs and hands on activities are interspersed throughout the course so that all class members can further understand the relevance of the content.

Students in grades 9 through 12 are provided with opportunities to take courses at basic, on track, accelerated or honors levels, including Advanced Placement (AP) courses for Chemistry, Physics 1, Physics C, and Chemistry. College Credit Plus credits can be earned in Chemistry, and some of our Career Tech (CTE) programs include Honors Physiology and Forensic Biology as necessary components of their program requirements.

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

Students at LMHS are given opportunities to explore the various stages of history through multiple courses, beginning with ancient Greece through global exploration in grade 7 to an introduction to early American and U.S. History in 8th grade. Students in grades 9 through 12 are required to take one credit courses in World Studies, U.S. History, Government, and Financial Literacy. Advanced Placement U.S. History and AP Microeconomics are also options for students who would like to take a more rigorous course load with an opportunity to earn college credit.

A great majority of our students also take advantage of one or more of our social studies electives, including AP European History, Sociology, Psychology, Ethics, Holocaust Studies, Pop Culture, the American Presidency, and Global Contemporary Issues. Each course uses the standards established by the Ohio Department of Education as the basis for the scope and sequence of instruction, with all four social studies strands being used to illustrate how historic events are shaped by geographic, social, cultural, economic and political factors. One point of emphasis is helping students to develop their understanding of how ideas and events from the past have shaped the world today.

As with every other academic area, our teachers are given daily common planning time within their respective departments, being certain that course expectations and assessments are aligned to the instructional purposes. Teachers work to implement strategies, materials, and/or pacing to meet the needs of individual students including those who would benefit from additional challenges. Individual learning goals are supported with an appropriate balance of teacher-directed, independent, and collaborative instruction along with multiple options for helping students to demonstrate mastery.

All students in each of the six grade levels and various courses are provided with an engaging and worthwhile educational experience. Regardless of the course, teachers seek to identify core values our students can agree are the basis on which our country was founded (freedom, equality, independence, empathy, work ethic, etc.) and evaluate examples of how we as a nation have or have not lived up to those values. We hope to establish a foundational belief that while we are not a perfect country, we are a great country. In an age where our students have witnessed more than enough examples of division and discord, we make efforts to provide opportunities for our students to respectfully share their beliefs, opinions and thoughts in a constructive way that fosters dialogue and understanding.

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

Lake Middle High School prepares students for college and career opportunities through many avenues. Career exploration begins in the seventh grade with students researching careers, with a follow up to further investigate career options in ninth grade as students work through their mentoring classes to complete several interest inventories aligned with the Holland Codes.

LMHS currently has 37 honors courses available to students in grades 7-12. We also offer 13 AP courses, with almost 70% of our students taking AP classes qualifying for college credit with a score of 3 or above on their AP tests. Our College Credit Plus program offers 11 courses for all students and an additional 10 CCP courses offered through our career tech programs. All of these courses are offered in our building and taught by our teachers who have obtained adjunct professor status at one of two local college/universities. There are six more CCP courses available for students to take independently online for enrichment with our GenYes/IT instructor serving as the teacher of record. LMHS currently has over 300 students earning college credit through participation in our CCP program.

LMHS houses six career tech programs with three of those programs open to the other three schools in our CTE Compact. Our in-house programs include career fields in Business & Administrative Services, Health Science, Human Services and Information Technology. Our students are able to attend programs within the Compact to round out the career field opportunities. The LMHS Health Tech Prep program recently saw a 100% passage rate on the 12-point industry-recognized Physical Therapy Aide Assistant credential. Our Business Management and Marketing program will, for the second time, be sending students who earned a spot at the DECA International Career Development Conference. Students in this program continue to manage a daily coffee shop in conjunction with the JTC program, while also creating and running student designed small businesses via Junior Achievement and working part time jobs during their senior year. The Legal Studies Program has witnessed their Mock Trial program earning top student awards while securing a spot at Regionals nine times and at the State competition twice within the past 13 years. The GenYES/IT program has been on the forefront of student led break fix programs for the 7-12 student body. With the addition of our JTC (Job Training Coordination) program within the last several years, we have witnessed students learn hands on work training skills within our own community. Each of our programs housed at LMHS has combined to show upwards of 70% of our students reaching the 250 hours of work based learning this year in each of our career tech programs through job shadowing, volunteering, paid work, work simulations and mentors working side by side on projects and presentations.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Students in grades 7 through 12 have the opportunity to participate in band, orchestra, and choir, with each of the groups receiving instruction each day.

The band, orchestra, and choir programs each have ensembles at the 7th and 8th grade levels along with a middle school jazz band. Students in grades 9 through 12 can participate in the marching band, 3 ability-based concert ensembles, high school jazz band, and pep band while also having access to music electives. High school students may also play in the high school orchestra, or join one or more of our three high school choirs.

In addition to performing throughout our local and surrounding communities, our bands, orchestra, and choirs annually perform in the Ohio Music Education Association's Solo and Ensemble Adjudicated Events, consistently earning Superior and Excellent ratings. The high school band and orchestra also annually participate in the Large Group Adjudicated Event and also consistently earn Superior and Excellent ratings.

Students in grades 7 and 8 are required to take a visual art class for one grading period each year, with a select yet diverse group of 8th graders taking a full year of an art enrichment class. Students in grades 9 through 12 are required to have at least one visual or performing arts credit, with semester classes offered for Art 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, Graphic Design 1, 2, 3, 4, and Digital Photography. Art 3, AP Art Studio, AP Art History, and Multimedia Productions are full year classes.

All of us at LMHS can attest to the significant research that shows the academic, social, emotional, and physical benefits of active participation in the visual or performing arts, citing higher grades and attendance rates, as well as positive effects on self-esteem, confidence, creativity, and problem-solving skills. The research might also show that this is even more attainable when you have teachers in these areas who give our students a reason to show up each day.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Students in 8th grade complete an introductory yet relevant health curriculum over the course of a nine week grading period, while at the high school level our 10th graders are required to complete a comprehensive curriculum that extensively covers nutrition, healthy relationships & violence prevention, safety, sexual health, depression education & suicide awareness, mental & emotional health, personal health & wellness, violence prevention, and Alcohol, tobacco, & other drugs (ATOD). The purpose of LMHS's health education program is to empower student learning and success in our continually evolving society. Our students will develop skills that assist decision-making needed to maintain optimal health. The total wellness approach will focus on physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and mental health for lifetime success. The curriculum will directly address the qualities needed for self-awareness, confidence, critical thinking, goal setting, time management, responsible decision-making, and grit.

Students in grades 7 and 8 take Physical Education for 50 minutes each day during one 9-week grading period, and 9-12 graders are required to earn a half credit of PE. High school students may also choose to take elective courses in Sports and Performance Training or Strength and Conditioning. Using the Ohio State Physical Education Standards as a guide, students create their own fitness plans while also being assessed in cognitive, physical skill, and social interactions. In addition to the physical benefits, participation in PE and a mastery of the standards supports students in the classroom by providing social and emotional health benefits, stress relief, and improvements in focus and sleep habits.

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

The Foreign language curriculum offered at Lake Middle High School includes German, Spanish, French and American Sign Language. These classes are available to students in grades 8-12 and are designed to support their acquisition of essential skills and knowledge.

Classes are offered on a daily basis throughout the entire school year, providing students with ample opportunities to immerse themselves in their chosen language. Our curriculum focuses on all aspects of language learning, including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, reading, writing, and communication. Each of the World Languages that are offered also include cultural components that help students understand the customs, traditions, and values of the target language community.

According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), language learning is a core component essential to the education of every student. Language learning develops essential 21st century skills as learners broaden their thinking beyond self-serving goals, begin to understand diverse cultural perspectives and their own identity, and become more adept in face-to-face interactions. The Foreign Language curriculum at Lake Middle High School is designed to help students develop the linguistic and cultural competence necessary to flourish and advance in an increasingly globalized world.

2d. Technology/library/media

Our LMHS library, the "Hot Spot," welcomes all learners. Students have open access to the school library during their study hall, privilege, and lunch periods. Multiple grade levels regularly schedule literacy visits. Monthly Book Clubs average over 70 attendees. This year, we are on target to check out close to 12,000 books and about 8,000 titles from our digital collection including audiobooks, e-books, and e-magazines. Students also check out books to read for the summer. Our readers can also visit our on-site, local public library branch during school hours.

Our school library sponsors special all-school events like "Poetry Palooza" where students participate in over 20 poetry-based activities, or "Read for the Health of It" emphasizing the mental and physical benefits of reading and self-care. Our literacy promotions include book give-aways donated by Books-a-Million. Students can also visit our "Lake House," a quiet space for reflection. Our Math and English teachers assigned to our Academic Lab program take advantage of our available spaces and facilities on a daily basis to provide tutoring in Math and English.

Teachers in all grade levels collaborate with our Media Specialist to provide research instruction using our subscription databases and INFOhio resources. Our tech classes and junior/senior classes utilize career prep

tools using digital resources. Both catapult our usage statistics to the top in Ohio.

We are readers, researchers and innovators at LMHS!

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

The GenYes IT program is now in its 7th year and was instituted at the same time our district began its 1:1 laptop initiative. GenYes is a 3-year CTE program offering CCP courses and IT training to select students who will simultaneously provide tech support for students as well as professional development and support for staff district-wide. Students are encouraged to apply to this program when they begin scheduling for their sophomore classes, are interviewed by our GenYes coordinator, and then receive the ongoing training and guidance to provide an invaluable service to our school.

GenYes students assist with laptop distributions and returns, setting up laptops for 7th graders, new students and staff, presentations and robotics trainings for students in all grade levels district-wide, and occasionally preparing and presenting training sessions to both certified and classified staff. There are students assigned to the GenYes room every period of every day to troubleshoot, repair, and maintain our technological devices, from individual laptops to desktops to the two interactive display boards in each classroom. Students are put into positions where they can acquire the knowledge and skills that will prepare them well for future education or opportunities with technology, while also developing the invaluable soft skills that will serve them well regardless of which academic or career path they wish to pursue.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Ongoing professional development is provided for our teachers giving them the training, tools, and resources to support their classroom instruction and meet the needs of all learners. There has always been a tremendous emphasis on using a more personalized approach to address individual learning needs rather than employing one strategy for everyone. As a result, our differentiated instructional strategies promote equity in the classroom and account for different learning styles as well as individual student backgrounds and experiences.

Teachers work to initiate and develop a partnership with parents as they communicate any concerns with regard to student performance or if there are any noticeable behaviors or attitudes that might be contributing negatively to a student's performance. Making contact with and meeting with additional team members that may include a student's school counselor, other teachers and, when appropriate, an intervention specialist encourages a more collaborative and supportive approach.

Students performing below grade level are encouraged to request or are given resources to help them improve their skills. Individual tutoring sessions before or after school, during an academic assist period, or during a teacher's planning period can help to address specific areas of need and promote confidence. Videos of lessons designed by the teacher, peer tutoring, a referral to an academic lab, and any necessary reteaching, review, and reassessing from the teacher or intervention specialist can also assist with helping students to close any gaps in the learning process.

Students who are credit deficient or who tend to struggle in a more traditional school setting can be recommended for the Lake Alternative Learning School (grades 9-12) or the Lake Streak Support and Connections program (grades 7-8) to receive help navigating a digital program in a smaller group instructional setting. Both of these programs have also proven to be beneficial when addressing social and/or mental health concerns that appear to be contributing to a lack of achievement in the classroom.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students performing above grade level are challenged to use resources provided by the teacher on the weekly agenda to go further in their learning when concepts are mastered prior to their peers. Choice boards

give opportunities for students to challenge themselves as well with material that is analytical and applicable to above grade level expectations. Students may also enter the next grade level early to assure appropriate level of instruction is benefiting the accelerated learner.

Students above grade level are given opportunities to analyze, evaluate, create, and reflect on their learning. Building a classroom community in which students feel safe and accepted is critical, allowing them to take risks to learn and grow. Instructional strategies used with high achieving students include, tiered instruction, open-ended assignments, project based learning, compacted curriculum, flexible grouping of students, and pre-assessing to allow students to learn at a faster pace. Honors and accelerated courses are offered for students who need a faster paced curriculum with deeper learning.

In addition to the honors and accelerated courses, students in grades 9 through 12 are also given the opportunity to take College Credit Plus (CCP) and Advanced Placement (AP) classes. Although there is an option for students to take CCP courses on a college campus, we have several teachers at LMHS who serve as adjunct professors for local colleges, allowing our students to take college-level courses in a more familiar and convenient environment. It is not unusual for our students who take AP courses, CCP courses, or a combination of the two paths to graduate from high school with at least a full year of college credits completed. Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, we will also offer an elective STEAM class to further explore and enhance creative thought and real-world opportunities in math and science, with plans to progressively expand this initial class to a three year program.

For those who are considerably motivated and might not have room within the standard school day, there are opportunities to take some of our more rigorous courses as an independent study.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Students with disabilities are monitored closely according to their specific needs. Differentiated instruction is provided and the approach is varied depending on the IEP and 504 plan. Preferential seating, read-aloud, small group testing, extended time, modified assignments and assessments and other specific accommodations are followed daily to assure student growth. Our teachers, counselors, school psychologist, and parents collaborate as a team to note what works best for each student at the beginning and during the school year, while also valuing input from those who have previously worked with that student. Communication between and among all parties is a necessity if our students are to achieve, and the needs of our students, regardless of the number or type of disabilities, take priority as the inevitable successes, challenges, and changes are monitored throughout the school year.

On track English, Math, and Science classes in grades 7 through 12 include sections that are co-taught with an intervention specialist. Basic Math and English classes are also offered all four years of high school, along with Basic Integrated Science, Basic Biology, and Basic Government.

We currently have three classrooms with classes of students with multiple disabilities (MD) divided appropriately into age groups. While the pacing and expectations of their curriculum are adapted and include an emphasis on life skills and developing independence, these students are given every opportunity to be included in the activities, programs, projects, and events at Lake Middle High School.

Several of our students with disabilities are also scheduled into one of our many Career Tech programs, and all are encouraged and welcome to participate in our band, orchestra, choir, athletics, and other extra-curricular activities including the grades 7 and 8 play, grades 9-12 fall play, and the Spring musical.

In addition to the support provided by our teachers and staff, we are currently resurrecting our Buddy Program now that the precautions associated with COVID are no longer necessary. Students across the grade levels are invited to assist and socialize with our MD students during the school day as they navigate their various projects, classes, and events. Members of our Buddy Program as well as our marching band and cheerleaders also participate in our schoolwide send off parade on the day these students participate in our All-County Exceptional Olympics.

3d. English Language Learners:

Prior to this school year, we have had a very minimal number of English Language Learners who were serviced primarily by our English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher who is employed by the district. There was actually less of a need to assist with the students' ability to communicate or comprehend the English language, with the greater concern being addressing how teachers and school personnel can best communicate with non or limited English speaking parents. Administrators and teachers have been introduced to the various apps and methods that will translate any necessary communications, employing them for everything from progress reports, IEP's, and report cards to the mass call out and email communications that are generated from our principal.

The largest contingent of both student and parent English Language Learners in our school building are of Ukrainian descent. As you might have predicted, we have had families and individual students arrive in our district as a result of the conflicts that have occurred in their homeland over the last thirteen months. Our ESL teacher had initially helped to assist with the enrollment process as well as with helping these students become acclimated to their new surroundings. However, due to the significant language barrier as well as the expectation that these students would be required to adhere to our academic and graduation requirements, we have employed a native Ukrainian speaking teacher who works individually with our students who require assistance. Our teachers now take full advantage of this valuable addition to our staff, our ESL teacher, and the apps and resources that have been introduced to them to help with lesson delivery, communication, academic assistance, and any other routine day to day tasks that will best help these students to thrive.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

All staff members, including administrators, teachers, and classified personnel make a conscious effort to be visible and present in the hallways while also making time to attend and become involved with our athletic events, fine arts performances, dances, and any of our many school activities. It is during these times when our students have an opportunity to observe people who model appropriate social etiquette and behavior, and perhaps even catch a glimpse of the more personal side of their teachers, coaches, and trusted adults in their roles as husbands, wives, parents, and grandparents. This also gives our staff members opportunities to build a rapport and trust with students that will most likely carry over to our hallways and classrooms.

Our building is now in the third year of implementing the PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) initiative, a framework that guides school teams in the selection, integration and implementation of evidence-based practices for improving academic, social and behavior outcomes for all students. The reminders and expectations for our students to “Be Responsible, Be Respectful, and Be Safe” are prominently displayed throughout the school building, with teachers and staff working to incorporate positive incentives such as “Blue Streak Bucks”, hand-written letters, or well-deserved recognition.

Pep rallies, class trips, food truck days, and staff vs. student contests are among the additional events that engage all involved in fun-filled experiences that can unify our students and staff and provide opportunities for camaraderie, recognition, positivity and quite possibly just a simple mental health break.

A privilege system for students in grades 9-12 has proven to be a tremendous incentive for students while providing a bit of leverage for teachers and administrators. Students who have a “C” or above for all classes and acceptable attendance and behavior at the interim and end of each grading period are permitted to take advantage of our “Hot Spot” media center, student center, stairs of collaboration (SOC), or any of our other learning areas rather than reporting to study hall. Freshman earn this privilege in place of their mentoring classes on Fridays only, sophomores use it each day for the study hall next to their lunch, and juniors and seniors can have privileges for each of their study halls while also having a late start or early release if their study halls fall at the beginning or end of the school day.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Lake Middle High School is the anchor of a campus that includes the Lake Community YMCA, the Lake Community Branch of the Stark Library, the Lake Chamber of Commerce, and the Cleveland Clinic Mercy Hospital Health Center. Our closest community partners work with us to provide additional facilities, convenient services, and a collaborative approach toward addressing the physical and overall health needs of our students, staff, and families. The public library is conveniently located adjacent to our own library/media center, “The Hot Spot”, allowing our students access to additional books, materials, programs, and services. Our district is also fortunate to have a partnership with our local Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health organization giving us an opportunity to provide our students with an on-site mental health therapist.

Our Family Support Specialist works closely with the Stark County Care Team network to provide assistance and support for our students’ families who may have experienced a hardship, loss, or who might be currently experiencing a crisis or simply a string of bad luck. The FSS will collaborate with our own LMHS CARE team which includes our school counselors, administrators, teachers, and community members to determine a plan of action for meeting the needs of our families and to track if or how the family is progressing. Our school also receives exceptional service from our two School Resource Officers who are employed through the Stark County Sheriff Department. We are extremely fortunate to have two deputies in our building each day to help foster relationships and provide an extra measure of security during the school day and at school activities.

Many of our teachers and academic programs have established valuable relationships with area colleges and businesses who have provided our students with field trips, on-site workshops and internships, and

opportunities to shadow or receive mentoring from experienced professionals. These include, but are certainly not limited to engineering and IT collaborations with the Timken Company, Bridgestone Firestone, Goodyear, the University of Akron, and Cleveland State University. Our Marketing program has worked extensively with Junior Achievement as well as numerous local business leaders who have assisted with our students who start and manage their own businesses. The Legal Studies program has participated annually in mock trial competitions, receiving advanced training and advice from a number of local attorneys and judges as well as the Stark County Bar Association. As mentioned in other areas, LMHS students are able to take courses for College Credit Plus (CCP) credit from Stark State College and Kent State University-Stark Campus from our own teachers and in our own classrooms.

The Lake community is blessed with a number of churches that take an active role in the spiritual lives of our families and students. Our Fellowship of Christian Students organizations for students in grades 7-12 help to encourage students to grow and strengthen their religious commitments, and churches of all denominations, including Evermore Community Church, Bethel Mennonite Church, The Chapel in Green, and area Catholic churches take an active role in supporting our school and recognizing our students, teachers, and staff.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

We are extremely fortunate to have a somewhat unique professional culture at Lake Middle High School where teachers value and support each other and openly appreciate the mutual trust and respect that is apparent in their relationships with the administration.

Our master schedule is carefully built around being certain that our teachers can have a common planning time each day. There is no question that the opportunity for teachers to determine policies, plan instruction, and collaborate to develop common assessments with fellow department members and particularly with those who are teaching identical courses has been the primary reason for exemplary academic achievement by our students and school. Students and parents appreciate the consistency in approaches from our teachers and yet, the teachers are very aware that while there is an expectation for common planning, there is no expectation for common delivery. There are very few “no’s” when it comes to the strategies or tools used for lesson delivery or for the methods or approaches employed to assess student learning at LMHS. We trust our teachers.

Professional Development is provided to teachers on specified days prior to and during the school year, and our district has also permitted us to have anywhere from three to five 2-hour delayed start days for PD. Each PD session typically begins with a 20-30 minute school safety lesson or update provided by our SRO’s. The schedule for the day will most likely include any immediate training or instruction that might be needed for any new initiatives or processes. We also ask our own teachers to present sessions that provide guidance for a best practice for instruction or assessment, building and fostering relationships, or navigating through the evaluation process. We feel strongly that “the experts are among us”, and our teachers have an opportunity to choose from a number of options where they feel they need to grow. Prior to COVID, we asked every teacher to present to their colleagues at least once over the course of the school year. We are gradually returning to a practice that has proven to be invaluable as a PD tool while also providing a side benefit that seemed to unify our staff. A survey is issued to all who participate in our PD days, asking for feedback on the sessions that were provided as well as input as to what else they would like to see in future PD days. These surveys are used as the immediate starting point when planning the next steps for professional development.

As with most of us, food and “dress down days” seem to be great morale boosters. Staff breakfasts are held on the first Friday of each month, and all who work at LMHS are encouraged to attend and bring along any children or family members who might want to start their day with a great meal. Donuts or refreshments are provided for most PD days and all faculty meetings, and a large number of our teachers are able to leave the campus for lunch on Fridays. Staff members are permitted to wear jeans or more casual yet appropriate attire on Fridays. There are also occasions when we allow Jeans Days due to special events or to raise funds for a special cause.

The visibility, accessibility, and unwavering support and encouragement of the LMHS administration is evident and appreciated by the teachers and, consequently, each of the principals recognizes and values the passion each teacher has for their subject matter and for our students. We care about our students, and we also care about each other. This is why we succeed.

4. School Leadership:

LMHS has a leadership structure that includes one head principal, three associate principals, department chairs for the various subject areas (Math, English, Art, etc.) for grades 9-12 as well as department chairs for grades 7-8. The head of our counseling department, our district media specialist, and the lead teachers for each of our grades 9-12 and 7-8 special education departments are also included with this group that constitutes our building leadership team. Monthly meetings include agenda items that are submitted by our district curriculum director along with any matters from the administrative team that need to be discussed. Department chairs are also encouraged to provide any questions or concerns that may have arisen from their respective groups that could possibly impact our staff, students, or overall school. If there is an issue that needs to be addressed or clarified that is more department-specific, the building principal or an associate principal will attend that particular department's weekly meeting.

The building administrators are very intentional about being visible throughout the school day in the hallways, classrooms, cafeteria, and larger gathering areas. Students and staff begin each day with the Pledge of Allegiance led by the building principal, and there is a high likelihood that the great majority of our students will see each principal at least once over the course of the school day. It is highly unusual for a student, teacher, or staff member to pass by an administrator without a greeting or some casual remarks initiated by one or the other. It is this familiarity, positive rapport, and emphasis on establishing and cultivating relationships that fosters a building culture where each person feels respected and valued. Regardless of where they are on the academic, behavioral, or emotional spectrum, our students know that we care about them and that we are here for them, and you really don't need to look too closely to see that our students actually care about their teachers.

There is a collective effort and consistent approach from the administration which encourages teachers to seek out any of the building leaders for advice, guidance, and support. Certified and classified staff will comment frequently about the backing that they receive from the administration, and they genuinely appreciate the accessibility of our principals if there is ever a question, concern, or a need to discuss matters of a professional or personal nature. Our teachers are continually encouraged to take advantage of professional development opportunities, to try new things, and to step outside of their comfort zones, understanding and accepting that all of us, as educators, need to continually seek ways to grow and improve and that we cannot fear failure. There is an obvious trust and a collaborative spirit that unites our staff and administration with the common theme being that we need to exhaust all of our collective resources and do all that we can to provide our students with a positive, productive, and memorable educational experience. We need to work together and take advantage of every opportunity to show our students that we care, and we do.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The demographics of LMHS clearly indicate that we do not have a particularly diverse student or teacher population when looking at our racial or ethnic populations. Our largest group of people that makes up most of our cultural diversity would be those with a Ukrainian background. For what we lack in day-to-day exposure or interactions with students who are from different ethnic backgrounds, an effort is made to educate our students about people from various origins primarily through our World Language classes and Social Studies curriculums, while also striving to have our students exposed to different cultures and socioeconomic groups through experiences available in our extra-curricular and athletic programs.

Our school has made a significant effort to open its doors and rally around our Ukrainian population within the last 14 months or so, offering assistance to those locally while also providing necessities that were shipped to relatives in their homeland.

Students and families who are economically disadvantaged or those who might be experiencing an unexpected downturn financially are supported through a collaborative effort from our Family Support Specialist, CARE Team, counseling office and administration along with our students and staff. Junior Service is an organization comprised of students in grades 7 and 8 who coordinate our Thanksgiving Food Drive and Community Christmas, meeting the immediate needs of families in our community at a time of year that can prove to be the most challenging. Our local churches, food bank, and an invaluable organization, Love Our Community, partner with our students as well as our National Honor Society to provide assistance on a more year-round basis.

Probably the best sources of information for those who have diverse needs or who might be experiencing some frustrations would be our teachers and students, with the great majority being adept at spotting situations where interventions might be necessary or finding those who might be struggling due to a recent loss or sudden change. It is not unusual for a teacher to notice a change in attitude, performance, or appearance, bringing it to the attention of their colleagues who work together to provide solutions. One instance that stands out occurred when a teacher noticed a rather shy, backward young man arrived at school one day after an unfortunate interaction with a pet, forcing him to start his day with an odor and appearance that obviously drew some second glances. The teacher brought it to our attention at 8:25 a.m., and by 10:00 the student was able to shower, put on new clothes and shoes, regroup, and return to class.

As what appears to be a trend in schools nationwide, our LGBTQA2+ population has increased and become more noticeable, and we are seeing more teenagers who are struggling with their identities, what names and pronouns to use, and the potential backlash from family and/or society that ensues. Our LMHS staff received professional development to help them to be more familiar with the needs of our LGBTQA2+ students as well as the mental health issues that some of them experience. As was mentioned and agreed upon by our educators, when speaking about and addressing anything dealing with this population, we are not asking anyone to agree or disagree, we are simply making an effort to be sure that we are taking care of these kids.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Walking the halls, visiting the classrooms, or perusing the flurry of activity in our facilities and on our fields, an impartial observer will no doubt be impressed with the visual layout of our building and the quality of the tools and technology available to our teachers and student body. It is a safe bet that they would be greeted by passersby and would not need to look too far to find an eager teacher or student who would be more than happy to expound on what sets Lake Middle High School apart, why our school should be held up as an educational model or, in terms more familiar to us, why are we “Great at Lake”?

As with many parts of this application, feedback was solicited from teachers and staff members along with pockets of our student body to get their take on what is the one practice that has been instrumental in our quest to be included among the elite schools in America. Even with that simple request, we were met with a number of responses reminding us that we are a student-centered learning community with competitive professionals who are seemingly never quite satisfied and always on a quest to get better. We have people who value the daily opportunities to collaborate, focusing on the planning, differentiation, and assessment of instruction. Our leaders and teams spend an exhausting amount of time examining the data and determining where and how we intervene when a student does not understand, and what our next steps are to further challenge those who do. And yet, as detail-oriented and determined and competitive as we are, we are not interested in competing with each other, choosing instead to work together to be sure that each of our actions and decisions consider the academic, social, physical, and emotional needs of each of our 1600 students. That will always be our challenge and, according to our strategic plan, that is our vision.

When asked why we are “Great at Lake”, the responses overwhelmingly mentioned our daily efforts to build and nurture relationships with students, staff, families, and our community. All that we do, and all that we hope to be, can only be achieved with people who show up for each class, each concert, each contest, and each day with a genuine passion for what they do and, more importantly, an unwavering care and concern for each student.

Four weeks after arriving at Lake as a freshman, a student who had spent his entire school life in another high performing district offered this unsolicited observation. This fifteen-year-old young man said, “Knowing what I know now, I don’t think I could have ever made it in my other school.”

“So what is the difference?” he was asked.

And he responded, “People care about me at Lake.”

Leave it to a Lake kid. It took us over 400 words to respond, and he was able to do it in six.