

U.S. Department of Education
2016 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 David W. Santore Ed.D.

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

Official School Name Dover Air Force Base Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3100 Hawthorne Drive

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Dover State DE Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19901-5391

County Kent County

Telephone (302) 674-3284 Fax (302) 730-4283

Web site/URL http://www.crk12.org/abms E-mail david.santore@cr.k12.de.us

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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

Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald E-mail kevin.fitzgerald@cr.k12.de.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Caesar Rodney Tel. (302) 698-4800

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. William Bush
(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, write N/A in the space.*

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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	28	35	63
7	34	36	70
8	31	39	70
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	93	110	203

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 22 % Black or African American
 - 18 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 53 % White
 - 3 % 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 21%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	19
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	25
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	44
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	208
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.212
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	21

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
3 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Tagalog

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 27 %
Total number students who qualify: 55

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
21 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 1 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 1 Orthopedic Impairment
- 7 Other Health Impaired
- 11 Specific Learning Disability
- 4 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	8
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 26:1

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No X

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

DABMS is committed to enhancing and sustaining student academic achievement in a safe environment, and to assist learners in developing skills to become responsible citizens.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Dover Air Base Middle School is a public school that primarily serves students of military personnel stationed at Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Delaware. The school houses approximately 205 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. It is one of three middle schools in the Caesar Rodney School District. Following their eighth grade year, most students go to Caesar Rodney High School, the district's flagship school. Our feeder school, Welch Elementary, is in the same building, though run by an entirely separate school administration.

Dover Air Force Base Middle School is housed in a building that was erected in 1961, and at the time served all students from K-12 who resided on the air base. Since the school's inception in 1961, the Caesar Rodney School District has been contracted to operate the schools on the air base. The terms of the agreement have been for three or five years at a time; however, each year, the contract must be renewed. The base contract provides the funding for the education of the military students, and Caesar Rodney schools, in turn, must provide similar programs to the two sister schools in the district. It should be noted that the military plans to begin construction on a brand new joint facility for Welch Elementary School and Dover Air Force Base Middle School in the summer of 2017.

In 1981, after 20 years of being a K-12 school building, the high school students went to Caesar Rodney High School after the eighth grade due to declining enrollment. Since that time, the configuration in the building has remained the same. Welch Elementary handles all K-5 students, while Dover Air Base Middle School takes them from grades 6-8. In addition to the students residing on base, the school accepts school choice students, who may also attend. These school choice students are primarily students of other military personnel who choose to live in off-base housing, as well as children of employees.

Recently, the school has enjoyed acknowledgment as a State of Delaware Recognition School in both 2012 for improvement of test scores for traditionally low-scoring populations, as well as again in 2016 for outstanding academic achievement. In addition, Dover Air Base Middle School was recognized as one of the 50 Best Middle Schools in the country by thebestschools.org for the past three years.

The outstanding character and work ethic of the United States Air Force is rooted in the culture of the school. Behavior problems are minimal due to the strong parental presence and core values of the armed forces. The parents expect that we hold their students to a very high behavioral and academic standard, and we do. The school is truly a community school, as there are no buses to transport students, and each morning most students make the walk through the quiet neighborhood to arrive at school on time and ready to learn. It is a community bonded by the importance of their duties to our country, as well as to each other. This is even more evident when family members deploy for various duties around the world. It is a caring and close-knit group of parents all raising their children in similar circumstances. The parents are a constant presence in the school, inquiring how to best assist their child through the difficult middle school years. This community demonstrates the old adage, "It takes a village to raise a child," more enthusiastically than most. Our staff is excellent at assisting the parents through a student's social and emotional development.

One of the primary challenges to the success of the school is that the military students are very transient. When they get to the sixth grade, it is common for us to be their third or fourth academic institution due to the nature of their parents' role with the military. This presents the unique obstacle of doing our best to ensure that all the students, who have tremendously different educational backgrounds and experiences, are able to meet their full potential. To accomplish this, we use a multi-faceted intervention program that is designed to allow struggling learners to fill in their learning gaps. These interventions not only concentrate on re-teaching critical material, but also focus on pre-teaching high-priority core content that is essential for student understanding. These programs work in concert with the exceptional classroom instruction by an outstanding, veteran group of teachers to maximize the effectiveness of the student learning experience. Finally, our differentiated instruction period for Math and Language Arts allows us to provide additional instruction to maximize all of our students' potential. For example, students who are advanced receive assignments one or two grades above their levels each and every day, while those students who struggle are receiving instruction on the prerequisites necessary to be successful in the classroom.

The level of expertise of our staff enables us to maximize the effectiveness of these programs.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The school adheres very closely to all Common Core Standards to guide the instruction of its core courses. The strategies employed in each class all have their foundation in the principles of Learning Focused Schools (LFS). There is tremendous consistency in the instructional delivery across content areas, which fosters the structure and routine necessary for students to succeed throughout the day.

The English Language Arts program has been revamped over the past two years with three major changes. The first change is new materials have been purchased as the literary base for the program. The new program is significantly more rigorous than the previous series, and has more available embedded non-fiction. In addition, there are more resources for re-teaching and differentiation. The teachers continue to supplement the series with excerpts of novels to give the students a more varied approach to literature. Throughout the year, the teachers engage the students in several performance tasks in which students must persevere to synthesize the information from various sources to produce a narrative, persuasive or expository product. Critical reading is at the core of what students do each and every day.

The second major change is that the ELA program is entirely paperless. All ELA classes have their students use Chromebooks for the entire class period. They use this in conjunction with Google Docs and Schoology to engage the students in the use of technology to enhance the learning experience. This allows the students to work on assignments at home and also allows their parents to assist them throughout the year, as there are many helpful re-teaching tools available through the program.

The last change is that there is currently an advanced section of Language Arts available in grades seven and eight. Students are identified through data and teacher recommendation, and are placed for the entire year in this more rigorous program. Approximately one-third of our students are placed in Advanced ELA. The advanced students read additional materials on a higher Lexile level, complete more writing prompts, and are exposed to more performance tasks than their peers in the standard class.

Math has undergone changes recently as well, as we have secured new materials within the last three years. The Core Mathematics curriculum is a blend of skill, conceptual understanding, and application problems. In an effort to ensure that the Math program is more aligned with Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), more supplementing of Depth of Knowledge Level II and III problems are integrated to promote higher level thinking and problem solving. Additionally, students strengthen their basic skills through our Content II program to assist them in the regular math classroom. Advanced mathematics is available in each of the three grade levels this year. In grade six, students work through the same curriculum at an accelerated rate with a focus on a deeper level of understanding of the topics being covered. Students in advanced mathematics in grade seven use a curriculum that integrated the major topics in grades 7 and 8, while the eighth grade advanced students complete the 9th grade Algebra curriculum.

Our Science curriculum is the approved State of Delaware Science Coalition program. The program is made up of four or five units, based on grade level, and is kit-based. For example, in sixth grade, units include “Body Systems,” “Force and Motion,” and “Simple Machines.” In seventh grade some highlights of the curriculum are “Diversity of Life,” “Genetics,” and “Properties of Matter.” In eighth grade, included are the kits “Transformation of Energy” and “Weather.” The State of Delaware provides a standardized training for the kits. Once trained, each year the teachers receive kits in intervals delivered from the state to complete the particular unit. The kits are in the process of being aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards.

Our Social Studies courses utilize the Social Studies Coalition of Delaware’s “Delaware Recommended Curriculum” (DRC) to guide the students’ learning. These units are developed to coincide with the Social Studies Content Standards and the Common Core. The units in sixth and seventh grade are theme-based and explore topics over time rather than the more typical chronological approach. In sixth grade, topics include “Global Mental Mapping,” “Economic Systems,” and “Humans and the Environment.” In seventh grade,

units include “Expansion of Freedom,” “Why Trade,” and “Partnerships and Partitions.” The program is capped in eighth grade with a more traditional historical approach to US History.

In line with our College and Career Readiness philosophy, the teachers concentrate on the Key Content Knowledge (Know) aspect of the “Think, Know, Act, Go,” model in the classroom. This model was part of our professional development in the beginning of the year. Our school focuses heavily on the real world application of their content knowledge to promote problem solving skills and approaches to learning. In addition, writing across the curriculum is emphasized in all subject areas, and is taught explicitly in the ELA classroom, so that when students write in their other classes, there is a concentration of multiple modes of writing (descriptive, expository, and analytic). Finally, there is the constant reminder that hard work is the most important personal trait of all. We stress individual effort over aptitude daily.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our Related Arts courses include Art, Library Science, Technology Education, Business, Family and Consumer Science, Health, Gym, and Music. Students have Gym and Health, Technology Education, and Art each of their three years at Dover Air Base Middle School. Additionally, in sixth grade, these four courses are combined with Music and Library Science. In seventh Grade, they are joined with Library Science and Family and Consumer Science, and in Eighth grade, they are joined by Business and Family and Consumer Science. Each course meets for one trimester, or 12 weeks per year.

All teachers are expected to provide instruction that ensures that students achieve the standards established by the district, state and/or federal government for their content areas (in those areas where standards have been completed). Where State Standards have not been developed, relevant national standards are used for our Related Arts courses.

The Art course progresses throughout the years to give the students a full art experience that begins with the Japanese Art of Origami and culminates with a student self-portrait, which allows the students to demonstrate their knowledge of many different aspects of realistic drawing, including value, proportion, and shading. Throughout the three years students are exposed to various artistic media to complete the many projects required of them.

The Technology course sees the students begin their engagement in basic problem solving design principles, as well as the creation of automata. Such components as gears and cams are explored to ensure the movements of the automata creations are carried out properly. Other favorite activities include making an automobile harness system so that an egg survives a “crash,” and also to plan and create a structure in eighth grade that asks students to design a balancing arm to maximum extension.

The Health course also meets each year. Students are engaged in topics such as making informed nutritional selections as well as strong choices when confronted with unwanted peer pressure. As the students get older, the topics are more age-appropriate. For instance, peer pressure regarding cigarettes and drinking are explored in 6th and 7th grades, while peer pressure regarding sex and drinking are explored in 8th grade.

Our gym classes concentrate on being active, and you will rarely see our students at rest in the gymnasium during Physical Education. Various non-traditional games are played, such as floor hockey with three balls and four nets at the same time. These types of activities reduce the amount of idle time the students have in the class. Activities are designed for students to remain active throughout the entire period.

Library Science is dedicated to having students learn about the qualities of strong research, including discerning between credible sources from those that are not. The research they complete is then integrated into various projects.

Our Business course contains a unit that has students explore possible careers as they get older based on their personality and what they believe are their strengths, etc... In addition, typing skills are sharpened to allow them to be more efficient for their schoolwork.

Our general music course has students learn about various types of instruments (brass, strings, woodwinds, etc...), as well as how music plays a part in various aspects of life. Students also learn music reading basics, as well as the effects of tempo and dynamics.

Family and Consumer Science is an introductory culinary course. Students make a variety of dishes, as well as learn about valuable life skills, such as budgeting.

Essential arts teachers are asked to participate in the success of the school by also integrating Common Core aligned writing assignments throughout the year to support writing standards. They are expected to complete one per trimester. In addition, throughout the year, Related Arts classes are expected to target skills identified as a weakness by the state test.

Band and Chorus are popular programs at Dover Air Base Middle School, and meet before school hours each day. Band meets for 45 minutes four days a week, while Chorus meets every Wednesday. Nearly one third of our student body participates in Band and/or Chorus.

Dover Air Base Middle School is proud to be a part of the Governor's World Language Program, which allows up to 50 of our students to learn Spanish throughout the year. The program is a hybrid format, with most of the course experienced online through Middlebury, our online learning partner. In addition, a language teacher meets with the students on a weekly basis to provide the conversational learning component of the program.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

All students are heterogeneously grouped. They receive 50 minutes of tier one instruction provided in the regular classroom by their classroom teachers. Learning is guided by the Common Core Standards and the Learning Focused Schools (LFS) framework. By implementing the LFS approach to instruction, all students are addressed at their level. Each lesson has four components, including:

1. An Essential question based on CCSS which focuses each lesson and guides student learning,
2. An Activating strategy to engage and link student's prior knowledge to the upcoming lesson,
3. Teaching strategies including collaborative pairs, a variety of graphic organizers and distributed summaries to solidify students understanding of the concept being taught, and assessment prompts which provide the opportunity for the teacher to gauge student understanding, and
4. Summarizing strategies which solidify students understanding and allow students the opportunity to answer the Essential question.

Tier II and III support is provided during Content II where students are homogeneously grouped and the instruction focuses on either filling the gaps students have so they may be more successful in the tier I setting, or enriching their educational experience with a variety of performance tasks. The schedule provides a 49 minute block of time daily where students receive Content II. For example, there may be four groups, which include an accelerated group, an on-level group, a tier II group and a tier II intensive group. The group size for both tier II groups is 8-12 students. Students are grouped by a number of data points which may include SBAC data, DCAS data, classroom observations and assessments, Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) screener, or the Achieve 3000 screener. All students who scored low on the SBAC as well as some students who scored below and have another indicator have been enrolled in SMI and Achieve 3000.

We also employ a student support class for our tier three students, which uses the LFS acceleration model for students who need additional support topics based on need. It is a pre-teaching model. For instance, students may read the story and preview the vocabulary they will be experiencing in their regular ELA class the following week.

Support for all tiers is also provided before and after school. Specific students have been targeted as needing extra support, however, all students who show an interest are encouraged to participate. Teachers use curriculum based interventions in math and Achieve 3000 in reading during the tutoring sessions.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Formative assessment is used extensively at Dover Air base Middle School. Distributive summarizing is a mandatory teaching component, and occurs several times throughout an acquisition lesson to determine whether or not the students understand the content being taught. This can be done in several different forms, such as a quick discussion between collaborative pairs, summary point writing, a think-write-share, etc... A summary then occurs at the end of class to determine whether or not the students understood the essential question. That exit ticket takes many forms, such as a 3-2-1, "The Most Important Thing..." etc... These techniques are used extensively by our teachers in all classes, including all core and related arts courses.

Exit tickets are analyzed afterwards to assess individual understanding of the material being taught during the lesson. After analyzing the exit tickets, teachers determine whether to re-teach the concept, or to address it in small groups or individually, or to go on to the next concept. This was a focus of our professional development two years ago, and the teachers are very adept at addressing learning gaps in this manner. It allows for those students who are struggling to be worked with early, therefore reducing the gaps between them and their peers.

We have maintained a high level of achievement by ensuring our summative assessments are crafted to ensure they meet the rigor expected by the standards and contained in the state tests. An essential aspect of teaching to the standards is making sure that the assessments that a teacher uses in the classroom on a regular basis mirror the types of assessments which students will encounter on the state assessment.

Assessment continues to be a focus, as this year teachers are working to ensure that those modified assessments for our Special Education and 504 students meet the demands of the Common Core Standards. We want them designed in a manner that the core content for high achievement by all sub-groups is not compromised by a poorly designed modification.

Teachers have received professional development to ensure that various Depth of Knowledge levels of questions are evident in their instruction and assessments. Teachers chart each question, match the depth of knowledge necessary to answer the question, and then match it against a standard.

The parent and student are constantly able to monitor the student's performance in the classroom through our Home Access program. The parent and student are given their own unique log in and password to access the system, which also gives access to interim grades and report cards.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our positive climate for students is evident in the interpersonal interactions with the outstanding teaching staff. Teachers motivate students by building personal connections with each child in the school. We engage them in meaningful work each and every day, challenging them to increase their core knowledge and to become better learners. They know that we care about improvement above all else. That includes improvement not only in their content knowledge, but also in their interpersonal skills, and their physical and mental well-being.

Furthermore, we work daily to instill our students with Caesar Rodney PRIDE (Prepared, Respect, Integrity, Disciplined, and Excellence). This credo is not only recited each morning, but also modeled and emphasized each and every day by our teaching staff. Our expectations for their behavior are clear, and our staff consistently holds them to a high standard behaviorally and academically.

Because these students are primarily the children of active military personnel, the school provides a club called Families Dealing with Separation or Deployment (FDSO). This program offers support for students who have one or more parents who are or have been or will be deployed away from home as part of their military service. The club meets during the school day every other Wednesday and has guest speakers on topics relevant to these students, as well as fun, team-building activities such as robotics. The program is aided by the Family Readiness Center from Dover A.F.B.

The high standard we hold is reinforced by our focus on motivating students to aspire to pursue higher education. College awareness is prevalent in their daily routine, as we have many activities that highlight higher education. Our staff has their college institutions posted outside of their rooms, and each Monday we have “College Trivia” or a “Fun Fact” about a university. Also, one day a month, all of the teachers wear a shirt that represents a college or university. Finally, each department also highlights a famous graduate from a College or University in their field. One example is Danica McKellar, who was highlighted by the Math department for her books on helping students with math, such as “Math Doesn't Suck: How to Survive Middle School Math without Losing Your Mind or Breaking a Nail.”

To show students we appreciate their hard work, we have a quarterly “No Bookbag Day.” Students qualify for participation by making sure they have no discipline referrals and all of their classwork submitted. Students who meet the criteria are treated to a movie, board games, etc...

Our outstanding teaching staff is the primary reason for our success. They are made to feel valued by the highlights on the weekly staff memo, as they are regularly thanked for their good work and for “going the extra mile.” In addition, faculty meetings often highlight the positive instructional practices that were witnessed during administrator walkthroughs. In addition, last year each staff member’s favorite teacher was highlighted in “The Monday Flyer,” which is our weekly staff communication. It served as a reminder to everyone that the teaching profession is indeed important in shaping young lives, as we recounted those individuals who shaped ours.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The parent and community involvement at DABM is an integral part of making sure students are successful academically and socially at the school. In an effort to foster the relationship between parents and the school, we have many events that bring parents to us. One such event is the Honor Roll Breakfast. Students who make honor roll, as well as their parents, are served breakfast each marking period to celebrate their academic success for the marking period. Our excellent band concerts and drama performances also bring parents to us throughout the year. The large participation rate of band and chorus students ensures that our performances are always very well attended. In addition, we also have a more informal “Evening of the Arts,” where we showcase our students’ musical and artistic talents during an

outside concert and art gallery on the front lawn. Parents and the community are invited to help create a supportive and positive environment for our young performing artists.

In addition, evening informational events are scheduled to apprise parents of the curricular programs at DABM. Over the last two years, we concentrated on helping the parents understand the new adopted curricula for Math and Language Arts. Parent resources for both programs were demonstrated in evening sessions, including the online re-teaching resources that enabled the parents to help their children with some of the more difficult topics in Mathematics and Language Arts. Furthermore, there were specific sessions for parents to educate them on the new state assessment used in Delaware. These sessions were well attended and received positive feedback from all involved. Other events, such as our Library Café, invite parents in to have some coffee and tea and engage in book talks with their students.

Since the school's student body is made up of predominantly children of military personnel, we also work closely with others in the air base community. Personnel at the base work with the school administration to engage our students in contests, such as an essay contest to write about "Great woman in history." The community has also solicited our students to help with posters and decorations for Hispanic Heritage Day. Our students go out into the military community to spread happiness as well. Our chorus is a regular performer at the local Veteran's Home.

Our students are also engaged in charitable endeavors. In the past few years they have organized a coat drive for a local homeless shelter, provided gifts for veterans in the Veteran's Home for Easter, and have sponsored homeless and abandoned students who reside at the Murphy Home in Dover during the holiday season.

Finally, our career day brings in local community members to share their experiences with our students. The participants are from the local business and the military community, and are able to give an overview of potential careers that may be of interest to our students.

3. Professional Development:

The district oversees the school's district-wide professional development approach, as there are several days throughout the year dedicated to district-wide initiatives. These initiatives have included common curriculum work between schools. For instance, the seventh grade mathematics teachers across the district have worked on a curriculum map for the new series, and the social studies teachers have worked on adding more rigorous activities into their current units that address Common Core standards. The district has also provided significant professional development on the integration of technology into classrooms. This has been very beneficial to our school, as we have a significant amount of technology at our disposal, and use it extensively in our classes. Training on Schoology, Google Documents, and other applications and ideas to integrate computers into the classrooms has been well received and very useful.

In addition to district-level professional development, there is time for buildings to address their own particular needs. At the school-level, we try to take a "less-is-more" approach to professional development, and focus on improving a few areas that yield a high return in raising student achievement, rather than a "wide" approach where we address several areas. Our school tries to focus on one or two improvements to ensure that we become adept at whatever focus we have. This year, assessments are our focus for the second straight year. Last year, the teachers were introduced to Webb's Depth of Knowledge, and used it to ensure they were developing rigorous assessments. Teachers made sure that each question was not only aligned to a Common Core standard, but also that the assessment contained level two and three questions similar to what would be presented to the students on the Smarter balanced test. Teachers worked on this the entire year with their departments, with guidance from the Principal and the Achievement Liaison Teacher.

This year, teachers are continuing that same practice. However, they are also working to provide effective modifications and accommodations to the assessments in accordance with student IEP's and 504's. Teachers are not only working with their departments this year, but also in conjunction with the Special

Education teachers and the Case Manager. This is an effort to build the capacity of all teachers to develop strong assessments with intelligent modifications that ensure the success of our special needs populations.

4. School Leadership:

The school leadership consists of the Principal, who together with the Team Leaders and School Success Team, work together to ensure the operation of the school promotes success for not only students, but also the employees.

The School Success Team is comprised of a representative from each grade and subject area, as well as parent representatives and specialists. The school success team meets on a quarterly basis to review the progress made on the School Success Plan, which addresses the many different needs the school has set out to address in each particular year. It contains the school's SMART goals, which are the driving force in the development of the many activities to address the areas of College Career Readiness, Improved Instructional Practices, Improved Assessments, and School Climate. At the beginning of each year, the team uses the previous year's data to develop the new activities to meet the goals.

The Team Leaders consist of a representative from each of the different grade levels, as well as a representative for Related Arts, Special Education, and a Specialist. This team acts as the advisory group to the principal on any issues that may impact the school. These issues include planning for special days such as quarterly "No Bookbag" days where we reward the students for working hard, career days, field trips, etc... The team also acts as an advisory group to solve issues the school may be having, such as student discipline issues or inadequate communication in certain instances. In addition, the group brainstorms logistical concerns to assist the principal in carrying out the mission of the school. For example, this group would be the team to make decisions regarding administering the state tests in an efficient manner that would minimize lost academic time that often occurs with giving so many standardized tests in such a short amount of time.

Due to the small size of the school, there is only one school administrator, the Principal. The principal relies on the input of key stakeholders, such as the active PTO, team leaders, and the School Success Team to ensure that the school is run well.

The philosophy of the school is rooted in the notion of constant improvement. Hard work and perseverance towards constant personal improvement is at the heart of what we do at DABM. We not only demand it of our students, but we demand it of ourselves. As a staff, we pride ourselves on constantly evaluating our programs and strategies to improve upon them, so that, in turn, we serve our students and their families as effectively as possible.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

If I were to pick a single practice that influenced the success of the building, I would identify the Intervention program as the center of what drives excellence in the building. The differentiated approach allows us to constantly monitor student progress and give students extra attention to fill in learning gaps, and to give them extra practice with difficult concepts to foster success. This intervention program is multi-faceted, as we use a three-part approach.

The initial part of the program is the student support class, where struggling learners are pre-taught math concepts and the literature and vocabulary they will be learning in their regular classrooms. This allows for the initial exposure to the content to be in a small group setting, which allows for more direct student assistance. Student feedback has been favorable, as students articulate that they are much more confident with the material in their regular classrooms due to their familiarity with the material. It actually makes them more confident and fosters class participation.

Students then receive outstanding classroom instruction each and every day as the second part of the approach. Our veteran staff is excellent, and uses many active teaching strategies to engage the students in learning. There is very little academic learning time wasted, and students are focused and involved in the lessons.

The third part of the approach is the small group Content II class that reteaches the material or gives struggling students the additional practice necessary to be successful in understanding the concepts. These classes are also in a small-group setting to promote a more individualized approach.

In trying to identify what makes a school successful, it is difficult to identify the one aspect that makes it so strong. Frankly, programs can be talked about, curricula can be analyzed, assessments can be examined, and school climate can be scrutinized; however, it is the people in the building working with the students that make it so special. The three-part approach described works because there are outstanding people in the building. Those educators are not only excellent with children, but they are intelligent and hard-working. Most of all, they constantly strive to improve upon the instructional practices in the school as well as on the programs used to implement them. Dover Air Force Base Middle School is lucky to have such a talented staff.