

**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 Jess Herbig

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

Official School Name Challenger Intermediate School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 325 North Walnut Street

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

City Goddard State KS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 67052-9548

County Sedgwick County

Telephone (316) 794-4040 Fax (316) 794-4266

Web site/URL http://challenger.goddardusd.com/ E-mail jherbig@goddardusd.com

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/U

SD-265-Challenger-

Intermediate-School-

220266328074110/ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/USD265\_CHA

YouTube/URL

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNn11Aj

QM0U

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. Justin Henry E-mail justinhenry@goddardusd.com

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Goddard Schools USD 265 Tel. (316) 794-4000

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 Kevin McWhorter

(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)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 3 High schools
  - 0 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	110	102	212
6	111	85	196
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	221	187	408

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 11 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 81 % White
  - 2 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 9%

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	17
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	17
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	34
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	377
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.090
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7%  
29 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Vietnamese, Balinese, Chinese, Bengali

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 34%  
Total number students who qualify: 137

8. Students receiving special education services: 20%  
81 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.

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>5</u> Autism                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness              | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness        | <u>40</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment    | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Mental Retardation    | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed               |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	16
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	6
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.

<b>Required Information</b>	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.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

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

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

Challenger's mission is to develop a well rounded student academically, socially, and emotionally using character traits as a guidance.

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

Goddard, Kansas is a fast growing community located west of Wichita. The city has limited industry and many available jobs are blue collar or independent opportunities, which means a significant portion of the residents commute to greater Wichita or another surrounding community, daily, for work. Many new families move within the Goddard School District boundaries for the school district itself, thus helping maintain the District's thirty-three years of consecutive growth. In fact, the District's student population is greater than the city's population (5,677 to 4,582). The identity and steeped traditions the town possesses are currently evolving to catch up to its population's needs and potential growth.

The school district spans sixty-five square miles. Accordingly, our students come to us from varied geographical areas, including the small town of Goddard, rural Sedgwick County, and subdivisions of Wichita. Three different elementary schools, spread throughout the district, funnel students into Challenger. Our students' socioeconomic backgrounds vary greatly, from lower to affluent status. Approximately thirty-four percent of our students qualify for free and reduced price lunches. Twenty percent of our students receive special education services. Blending these students together can be a challenge for our staff as their needs, existing support, and resources are all different.

Traditions and innovations are what distinguish our school. Challenger Intermediate School, as it is known now, launched in 2001. The building went through many changes before it became Challenger, as it was once the high school and then junior high school. Through all of the changes, our greatest tradition remains: strong leadership and a sense of pride. Our building is a family and we work to maintain this family-type environment in each classroom. Many of our teachers are graduates from the school district and we maintain a very low attrition rate for teachers. In fact, over the past three years, we have not had to replace any of our teaching staff. Challenger students work hard to demonstrate achievement and staff works hard to incentivize their efforts with food, activities, and recognition.

Challenger families are mostly working, dual-income families, where both parents or guardians work outside of the home. Parents are generally very supportive of the school and take pride in their child's education. This is evident by attendance at performances, events, fundraisers, and especially our midday end of quarter awards assemblies, at which more than half of our parents attend.

Year after year, Challenger supports community and national causes including our local Mitten Tree which provides assistance during the holidays, soldier care packages, weaving "plarn" (plastic yarn) mats for the homeless, and raising funds for American Heart Association. Friday's Club Day represents a fun and educational Challenger tradition. Teachers create clubs as another means to connect with students and take a short break from the norm. This club can be anything the teacher feels will excite students to want to be a part of. Every six weeks the students choose a new topic such as gardening, running, comic books, whiffle ball, and so forth.

Since 1981, our sixth graders have taken an annual field trip to the Kansas Cosmosphere in Hutchinson at the completion of a corresponding science unit. Other successful building traditions include our Fall tailgate event and our Spring dodgeball night where families attend with their students. We also have book fairs to benefit our library and an anti-bullying week. We culminate the year with a bowling and movie trip as well as an outdoor cookout. We have an active Parent Teacher Organization to assist with many of these highlights, in addition to fundraising.

We use innovation to make the school experience meaningful. Specifically, we've instituted character education as the overarching priority in all our efforts, academically and otherwise. Each classroom and department used character traits to inform and develop a social contract for their work and space.

Further, this school year, we introduced "Capturing Kids' Hearts " (CHK), a teaching model dedicated to developing safe and trusting relationships between students and staff. One of the daily CKH strategies involves greeting students at the door with a handshake. Teachers also encourage students to affirm one another and share the "good things" happening in their lives. We are one of two schools in the District that has implemented this initiative.

Over the past two years, Challenger staff has implemented the CHAMPS behavior model (Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, Success). Teachers use it at the beginning of a lesson to improve behavior and encourage engagement.

This is the third year for our Student Advisory Committee. The distinguished, teacher-nominated, student committee meets with the principal once per month to explore new ideas and possible events to make Challenger even better.

In summation, challenge is our namesake. It's who we are. We are the challenger of status quo. We believe in becoming better, brighter, and meaningful. We believe in Challenger.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

---

### 1. Core Curriculum:

The Core Curriculum all students receive at Challenger includes English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science. In addition to these areas, students receive vocal music, physical education and library. Optional curriculum includes band and Orchestra. In order to optimize each core subject learning standards, we maintain a block of time for each subject, incorporate connections across the curricular areas, and use a common vocabulary throughout the building. Teachers and staff also meet weekly to discuss curriculum maps, data, and best instructional practices. We have chosen cross-curricular approaches because we believe in continuity in the learning environment, effective communication between staff members, and more opportunities for connections across the curriculum.

English and Language Arts is focused on increasing and deepening students understanding of all types of reading using novels from a variety of genres. The goal is to help each student develop and improve vocabulary, fluency and comprehension, improve writing skills using connections to reading, practice writing for all purposes, and gaining note taking strategies. Interactive notebooks are tools students use to take notes on the skills they are practicing in class which they can refer back to throughout the novel unit. Other tools teachers use to help students acquire these skills include active engagement strategies, empowering students to be more involved in the learning process. Hence, students gain the opportunity to discuss and share ideas by fostering connections with peers and teachers. Students spend time each day reading books on their individual Accelerated Reader levels, independently or with an adult. They are required to write about what they have read, incorporating their thoughts and feeling as well as a summary. These journals are used to show comprehension and connection to books.

In Math, the focus is on increasing students' understanding on the application level, making connections to real life situations, attaining fluent computation skills, utilizing math thinking in written and verbal form. One way students practice communicating their thinking is through problem solving using a structured sequence. Through using summaries and pictures/models to explain the process, students can solve and communicate results. Teachers use active engagement strategies, differentiated instructions and individualized activities or programs to reach all learners at their level, which, in practice allows some students to utilize graphic organizer while other students will be practicing the skill at a higher level without the graphic organizer. Some students may receive small group practice that is facilitated by a teacher while other students are working through their practice independently.

Science focuses on Next Generation Science Standards with instructional practices which are both engaging and hands on. Students have the opportunity to observe and participate in experiments, projects and other hands on activities encouraging creativity and documentation while working in a group setting. Students benefit from dedicated fifth and sixth grade science teachers who work with other science teachers throughout the district on a regular basis to help implement these standards with fidelity. These discussions have helped to mainstream the standards and unify the K-12 curriculum. In the past two years, fifth grade science has implemented Project Lead the Way (PLTW). This program focuses on engineering, giving students a unique opportunity. We have partnered with Wichita State University to launch this program. Students spend nine weeks engaging in hands on activities where they learn to code, study diseases, and collaborate with peers to build and program a robot's worthy of a treacherous obstacle course. Challenger is excited to launch PLTW as part of the sixth grade curriculum beginning the 2016-2017 school year.

Social Studies curriculum broadens a student's breadth and depth of knowledge on topics such as US History from pre-colonization through the Constitution, to ancient world history on multiple continents. Throughout the curriculum, students integrate reading skills such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, sequencing, and fact/opinion to aid in understanding of the material. Teachers use active engagement strategies, interactive notebooks and note taking to keep students involved in the learning process. Projects and interactive activities help the students make meaningful connections. From immersive learning opportunities through role playing and problem solving, to journaling thoughts and reflections, students relive specific time periods all while becoming a more cultured member of society. Students have the

opportunity to express their thoughts and connections through writing and discussions in class.

To supplement and enhance the education for students above and below grade level, we dedicate thirty minutes of instructional time, each day, to strengthen foundational skills students may be missing or, if needed, provide further challenge. This period of each day called Pride Time. During Pride Time students are grouped based on ability level. Below grade level students are provided further human and technology resources to deliver math and reading interventions. Our above grade level students use Pride Time for project based learning such as, research-based projects, novel-studies and self-guided studies, all of which are collaborative with peers and educators. Further, teachers utilize Kagan strategies during core instruction time to individualize instruction based on student need and academic level.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students receive a well-rounded curricular experience at Challenger, including dedicated physical, music, and technology education. The teachers in these areas do an excellent job of supporting the core subject areas, as well as one another's program. Students take part in active and artistic experiences for 35 minutes daily as well as weekly time in our media center. Students take band or orchestra every other day and every Friday for 35 minutes. Our teachers believe the arts are important as we added an extra day of band and orchestra this year. This has made a tremendous difference for our students, as you could see their growth from the Fall concert to the Winter concert.

Our physical education (PE) program strives to get students moving in a meaningful manner, specifically to foster a love of fitness that they can apply now and throughout their life. The program incorporates the five national standards throughout all initiatives and activities. Students are assessed on their improvement and proficiencies. Further we use PE to help raise awareness of health, specifically the signs of heart disease through a fundraiser with the American Heart Association during which students run laps to reach their goals. Participation is recognized by with 100 and 200 lap distinctions that are displayed in our gym. At the end of the year our students take part in a Field Day, where they get to show off their skills that they have learned throughout the year. The big finale to this event is the class tug of war contest!

Our music program provides students the opportunity to explore music as well as cultivate knowledge and talent. Using hands-on techniques, the teacher helps students learn to read and understand sheet music, research different music genres, and to practice proper singing techniques. Ultimately, we hope to inspire an appreciation for music. Every year our teacher works with our students to learn a music selection that incorporates a different language. This has given our students a great experience of learning a different language, as well as learning about the culture and traditions within that country. Further, concepts from other courses are supported through our music education. For example, students work on fractions, practice their writing skills as they research famous composers, and hone their collaboration skills while writing song lyrics together using in-classroom technology.

Students also have the opportunity to take band and orchestra. Through electives, the majority of students participate in either of these classes. Approximately 70- percent of our 5th grade students and just over 50-percent of our 6th grade students actively take part in band or orchestra. Students receive one-on-one, small, and large group instruction. Students have many opportunities to showcase their work, including two concerts a year and a district tour. Students perform solos, in small ensembles, and in large groups. During the district tour, students perform festive music selections in our elementary schools and local community venues. Our band and orchestra are led by district high school instructors, which creates a unique sense of continuity throughout our intermediate to high school music programs.

Our students visit the library on a weekly basis to seek out the next great read, but also to receive further supportive instruction reading. Each student receives individual coaching in checking out books on their reading and interest level, setting up research projects, and assistance on proper usages of digital media. Challenger fosters a focus on internet and social media safety and responsibility through Common Sense Media, a program dedicated to digital media safety. The Challenger librarian strives to also educate parents through the Common Sense Media. Reading incentives are born in the library. Students are rewarded on a fixed interval schedule of reinforcement to, literally, increase reading behavior. The library nurtures

acquisition of knowledge not only for students, but has also hosted countless professional development opportunities for our educators. We believe these curricular experiences are vital to academic success. Throughout the year we have a reading night and a Book Fair breakfast to showcase what is taking place within our library. These events allow our students to showcase what is happening in the library and gives them a structured, quiet place to read to their parents or guardians.

Challenger's technology curriculum is rooted in digital citizenship. All students complete a dedicated nine-week Common Sense Media digital citizenship course. Our students learn basic aspects of technology, how to engage in a digital setting, understand the advantages and disadvantages of a digital world, and continue to develop their innate technology skills. Immediately, we see students implement these skills using the technology available in the classroom and on their own personal devices. The knowledge gained from this course prepares students to be equipped for the ever changing world of technology.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

We employ a variety of instructional methods and interventions in order to foster student achievement. Four times a week, we provide on-half hour of flexible grouping for both math and reading. Students are assessed and matched with similarly achieving students and participate in appropriate targeted skill work or enriching project-based activities. Students who are determined to be at-risk are afforded more frequent screenings to ensure efficacy of the intervention(s). Teachers and support staff, including the speech therapist, librarian, school psychologist, and ELL specialist collaborate to facilitate and enhance these methods.

Reading interventions focus on fluency, phonics, vocabulary and comprehension. Using researched-based programs teachers work to remediate and build individual capacities. Students showing deficiencies in fluency will practice fluency, set and track goals, and have weekly teacher conferencing. Students identified below their instructional level will also use similar methods as well as work with teachers and support staff both one-on-one and in small groups. Students above instructional level enrich their skills by reading level appropriate novels and participate in activities designed to increase their comprehension and vocabulary.

We use similar screening methods to determine the appropriate interventions for students in math. A below instructional level group might use a multisensory fact practice to increase student's knowledge of facts or students will work in teacher-led small groups to improve skills such as computation and problem solving. Students on level, or above level, use projects and activities to advance their understanding of mathematics and how it applies to different situations. For example, our above level students participate in a "Fantasy Football" activity during which students work with a partner, or in groups, to create and manage a team. They are encouraged to research and understand player statistics to help them build a team and to predict which team will win the league. Students also engage in a payroll simulation in which students calculate rate of pay, total hours worked, and the profitability of a business based on information they gather during the simulation.

Further, we have created a class structure that supports special education students in a general education classroom. This co-teaching program creates a classroom in which instruction is delivered from a general education and a special education teacher. Below level students may receive their accommodations and modifications through their collaboration, while on-level or above level students also may receive individualized instruction. Co-teaching fosters the academic growth of all students while also providing ancillary, measurable benefits. We have seen an increase in students' academic and social confidence both in and out of the classroom, and have noticed students become more comfortable with needing and requesting different accommodations and modifications within the classroom.

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

Continuous improvement is the goal of all the staff at Challenger. We pride ourselves in making data based, informed decisions to improve instruction for all students.

At the beginning of the year our students take the STAR screener in both math and reading. Assessment results are discussed in weekly PLCs, monthly staff meetings, monthly department meetings, and on

professional development days. Once student data results are analyzed within teaching teams, students can be grouped based on need for intervention with similarly achieving students. This test is then administered on a monthly basis to determine student's progress and adjust interventions when necessary.

Other valuable data used in the assessment of challenger students is derived from Moby Max and Lexia Core 5. Students access Lexia through computer or tablet, which streamlines data collection and allows teachers to quickly identify students who may be lacking skills in phonemic awareness. Moby Max, also computer based, simultaneously tracks student progress while honing math computation, reasoning, problem solving skills. Students can work on Lexia and Moby Max at home to improve their progress. Curriculum and formative assessments are also used to determine students' progress through the classroom curriculum. These may include chapter and unit tests, exit tickets, skill check lists, informal observation or teacher data collection.

Our staff communicate with parents about their child's progress throughout the year. We break down assessment scores with parents twice a year during parent/teacher conferences. More frequently, we provide parents with a weekly progress report detailing how their child is doing in their classes. This makes it easy for parents to monitor progress within their child's classes. This program also allows parents the option to access this information more often if they choose.

We also encourage our students to strive for excellence through awards assemblies held each nine weeks. Students receive certificates for all A's, all A's and B's, and perfect attendance. Parents are always welcome to attend and a majority attend. Students who make all A's get to have an ice cream party with the principal. Teachers also present awards to students for growth within their STAR scores as well as reaching certain levels within the Lexia program.

At Challenger, we know the importance of assisting all students to achieve excellence. We work with students each nine weeks to set behavior, academic and attendance goals. Teachers work individually with students to provide council and discuss progress. It's truly inspiring to see a student's confidence flourish after graphing progress and visualizing their potential to meet their goal!

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

A focus on family is critically important to Challenger. We strive to be a building where family extends beyond its basic definition from staff to staff, staff to students, and students to students. Our goal is to cultivate and maintain a culture of success and support for every child, within this family-type atmosphere. The feeling of connectedness and hope is easily recognizable upon entering the building and our classrooms. We firmly believe academics are important to student success, but even more vital to their livelihood post public education is developing solid character traits they can employ no matter what their future path is.

Each month we concentrate on a different core character trait. Our teachers work with students on the identified trait throughout the month. Our counselor generates content and lessons, then staff works to regularly implement the information. At the end of the year, we celebrate our students' success with character trait awards. All awards are peer nominated and presented at our year-end assemblies.

Students at Challenger are engaged in the management of their classrooms, actively working with teachers to create the social contract guiding the expected behaviors and decision-making framework so all students can be successful. This social contract is reviewed on a daily basis. There is a focus on a social contract word of the week; this word is highlighted in our morning announcements, video announcements, and in each classroom. The consistency and visibility of the words and contracts are important as it helps hold one another accountable. To emphasize the importance of accountability, each person who is a part of the classroom signs the social contract.

Expectations are another reason success occurs at Challenger. The staff set high expectations of themselves and all students. On almost a daily basis, we use the CHAMPs (conversation, help, activity, movement, participation, and success) model to review these expectations. This is used with fidelity throughout the building, which helps everyone know what is expected in classrooms, the school, and beyond.

The teachers at Challenger work diligently with students to create an engaging and rigorous curriculum. They meet on a weekly basis in PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) to discuss student data and how they can further enhance the classroom curriculum. During PLC time, our counselor and administrator facilitate personal development discussions or host social time in the gym. Staff utilizes the content and strategies discussed in PLCs to move their students forward. Additionally, staff often stays after our official hours to work with the students to help them master topics and skills needed to achieve in the classroom.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Our families are incredibly engaged in what we do at Challenger on a daily basis. We have great parent and community attendance at performances, assemblies, book fairs, breakfasts, and field days.

The active PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) works alongside our teachers to meet student and classroom needs and enhance extracurricular opportunities. In August, PTO quickly and willingly provided school supplies and backpacks to children in disadvantaged situations. PTO also purchased sixteen iPads for our library, which students and classrooms can check out. The iPads help us make technology available for students who might not have access otherwise. Furthermore, the iPads allow us to integrate a digital component into classroom-wide and group projects. In addition to providing classroom materials to all students, PTO also provides students with one of a kind learning opportunities and fun, end-of-the year trips. By funding a 6th grade field trip to the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson, Kansas, students are exposed to a hands on extension of the science classroom curriculum. Knowing the budget has thinned, PTO paid eight dollars/per student for more than two hundred students to attend. Additionally, the end-of-the-year fun filled field trip gives all students an opportunity to go bowling and see a movie. The PTO's willingness to pay for these outings is a welcome relief for our families as they do not have to worry about these added costs.

Our PTO also hosts events providing social and physical activity opportunities which are outside the norm of the school day. In the fall, they hosted a four-hour lock-in-type event, at which students participated in a bridge building competition, a fun cardio game, kickball, movie time and a meal. Three-quarters of our four hundred students took advantage of this event. The Farmland Corporation donated hot dogs and our local Wal-Mart assisted with buns and meal supplies. Community members and parishioners of a local church worked alongside our staff to supervise and execute the event.

Community partnership with Challenger is evident. Every year a local church donates \$500 to our school, which goes to helping students who are underprivileged. Clothes and shoes are purchased as well as funding a need-based account for student school lunches. We also utilize our facility to store thousands of donated gifts for the community's holiday Mitten Tree which provides holiday meals and gifts to 400+ individuals in greater Goddard. Additionally, our students help fund Challenger's adopted mittens through a donation-based handmade blanket contest which our secretary coordinates. The Mitten Tree event, allows educators to tie back to generosity, an identified character trait. We feel this has helped to further develop our students' empathy, capacity for service, and citizenship.

### 3. Professional Development:

"Status Quo" is not in our vernacular. At a district and building level, our staff is encouraged to seek local and non-traditional opportunities for continuous growth. Various professional development (PD) opportunities are provided by the district. In fact, master's level staff can receive enough hours to re-certify. PD is tracked and monitored for our staff with the My Learning Plan program by a Challenger representative from our district-wide Professional Development Committee (PDC).

Our educators drive the content for all PD days and school staff meetings. Meetings focus on the teaching strategies developed as part of our school improvement plan. Educators take the lead on trainings, often facilitating the information. It is highly valuable for our staff to learn from their peers, which also increases the engagement. It empowers our educators to teach students in a more cohesive manner. We work to ensure the transition within our building, from 5th to 6th grade, is streamlined for both our staff and students.

We have a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team, which consists of two teachers from each subject area in 5th and 6th, counselor, and the school principal. The MTSS team develops and revises our school improvement plan based upon the information received back from staff during PLCs. The team also regularly reviews the different strategies being used in classrooms and identifies content areas in which further professional development is warranted. This information is then distributed through staff meetings and PLCs so action can be taken. Said actions and improvements are then cycled back to the MTSS team and the PDC representative.

Focusing on the strategies used in the classroom has undoubtedly helped our students be more successful. The staff-wide collaborative effort to streamline the curriculum has provided a vast array of methods for staff to employ, as well as helped us reduce past content overlap.

We are challenged with a thirty-four percent free and reduced lunch rate. Coupled with about twenty-percent of our student population receiving some level of special education services, the needs, capacities, and support our students experience greatly vary with many needing extra support and guidance to be successful. As such, this past summer, our staff focused three days of professional development on fostering meaningful relationships with all students. This helped our staff meet students' needs beyond the curriculum. It has made a major impact on the learning environment, where students feel safer and more open to sharing with their peers and teachers.

### 4. School Leadership:

At Challenger, all school stakeholders have a role in school leadership. This creates an environment where everyone—staff and students—has a shared, mutually developed philosophy informing strategies, actions,

and decisions within the school. Multiple building leadership teams, as well as our building site council, help to extend the vision and integration out to all levels. We believe this quality is unique to Challenger.

Our site council has parents, Board of Education members, teachers, and community volunteers. This Council, which meets quarterly, assesses the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of the school, finding resources available to assist with any identified weaknesses or needs.

The principal has a student leadership team, comprised of a student from each classroom, serving as the representation of the student body. This team helps to foster the needs of the students and works to give students a voice into the decisions taking place within the school. This leadership team generates solutions to potential issues and plans activities all students can enjoy. The team has been a driving force in helping to create a student-focused culture as well as in developing their own leadership skills.

There is also a teacher-sponsored leadership organization, called Pride Pack. This group is nominated by their peers and meet regularly after school. They help to determine school spirit weeks. They are responsible for the themes, activities, and promotions of the weeks. By hosting spirit weeks prior to big school events, and with student input, we have experienced increased participation rates and enthusiasm.

We have created a shared culture of responsibility and communication by establishing department heads. The department head team is comprised of a special education teacher, a fifth grade teacher, a sixth grade teacher, and a science teacher. This group meets monthly to discuss items pertinent to every teacher; they are then responsible for taking information back and share it with their particular group.

Our aforementioned MTSS team works specifically with the curricular areas working to better advise school improvement, PD, and students' academic experience.

We also have a Process Champions team made up of eight individuals including teachers, the school counselor, and the principal, focusing on working to improve the relationships within the classrooms. These teacher leaders work with a specific group of teachers, observing their classroom and working individually with teachers to help them build positive and meaningful relationships with their colleagues and students. They also greet teachers at the door, share positive/inspirational stories, and highlight an aspect of building positive relationships during each month's staff meeting.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

---

Capturing Kids' Hearts (CKH) is the critical component in Challenger's student academic and socio-emotional success. CKH is a program empowering students with skills to assist educators develop safe, trusting, self-managing classrooms, and improve school attendance by building students' motivation. Students learn responsibility for their actions and performance. It has been proven to decrease delinquent behaviors such as disruptive outbursts, violent acts, drug use, and other risky behaviors. Through this program, the staff and students at Challenger have built more meaningful relationships with one another.

We work diligently to get in touch with students personal, emotional, and academic status. Each morning, as students enter the building and classrooms for the day, staff at Challenger shake the students' hands. Then, at the conclusion of morning announcements, the principal launches them into the day with a quote that speaks to the importance of attitude. Further, students share the "Good Things" (positive things happening in their life) either verbally or through journaling. These simple practices allow adults to engage in the student's whole well-being and start their day off on the right foot so they may focus on their studies. Additionally, students and teachers affirm good deeds and outstanding effort through "Affirmation Friday" where affirmations are read aloud on the Friday morning announcements and posted in "Affirmation Alley" at the entrance of our building.

Students are encouraged to take on leadership roles within their classrooms by building one another up, exercising self-control, being self-motivated, and demonstrating genuine care. Teachers have remarked, and it has been evidenced in assessment, through CKH, instruction has become more effective, the class discussions have become deeper and more inclusive, and that effort exhibited in all subject areas is greater.

Parents have commented about the positive changes seen in their children since CKH has been implemented. One parent thought their child was "more social and happier than any other year in their school career." When a student's brother passed away, her father came to talk to the class; he referenced and complimented the soft skills students were using made it easier for her to integrate back into the classroom and cope with this tragedy.

We believe academic success and emotional stability are interdependent. This program works because all parties within our school are engaged. Students are empowered to use the skills modeled by the staff within an atmosphere built on trust and positive interactions.