

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Jim Brockway

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

Official School Name Wheatridge Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 318 East Washington Street

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

City Gardner State KS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 66030-1215

County Johnson County

Telephone (913) 856-2900 Fax (913) 856-2980

Web site/URL http://www.usd231.com/WMS/ E-mail garrettc@usd231.com

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*Mrs. Pam Stranathan E-mail stranathanp@usd231.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Gardner Edgerton School District Tel. (913) 856-2000

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. Rob Shippy
(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
 - 0 K-12 schools

11 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	92	62	154
6	64	58	122
7	62	66	128
8	60	66	126
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	278	252	530

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 89 % White
 - 0 % 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: 0%

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	523
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.000
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	0

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 39 %
Total number students who qualify: 206

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
54 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>7</u> Autism | <u>3</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>5</u> Deafness | <u>24</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>48</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>12</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>18</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>7</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>4</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>6</u> Mental Retardation | <u>3</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>9</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>11</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
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	2
Classroom teachers	21
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	15
Paraprofessionals	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 25:1

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	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
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.

Wheatridge Middle School provides a positive and safe environment where all students are challenged academically and guided to make good decisions.

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

Wheatridge Middle School is located approximately 30 miles south of Kansas City and is part of USD 231, Gardner Edgerton School District. The district serves the growing communities of Gardner and Edgerton in the southwest corner of Johnson County. With a current enrollment approaching 5800 students, USD 231 has seven elementary schools (preschool - 4th grade), three middle schools (grades 5 - 8), and one high school (grades 9 - 12).

As a result of the knowledge, passion, and tenacity of the staff members as well as the community, USD 231 is academically competitive with the strongest schools in the Johnson County region. Students perform above state averages in standardized assessments and excel in areas such as performing arts, sports, and other collegial activities. Collaborative partnerships with parents, business, and community members are essential factors to our students' success.

Wheatridge Middle School (WMS), one of the district's original buildings, has served as the high school, middle school (grades 7 and 8), and Board of Education offices. In 2007, Wheatridge underwent modifications including a gymnasium renovation, a 56,000 square foot addition to the west end of the building, and a large-scale remodel resulting in a state-of-the-art facility with a program capacity to accommodate approximately 800 students in grades 5-8.

Students attending WMS reside in single-family homes, apartments, duplexes, and mobile homes. The Title I academic center is a fair split of forty-eight percent female and fifty-one percent male. One-fourth of our students is economically disadvantaged.

Thoughtfully designed, WMS follows a neighborhood concept grouping students homogeneously. Sitting on the north side of the building, fifth-graders learn in self-contained classrooms while sixth graders have a homeroom teacher and rotate as a class to social studies and science. The south side of the building houses our seventh and eighth-grade students. Each of these grade levels operates on a typical middle school schedule consisting of 8 forty-five minute classes. Additionally, WMS houses a Lifeskills classroom for developmentally delayed students.

WMS students and staff are aware of the thousands of students who have called this school home. Pride, spirit, and tradition foster educational achievement and create a positive and safe environment where all students are challenged academically and guided to make good decisions. Safety, Preparedness, United, Respectful and Self-control defines and leads all Mustangs down the SPURS road to success.

Families look forward to the Muffins for Moms and Donuts for Dads, Family Literacy Nights, Incoming Fifth-Grade Parent Nights, Pizza Bingo Night, Building Brains and Bodies, Day at the K, Eighth-Grade Field Trip to World's of Fun, Talent Show, Student of the Month - including neon t-shirts, Weekly Spurrific Students, Bookmark contests, PE Club, and Robotics.

Above all, the focus and goal are that every student and teacher strives for excellence each and every day.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

In March 2013, USD 231 adopted new K-12 District Curriculum Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. This comprehensive curriculum aligns with Kansas Standards, National Standards, and gives students a solid foundation for college and career readiness.

The curriculum process was researched, designed, and implemented by district administrators and educators, including staff from Wheatridge Middle School (WMS). Also, WMS teachers served on district committees such as the English Language Arts (ELA) Summit Team, Reading Team, Math Team, Elementary Report Card Alignment Team, and other various District Educational Services Committees.

This curriculum, a foundational core element, has guided WMS staff and students to raise the rigor in all academic areas. WMS is academically competitive in the Johnson County, Kansas region and has surpassed district goals by achieving high scores on state assessments. As a result, WMS is the proud recipient of the Governor's Achievement Award, which honors the top 5% of schools in Kansas.

The commitment, intelligence, and passion of WMS educators reflect in the student's educational efforts as well as their connected, conscientious community. Dedication to educational excellence has resulted in numerous honors and accolades for the staff. These include Kansas Horizon Awards, Kansas Middle School Administrator Association Principal of the Year, Kansas Teacher of the Year Awards, Nationally Board Certified teachers, and District Shining Star Awards.

Students select two elective courses including Fine Arts; Band, Strings, Choir, Industrial Technology, Computers, Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS), Spanish, and Art. Seventh- and eighth-grade students are on grade-level teams and attend seven, 45-minute classes. The 8th hour is Guided Studies, which is facilitated by WMS teachers. During Guided Studies students complete independent work. Four core subjects (Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies) are taught by teams of teachers who coordinate instruction and routines to differentiate instruction for each, individual student. At WMS, teams promote relationship building and social and emotional skills while creating an authentic learning environment.

The Core Extension Math and Core Extension Language Arts classes support a stronger foundation in each respective area's core competencies. Instructors reteach, reinforce, and enrich students based on their strengths and stretches. This practical model offers variation in lesson presentation because it promotes teacher and student collaboration. This results in high efforts and expectations from staff and students. The ELA curriculum focuses on core reading and writing skills, speaking and listening opportunities, and building language development cross-curricularly. Through academic rigor and building a trusting classroom community, teachers model effective instructional strategies and techniques that cultivate and challenge all students. Students thrive on regular, constructive feedback that enables them to think outside of the box while developing these skills that are necessary for growth.

WMS staff seamlessly weave ELA skills into their instruction by focusing on content-rich text, close reads, active literacy learning strategies, and authentic writing while aiding in establishing speaking skills. All of these key skills are grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational. Teachers provide regular practice with complex text and academic language to develop mastery of these skills.

Mathematics

The math curriculum is based on a set of 8 clearly defined processes and proficiencies. Before transitioning to the high school, WMS students should have knowledge of skill in the use of the vocabulary, forms of representation, materials, tools, techniques, and intellectual methods of the discipline of mathematics, including the ability to define and solve problems with reason, insight, inventiveness, and technical proficiency. Students' progress through the following sequence:

For 5th-grade, instructional time focuses on three critical areas: (1) developing fluency with addition and

subtraction of fractions, and developing understanding of the multiplication of fractions and of division of; (2) extending division to 2-digit divisors; and (3) developing understanding of volume.

The 6th-grade curriculum focuses on mathematical practices and four critical areas of content: 1) connecting fractions to ratio and rate; 2) completing understanding division and extending concepts to the system of rational numbers; 3) writing, interpreting, and using expressions and equations; and 4) developing understanding of statistical thinking.

The 7th-grade curriculum focuses on four critical areas: (1) developing understanding of and applying proportional relationships; (2) developing understanding of operations with rational numbers and working with expressions and linear equations; (3) solving problems involving scale drawings and informal geometric constructions, and working with two- and three-dimensional shapes to solve problems involving area, surface area, and volume; and (4) drawing inferences about populations based on samples.

The 8th-grade curriculum continues to build an algebra foundation. Instruction focuses on the following: an in-depth study of expressions and equations leading to linear equations, the concept of a function and use of functions to describe quantitative relationships, geometric concepts of angles, distance, similarity, scatter plots, congruence, and application of the Pythagorean Theorem.

Science

WMS has embraced the Next Generation Science goals. Students are frequently involved in collaborative, hands-on activities with local data collection. Real-world connections surface when teachers involve students in their instruction. For example, teachers provide opportunities to travel to local streams to test surface water resulting in higher-level thinking. The experience as well as the collected data allows for deep discussions about local ecosystems. Strengthening written and spoken communication skills are an important focus of the science curriculum. Many projects are systematically devised and planned by the science and ELA teachers. These collaborative projects allow for opportunities of exploration, practice, and reflection.

Social Studies

The Kansas State Department of Education as established the following mission statement, The Kansas Standards for History, Government, and Social Studies prepare students to be informed, thoughtful, engaged citizens as they enrich their communities, state, nation, the world, and themselves. The following five overarching standards connect the students learning throughout middle school: 1) Choices have consequences; 2) Individuals have rights and responsibilities; 3) Societies are shaped by beliefs, ideas, and diversity; 4) Societies experience continuity and change over time; and 5) Relationships among people, places, ideas, and environments are dynamic.

The 5th-grade course of study begins with the introduction of people and lands before European exploration. 6th-grade students focus on the Ancient World History course covers the period from the birth of the river civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China to the Middle Ages in Europe. The 7th-grade curriculum familiarizes students with their world using the Essential Elements and Geography Themes. A majority of time is dedicated to Kansas History, beginning with a study of archaic native inhabitants of the land that was to become Kansas. The course will cover major events, individuals, groups, innovations, and movements from pre-historic days to the present. Finally, the 8th-grade course of study begins with a review of the major ideas, issues, and events of the founding of the nation and Constitutional Period.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Visual and Fine Arts

In Art, a daily practice during the nine-week course is to introduce various media and production techniques. Fifth-grade students practice core art skills such as scissor cutting by producing collages and clay coil rolling in the form of an earthenware clay bowl. Sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students build upon previously taught skills. Grade levels produce creations out of earthenware clay while practicing a wide range of hand building skills. The same style of progression takes place throughout other art concepts such as drawing, collage, and painting. A variety of opportunities are provided to musicians. Students explore

band, orchestra or choir while learning fundamentals such as music theory, instrument care, and performance skills.

Physical Education/Health/Nutrition

The mission of the Physical Education department is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity. The teachers actively strive to enhance and build fine and gross motor skills, sportsmanship, teamwork, self-confidence, and physical fitness in all students while maintaining a positive, safe, learning environment. There is an after-school P.E. club for fifth- and sixth-grade students who are not offered the chance to participate in athletic teams within the school. Each year, the P.E. teachers operate a Health and Wellness night where community members learn about healthy eating habits and physical activity.

Foreign Language

Foreign Language is geared towards teaching students the language and culture of Spanish-speaking countries. The 5th-, 6th-, and 7th-grade students are exposed to the fundamentals of the language. Eighth-grade students may take Spanish I for credit that will transfer to the high school.

Technology

WMS staff and students utilize Google Apps for Education (GAPE) in preparation for the district's one-to-one technology initiative. In January 2017, middle school students will receive a personal learning device (Dell Chromebook) for use at home and school. The Chromebook offers a unique learning experience personalized to meet individual educational needs and encourages personal learning styles.

Library

The WMS library media center, serving as an academic hub, is colorful and vibrant. The student-centered design provides access to print resources, online resources, as well as a variety of technological tools aimed to help students achieve academic and personal success. The WMS library, housing over 13,000 holdings, circulated 16,190 resources in the 2014- 2015 school year. Students also placed 652 books on hold throughout the year. The average age of the collection is eleven years, illustrating a strong commitment to providing a current, exemplary library collection for staff, students, and community members. The library supports the curriculum, creates a feeling of community and ownership, and fosters a love of learning and reading that will extend far into our students' futures as happy and productive citizens.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

High levels of engagement, collaboration, inquiry, and data segregation lead to a cohesive and effective learning environment for all. Committed to differentiate instruction to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of each student, teachers thrive on building strong relationships with students, parents, and community members. The development of positive relationships transcends all matters.

WMS teachers use a wide array of research-based instructional teaching methods and strategies to ensure that students reach their highest potential. Effective strategies include thoughtful, reflective, collaborative planning throughout the entire learning process, before teaching, during teaching, and after teaching.

Staff know the district curriculum and understand the pacing and long-range planning guides. Integrating all content areas promotes advanced learning, connections, and real-world applications.

WMS teachers meet their students where they are currently as it relates to their academic ability. By utilizing existing assessment data (pre/post testing) to help guide and differentiate instruction, teachers plan for their students' needs while capitalizing on their strengths. They also apply effective lesson design by setting the stage for learning, linking new learning to previous learning, utilizing guided practice, checking for understanding throughout lessons, and applying independent practice with constructive feedback.

During lessons, educators continually monitor learning to modify and adjust lesson pace, delivery, and questioning techniques. Cooperative learning structures, hands-on learning models, active participation (every pupil response), flexible grouping, student conferencing, direct instruction, and higher level

questioning techniques promote learning environments where each student is actively engaged. WMS staff use a variety of authentic assessment techniques, matched to the learning objective (performance, multiple marks, written response, self-reflection, portfolio) to assess student growth. Based on learner responses, tutorials or enrichment opportunities may be provided through extended learning. Above all, the strategies employed by WMS teachers increase student retention of information and promote opportunities for student self-evaluation.

Reading and Math Interventionists provide differentiated reteaching opportunities for both at-risk students and those who are performing at an advanced level. Frequent collaboration among Professional Learning Communities ensures that students most in need of additional academic support receive intentions and intensive support. Our tiering approach allows for small groups targeted to specific needs – students performing above and below grade level. All staff members use Lexile scores to match students with appropriate texts. Our science and social studies teachers strive to gather several articles with different Lexile scores. This allows students with significant gaps as well as those who are advanced, to experience success.

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

WMS has a system of supports in place to ensure success for all learners. The first step focuses on the implementation of the district's Core Curriculum. During weekly grade-level meetings and administrator/team meetings, administrators and teachers talk about students and analyze assessment data. Using data from formative and summative assessments, DIBELS, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), and students' work examples, administrators and teachers have discussions about how students are responding to instruction and the need for interventions.

When additional supports are required for individual students, they are discussed at weekly CARE team meetings attended by grade level teachers, reading/math interventional special education teacher, and administrator; data are reviewed by the team and ideas are brainstormed. As a result of this collaboration, further interventions are planned to better support the learner.

If the implemented interventions do not result in student progress, the CARE team meets again to review all available data and implemented interventions to formulate a new plan. District-wide resources such as school psychologist, occupational therapist, ELL, social worker, and the speech and language pathologist are often consulted at this stage to consider all new ideas to provide additional support.

The results of remaining focused on the individual student and data, we are able to provide a positive and safe environment where all students are challenged academically and guided to make good decisions.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Generations of staff, students, and community members have worked to establish a remarkably positive school culture at Wheatridge Middle School. The WMS Mustangs abides by the following mission statement: Wheatridge Middle School provides a positive and safe environment where all students are challenged academically and guided to make good decisions. In order to capture the essence of what occurs daily in our building, this mission statement serves as a reminder to all of our purpose and vision.

A positive climate is established prior to students being enrolled at WMS. Incoming 5th grade families are first welcomed during the students' 4th grade year. During 4th Grade Transition Night, students from feeder schools visit WMS in order to tour the school and learn about the culture, classes, electives, and lunchtime routines and procedures. This is followed up by a personal phone call from the principal and assistant principal two weeks prior to the start of school. These efforts enable new students to ease into the middle school transition while providing extra opportunities to build a strong, foundational relationship.

The entire staff focuses on building solid, trusting relationships with all stakeholders. Each year, time is spent to build relationships with new staff, students, parents, and community members. Time is spent outside of school welcoming new staff and catching up with veteran staff so that individuals feel excited about their profession and comfortable with their colleagues. These strong, solid collegial relationships are the glue that holds the WMS community together. Students come to school and feel safe, respected, and worthy. Staff arrive at school with an open mind, a drive to help each individual student, and a camaraderie that cannot be forced.

Each quarter, a WMS student is recognized by the Board of Education for demonstrating outstanding character traits in and out of the classroom. Students who have exceeded expectations are selected by the principal and staff to receive the Student of Character Award. These students are recognized at the Board of Education meeting for their outstanding and unselfish service to others.

When you walk into WMS, whether it is during the school day or for an after school activity, the positive culture is evident. Staff and students are smiling and you instantly feel the sense of community.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We must actively engage our students each and every day as well as parents and community members. Teachers have donated many evenings to educate our parent community about important curriculum guidelines, changes in indicators, and assessment timelines. Walking the community through the changes in our academic focuses helps parents understand what is expected of their children. Many opportunities are available to parents and community members in order to include them in all aspects of our school. Back to School Night in August, teacher newsletters, and classroom blogs are a few ways in which teachers engage parents.

Families and community members look forward to events such as Grandparents Day where 5th and 6th grade students invite their grandparents to take part in their school day and expose them to 21st century learning at the middle school level. The library sponsors two Scholastic book fairs each year which provides access to new books while promoting a strong sense of excitement about reading.

There are many opportunities for parents and grandparents to become involved at WMS. Many family members volunteer to operate the book fair while others participate in events such as Muffins for Moms, Donuts for Dads, and Family Literacy Nights. Attendance at these events is high as many community members make it a point to support the students.

The Mustang Musicians and Mustang Crew, two of WMS' choirs, reach out to community members by taking field trips to area nursing homes. These outreach events help connect generations through music.

Each year, students also have the opportunity to perform at Crown Center, a unique shopping area in downtown Kansas City. This coming spring, the Mustang Crew will be visiting Baker University, a small college in Baldwin, Kansas, to participate in our Master Class program. During their visit, the students will work with the choir director to listen to different ensembles to aid in determining how music can be part of their college plans.

This year, the School Resource Officer (SRO) led a community event to raise money for Special Olympics while involving staff, student, and parents. The group participated in the Kansas Polar Plunge and Strut, a 5K run culminating with a dip in an icy lake. The event was attended by many staff, students, and families and proved to be a wonderful opportunity to build relationships outside of school.

3. Professional Development:

The WMS staff feels a strong commitment to continuous growth as well as networking with other area schools. Sharing successes with fellow schools allows WMS to share achievements as well as areas of need and growth. These joint sessions enable WMS to reflect on practices while adjusting their instruction in order to create the most appropriate learning environment for their students. Learning from colleagues is vital to the success of WMS. Aligning with the school improvement plan, WMS staff glean incredible learning opportunities from area schools and are able to immediately put innovative strategies into place in their classroom. Collaborating with other middle schools has increased our knowledge of instructional and technological strategies as well as improving our understanding of the emotional and mental health of our students.

Vertical teaming, Professional Learning Communities, district and building professional development sessions, book studies, data segregation, and unpacking state standards have led the staff to acquire important skills and results that directly impact their teaching and lead to student successes. Focusing on innovative problem solving strategies as well as intensive vocabulary and comprehension strategies, staff encourage and model effective questioning techniques for all students. Through all of the professional development opportunities, staff have evolved into reflective practitioners who hold high expectations for each learner.

Teachers and students have flourished because of the structured and intense educational practices in place at WMS. WMS teachers and administrators have been invited to present at district meetings as well as other area organizations. As a result, many WMS staff have been awarded with accolades such as the Kansas Horizon Award, Kansas Teacher of the Year Award, and the USD 231 Shining Star Award.

In addition, staff members are active in professional educational organizations, where they network, research, gain insight, and share successful strategies with colleagues across the state and nation. The building principal and assistant principal have also presented to fellow principal colleagues on various educational intervention and enrichment programs and topics throughout the Johnson County area.

4. School Leadership:

WMS strives for shared leadership by collaborating with staff, students, parents, and community members in decisions and programs affecting the school. The administration team consists of a principal and assistant principal and operates within a shared leadership model. Office doors remain open so that administration are accessible to all stakeholders throughout the school day. Administration guides staff to problem solve, seek to understand, and focus on what is best for each student. Two key mottos are heard and modeled throughout the school year; family comes first and there is no need to worry alone. Seeking creative solutions is the cornerstone of the administrative team and each idea brought forth is valued and respected.

Grade level teams, including specialists, meet with the administrative team at least one time per week in order to maintain a cohesive school community. During these collaborative and solution-based meetings the team of educators pores through assessment and behavior data while staying abreast of important

district and building platforms and expectations. Time is also dedicated to routine procedures such as reviewing calendars, scheduling meetings, and developing upcoming projects. Book studies are an important part of our school leadership model. Each week, staff focuses on a section of the book, *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents*, by the National Middle School Association. Staff participate in weekly book discussions about maintaining a student-centered learning environment.

WMS has a Building Leadership Team with monthly meetings and is comprised of one teacher per grade, one special education teacher, the administrative team, and one classified staff member. During the meetings, the team reviews behavior data, addresses school needs, and devises plans for professional development days based on the school improvement plan. Currently the BLT team is studying the book, *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom* by Rick Wormeli. This book is aiding in the drafting and creation of next year's professional development calendar in order to move closer toward our academic and behavior goals.

Monthly meetings are held with the school's Site Council, an advisory committee comprised of teachers, parents, and community members. The goals of Site Council focus on state, district, and school-wide objectives. Site Council, an integral part of our school community and family, assumes the following responsibilities, per the State of Kansas: a) Provide advice and counsel in evaluating state, school district, and school site performance goals and objectives; and b) Provide advice and counsel in determining the methods to meet those goals and objectives at the school site.

The Student Leadership Club allows students to serve in leadership roles within the school. This program, offered for students in 5th through 8th grade, enables students to plan school activities and service projects within the school and around the community. Accomplishments of the Student Leadership Club include planning Red Ribbon Week events, school dances and other social gatherings, community service projects, and various community fundraisers such as Pennies for Patients and Hoops for Hearts.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Wheatridge Middle School is a unique learning environment comprised of creative, intelligent, and passionate people. The 5th - 8th grade configuration proves effective as support and guidance are provided according to the needs of the students. Incoming 5th grade students receive more support but as they academically, socially, and emotionally grow, responsibility is gradually released in order to help them be successful 6th grade students. If you were to walk through the WMS halls or peek into the classrooms, you would feel a positive climate and see engaged, collaborative students and teachers working towards a common goal. Through the shared leadership model, staff and students take ownership over their instruction and learning by focusing on their individual and dynamic strengths. There is not one person, strategy, or plan that makes WMS an academically successful environment. Instead, each independent part is woven together to create an intricate web of academic success.

WMS staff, students, parents, and community members are generous with their time. Staff members tirelessly donate their time to after school programs and clubs such as our robotics club, an engineering program for 6th - 8th grade students. Students are formed into collaborative groups who learn the importance of teamwork, problem solving, and creative thinking all while being introduced to a broad array of engineering concepts. Focus is placed on designing and building remote-controlled robots in an effort to compete in competitions against neighboring school districts.

The physical education teacher organizes and leads the community through the Building Brains and Bodies Outreach Program. Personalized instruction and focus is placed on nutrition and exercise in order to educate students and families to make healthy decisions and to lead a healthy lifestyle.

A group of students advocated for a before school prayer group. They approached the administrative team and delivered multiple reasons why WMS needed this program. The prayer group was approved and embarked on their mission with a group of three students. Currently, there are fifteen students who meet together each morning in the lunchroom for quiet prayer.

A group of 6th grade students approached the administrative team with the idea that free ice-water should be available during lunch. The group formally sought permission through a letter to the District's Director of Food Services. Permission was granted and WMS is proud to offer free cups and ice water to staff and students during lunch.

One of the office secretaries, a certified teacher, recognized an opportunity to help the 5th-grade team during their literacy and small group reading block. Each day a group of students works with the secretary to improve their reading skills in effort to achieve academic success.

In order to achieve academic success, strong relationships must be developed. For example, the School Resource Officer planned and promoted the Polar Plunge and Strut in an effort to raise awareness and monetary funds for the Special Olympics in Kansas. Students and staff formed a team that participated in the event together and allowed students and staff an opportunity to build relationships. One administrator headed back to the classroom to teach an elective class on leadership which culminated in a field trip to the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum in Independence, Missouri. Another example includes arranged opportunities by staff for each 8th grade student to receive handwritten notes from staff members. Building genuine and trusting relationships leads WMS to achieve academic success.