

**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 Ms. Julianna Annand

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

Official School Name Kendyl Depoali Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 9300 Wilbur May Parkway

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

City Reno State NV Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 89521-4331

County Washoe County

Telephone (775) 852-6700 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://washoeschools.net/depoali E-mail JAnnand@washoeschools.net

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\*Ms. Traci Davis E-mail tdavis@washoeschools.net

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

District Name Washoe County School District Tel. (775) 348-0200

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 Dr. Angela Taylor

(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):
- 62 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 14 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 14 High schools
  - 1 K-12 schools
- 91 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	187	180	367
7	207	199	406
8	222	194	416
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	616	573	1189

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 6 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 19 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 66 % White
  - 7 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 12%

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	85
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	56
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	141
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	1135
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.124
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, German, Russian, Italian, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Slovakian, Marathi, Portuguese, and Thai

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 19 %  
Total number students who qualify: 228

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
118 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>13</u> Autism               | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness              | <u>26</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness        | <u>60</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>9</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment    | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>2</u> Mental Retardation    | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>4</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed               |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 8
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	3
Classroom teachers	47
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals	6
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 27:1
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	95%	96%	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.

<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.

To produce students who are personally responsible, accountable and productive while fostering a community of 21st century learners. As a staff we will provide a rigorous, relevant curriculum while integrating character education so students understand the importance of stretching themselves to personally contribute positively to their family and community.

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

---

Kendyl Depoali Middle School opened its' doors to 6th, 7th and 8th graders in 2009. When it opened, it was taking the middle school students from a 7-12 school in a very tight knit community and many people were very anxious to see if the new school would be able to meet the needs that “were already” being met in that environment. The community was also very anxious about having 6th grade in the middle school. The biggest challenge was to create a culture of high expectations while meeting the needs of the social and emotional fragility of the pre-adolescent. The new staff took this challenge on and created a school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support system that allowed all students and staff to have a common language when referring to the high expectations and when reinforcing those behaviors. Our STRIKE (Strength, Tolerance, Responsibility, Integrity, Knowledge, and Empathy) matrix is the cornerstone of our climate and culture – Strength, Tolerance, Responsibility, Integrity, Knowledge, and Empathy. When creating the matrix, we had input from the leadership students who would be our first 8th graders, parents and the new staff members. The STRIKE matrix is alive and well today and lessons on all of these words and how we use them and live up to those in the classrooms, hallways, and community are taught on a weekly basis in our Advisory classes.

KDMS has been the largest middle school in the district since the day it opened and continues to grow as the community grows. We have been designated as a 5-Star school the past 2 years on the Washoe County School District and Nevada State Performance Framework. Our climate surveys from both parents and students also rank us as high achieving and a school in which the vast majority of students enjoy being in school and feel safe in our environment. We pride ourselves on creating a safe learning environment where all students are connected to an adult through the teaming that allows such a large school to feel like a much smaller one. During this transitional time between elementary and high school, we have students on a 2 person team in the 6th grade and then move into the 7th and 8th grade to a 4 person core team. We also have students stay with the same team of students and teachers for the 7th and 8th grade year. We feel that this looping allows teachers to build those relationships with the students and learn about their learning styles and therefore able to challenge and push them to their greatest potential while with them.

As the feeder middle school to the Performing Arts Signature Academy High School, we have the number one middle school music program in the district. Our music department serves over 800 out of 1200 students. Our programs receive Superiors at the music festivals, they win drumline and winter guard competitions, often beating out high school competitors. They out perform their peers and continue to grow the program at the next level. It truly is a joy to watch and listen to our students perform. The vertical articulation between the two schools continues to make this side of town the place to be if you want anything to do with music.

While we are not a GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) magnet school, the majority of our zoned GATE students choose to remain in our school instead of going to the magnets. We have the same number of GATE students in our school that those schools are serving due to the level of rigor within our classrooms and the instructional strategies that our teachers use on a daily basis. Because of the number of GATE students, we are able to cluster them within the grade levels and the district has allocated us a full time GATE specialist to push-in to those classrooms and collaborate with our teachers. All students are included and all classrooms are doing Project Based Learning. The middle schools all took on district initiatives and KDMS took on PBL. It has allowed our teachers to teach with 21st century skills in mind and expect all students to use the 4 Cs – collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity while working through their driving questions. We are also an inclusive school. As we continue to change and grow, these skills will allow our students to be ready for the next level and prepare themselves to not just be college and career ready but to be life ready.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

---

### 1. Core Curriculum:

Since it's opening in 2009, Kendyl Depoali Middle School has consistently offered a diverse range of coursework in the core content areas: Reading/English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies/History. All four core subjects engage learners at each grade level in curriculum that is rigorous and integrates the social and emotional needs of students. In regards to standards, all teachers collaborate and plan lessons that are focused on the Nevada Academic Content Standards (Common Core Standards and Next Generation Science Standards) that have been adopted state-wide in efforts to prepare students to be college and career ready. Teachers implement a variety of strategies that engage all learners. Interdisciplinary lessons are taught in addition to Project-Based Learning experiences in which students are challenged to think critically, collaborate, communicate, and exhibit creativity.

Reading/English Language Arts students engage in reading with depth and complexity with a variety of text types (i.e. literature and informational text). In writing, ELA students have opportunities to gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications in a variety of genres (argumentative, informative/explanatory, narrative, etc.) with a focus on real-world writing. In speaking and listening, students in ELA have experiences in a variety of academic conversation strategies including, but not limited to: Socratic seminars, accountable talk, and literature circles. Each year, in reading, writing, and communication students demonstrate increasing proficiency in these skills and understanding.

The instruction of standards for mathematics students is focused and coherent and students utilize the eight mathematical practices in their determined math course. These practices include, but are not limited to: inquiry-based problem solving, using data-based evidence, and modeling. New concepts are taught through a planned learning progression through a coherent set of the mathematical Common Core standards. Student learning of new content is facilitated through mathematical shifts; focus, coherence and rigor. Students learn through the use of challenging tasks/questions, mathematical discussions, and are monitored through regular checks for understanding. All students have the opportunity to learn and engage in the mathematics that prepare them for career and college.

Science students at Kendyl Depoali Middle School are engaged in Earth, Life, and Physical science content following the science practices: asking questions and defining problems, developing and using models, planning and carrying out investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, using mathematics and computational thinking, constructing explanations and designing solutions, engaging in argument from evidence, and obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information. As students progress to a new grade level, science content continually builds off prior knowledge and students are challenged to show how prior knowledge connects to new concepts. Cross curricular concepts, or ideas which are not specific to any one discipline but cut across them all, are addressed in the curriculum to ensure that performance expectations are being met and that students are making these connections.

In Social Studies, the Nevada State Social Studies Content Standards are taught through the Nevada Academic Content Standards. On a daily basis, students are critically thinking, analyzing sources, reading complex text, and writing. Social Studies lessons meet the Common Core Standards with a variety of different instructional methods including: Close Reads, Argumentative and Informational Writing, Document Based Questions, and Research Based Discussion Strategies (including Jigsaw Seminars, Structured Academic Controversy, and Socratic Seminars).

Instruction in all core subjects is planned collaboratively among content specific professional learning communities (PLC's) and other departments in the school (i.e. Special Education, Gifted and Talented, and Counseling). This collaboration ensures that students are getting not only a well-rounded education that offers a plethora of instructional strategies, but that the individual needs of all of our learners are being met so that they will be prepared for High School and college and career ready.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Educating the whole child with rigor has been a constant goal for Depoali since the school's inception. College and career readiness means going beyond the basic core classes, and Depoali has been able to incorporate this philosophy throughout each student's journey. Depoali offers 14 different encore classes for our seventh and eighth grade students: Leadership, Spanish, Art, STEM lab, Communications, Yearbook, Physical Education, Healthy You, Wellness, Band, Orchestra, Strings, and Choir. Students can also apply to be a student aide. Several encore classes are uniquely developed to incorporate the heart of Depoali's social, emotional, and character education (STRIKE). Encore classes also emphasize Depoali's school-wide initiative: project-based learning (PBL).

All of Depoali's sixth grade students participate in a variety of encore opportunities on a rotating basis throughout the year. With few exceptions, every sixth grader takes art, music, physical education, and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

Of the 1,189 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, more than 70 percent participate in music classes. Depoali has the largest choir in the district with 297 students participating. Five students who auditioned were accepted to Washoe County School District (WCSD) Honor Choir. Almost 300 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders participate in band, and approximately 250 take orchestra. Our advanced band and orchestra have been recognized as "superior" at festival competitions and our band was the highest scoring middle school band in the district. Thirty-four students were accepted into the WCSD Honor Band. Depoali's drumline and winterguard teams are another opportunity to participate outside the classroom environment. Both teams have earned championships at Northern Nevada middle school competitions and often compete against high school teams.

Wellness class is unique to Depoali. Wellness focuses on social and emotional learning (SEL). Students participate in a wide range of topics including learning styles, bullying and harassment, stress, time management, PBIS, and nutrition. Every seventh grader experiences this SEL curriculum. Eighth graders may elect to take an additional course that enhances basic SEL studies. Because of the success of this course, WCSD is using it as an example to help develop other Health and Wellness courses.

Leadership is a semester-long class offered to seventh and eighth graders. Nearly 400 students take leadership each year and they complete over 5,000 service hours. They help more than a dozen non-profit organizations each year and give \$5,000-\$10,000 back to the community.

The yearbook staff is made up of 36 students who are selected from over 100 applicants. They produce a nationally recognized yearbook which is ranked in the top four percent in the country. Students are involved in every aspect of production—from interviewing and writing stories, to drawing layouts and taking pictures. They also create and implement a marketing plan to sell their book.

Approximately 1,000 students participate in physical education. With few exceptions, every sixth and seventh grader participates for at least one semester and eighth graders have a choice to take the class again. Physical Education instructors are committed to providing a safe and positive learning environment where various activities can be explored. The goal of the program is to guide young lives towards healthy futures and learn lifelong skills.

All students at Depoali have the opportunity to take art and communications. These classes are dedicated to integrating 21st century skills, and personal creativity through PBL. In one such project, art students create the next new designer toy. They practice marketing, visual arts, and presentation as they promote their ideas to university professors. In communications, students work in small groups to complete a variety of projects such as creating technology-enhanced story books and producing STRIKE videos for school-wide use.

STEM lab is a student-driven active learning environment. In this semester-long class, students explore STEM through a series of engaging projects using industry-standard technology and software platforms. Students enhance their college and career readiness as they use technology to address real-world challenges such as bridge design, robotics engineering, graphic design, video production, audio production, and stop-

motion animation. There are 28 to 46 students working in collaborative groups in each of the six sections of STEM lab. Depoali Middle School was honored to be the host site for the 2014 Advanced Facilitators Development Conference. STEM Lab facilitators from all over the U.S. came to see how Depoali's STEM lab teachers facilitate excellence in their classroom.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Depoali staff engage in offering a variety of instructional methods to support the diverse learning needs of our student body. This school year, our staff has participated in school-wide professional development that targets differentiated instruction. During these workshops teachers are able to see examples of strategies and best practices in differentiated instruction and collaborate in our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) how to best implement these strategies. For example, one strategy has teachers design a lesson that has students rotate through stations that address various learning styles. Some examples of stations may include technology, a cognitively demanding task, reteach or small group teaching, and collaborative, hands-on activities or use of manipulatives. Teachers consistently offer choice menus with their assignments, allowing students to choose a product of their learning based on their learning style. As part of the differentiated learning process, many of our teachers are using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to build supports and accommodations into the original instruction given. UDL supports students through a variety of presentation, responding and participation methods appropriate to the student needs and expectations.

Depoali staff is also a dedicated Project Based Learning (PBL) site. PBL provides relevant, interdisciplinary and rigorous tasks for all learners while teaching important 21st century skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Our staff collaborates to develop projects that allow for students to participate in a project that both challenges them at their individual level and provides an opportunity for student choice, as well as participate collaboratively within a learning team. School-wide, teachers have committed to implementing a minimum of two PBL experiences each year within their curriculum. Many teachers at Depoali design every curricular unit they teach around PBL, far exceeding the minimum of two experiences per year.

Through the problem solving process of multi-tiered systems of support our team works to provide academic and behavioral interventions based on individual student needs. Our highly trained support staff use a multitude of strategies and programs including; small group instruction, learning games, pre-teaching, pre-reading strategies, IXL math supports, post skills development and individualized technology supported learning for reading comprehension and phonics skills.

For our many diverse learners such as those eligible for Gifted and Talented programs, English Language Learners and Special Education we work hard to meet their needs within the general education classroom through differentiated instruction, co-teaching, and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). Our experience has shown that when our students are held to high expectations and granted the same access as their peers to common core instructional topics and methods they are able to succeed with accommodations and supports.

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

Here at Depoali Middle School we have built into our schedule a common preparatory period for our intervention teachers which allows us to meet weekly with several stakeholders including counseling, administration, school psychologist and those intervention teachers. This team, the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) established normed cut scores in order to identify students who would need Tier II and III supports. Students within these Tiers are regularly taught specific skills within small classes and monitored for growth. Quarterly, all intervention students are then reviewed to determine an increase or decrease in intervention supports. At the Tier I level, which is the core curriculum, subject area teachers meet weekly to plan together lessons, assessments and review data based on the common assessments and the high stakes testing scores that we receive once a year. Our subject Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) not only plan common assessments but are very high functioning in the respect that they curriculum map based on those scores from the previous year to make sure that they continue to raise the bar for our students and hit all of the standards that are expected through their pacing guides.

Our sub-populations that have achievement gaps have grown smaller over the past 3 years. In fact, we had a negative gap in our Hispanic population; the last time that we receive our assessment results, the district had a 62% in reading and we were at a 65% proficiency rate and in math, we were 1% age point above the district. Where we struggle is in our IEP population and we continue to work within our Special Education classes by truly targeting the students' goals and their skill deficits. This past year our SE teachers and core teachers undertook the Stetson training to improve their co-teaching and inclusive practices. The 14-15 school year, KDMS was the only middle school which made significant growth and exited ELL students.

Our academic achievements and data are communicated to parents through letters home but more importantly our teachers are required to update grades weekly and communicate with parents when students are struggling or have a sudden change in academic or classroom behaviors. Our counselors are an integral part of our teams and set up conferences with parents and team teachers often. Depoali has the greatest number of documented positive referrals in the district. When a student is being recognized for positive behaviors, an administrator calls home and speaks with a parent about those behaviors and it is documented in our student accounting system.

Our staff constantly looks at data to drive instruction, climate, and culture which allows us to continue to excel and push our students to new heights.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

At Kendyl Depoali Middle School, our school climate and culture were born out of the vision of the administration and staff who opened the school in 2009 and strengthened by those who remain a part of the original team and those who have since joined the Depoali family. From the day our doors opened, the school culture has been one where, not only academic engagement is a cornerstone to our success, but teaching the “whole child” is what aides in our student body being better able to reach their potential, both socially and emotionally, during the sometimes difficult middle school years and beyond.

As a staff, we are united ensuring that students are engaged in their learning and offered opportunities for support when struggling academically or emotionally. Staff meetings, Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities give our staff a chance to create a dialogue about what is working and what new ideas are out there for us to learn more about and use to motivate our students and propel them towards higher achievement. With each staff member as part of school-wide committees, we are able to share feedback and thoughts about many of the workings of the school that teachers are not customarily privy to in other school sites.

Within grade-level teams, all staff members feel that their input is valued and appreciated and that they are in a unique position to make an impact on, not only their own professional growth as an educator, but on the learning of the children they encounter daily. Working with their teams, gives the staff a chance to foster relationships with students, create the culture of belonging and safety for them to feel confident in raising their hand to answer a question, asking for assistance when struggling with a concept, and feeling free to be themselves in the classroom with accepting staff members, who know them well, guiding and supporting them.

Through Social Emotional Learning embedded within our curriculum, our Peer Advocacy program where students aide in learning of their classmates, our culture of inclusion for all students to access grade-level content, our clubs and extra-curricular activities offered at school and our STRIKE Matrix, the school-wide Positive Behavior Support System where students focus on showing Strength, Tolerance, Responsibility, Integrity, Knowledge and Empathy, Depoali has created a positive school culture where students are engaged in their learning and motivated to perform academically and as a productive member of our community. This encouraging environment is built on the valued relationships we have fostered and is the foundation of our positive school culture and climate.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

When Depoali Middle School opened in 2009, students, staff, families and community members became ONE. Often referred to as the “Depoali Family,” from the beginning, each knew it was part of something bigger. Something that was there to support students and their families in any way they may need. Whether it was to help families get back on their feet after a massive wildfire destroyed their homes, or just help families navigate the ever-changing online gradebook, Depoali staff was there to help. In the beginning, the school focused on being a resource for the community, but it soon realized that this community had a lot to offer its students and together they became mutually beneficial.

Leadership students provide over 5,000 hours of community service and give back \$5,000-\$10,000 a year to our community. They participate in the international CANstruction competition which benefits our local food bank. They adopt a Make-A-Wish child each year and host a Drive-thru Donation Day which benefits over a dozen non-profit organizations. This year, they collected over 3,000 books to support literacy initiatives in our community. Students select which organizations they want to support and the Leadership teacher creates a unit of study around them. This allows students to learn more about the community resources available to them, and how their time and monies will be spent.

Our community also supports our students. Over 100 parents and community members come to our school

for Career Day and other guest speaking engagements. They come to listen to and provide feedback of our students' Problem Based Learning projects. Engineering students from our local university have taught hands-on science lessons to our 6th graders. Not only did the students learn how to create solar power connections, but it also gave them an opportunity to see what kinds of things they could learn about when they go to college.

Learning also takes place outside the walls of our school by way of the many field trips students are allowed to take. Students interested in Healthcare professions attended an event at our local community college to learn about career opportunities. Students attended the Reno Air Races where they learned about flight and drones. Music students attended field trips at the university. Our choir students perform at nursing homes. As a culminating assessment for their etiquette unit, 400 Leadership students eat lunch at the Olive Garden.

Depoali also has a Family Engagement Committee made up of teachers, parents, a counselor and an administrator. Its purpose is to facilitate connections between the school, our families, and our community with the goal of fostering student success in all three areas.

### 3. Professional Development:

Professional development has always been a vital part of the climate at Depoali Middle School. There have been several school-wide initiatives that support teacher and student growth. The entire staff was trained on Project Based Learning with the Buck Institute.

There is a professional development committee that meets monthly and is comprised of one teacher from every academic team. The committee collaborates and works to develop literacy lessons that support best practices, the Nevada Academic Content Standards, and social and emotional learning. In addition to the committee, several times throughout the year during the monthly staff meeting, staff members, instructional coaches, and district representatives have presented various breakout sessions. Some of the sessions included differentiated instruction, incorporating and implementing accommodations and modifications, successful interventions for behavior issues, and creating a positive climate in the classroom.

The administration has always supported and encouraged attendance with outside professional development including conferences and district classes by paying registration costs and providing subs for their teachers.

The social studies department attended the annual Northern Nevada Council for the Social Studies. This conference brings in various key note speakers from around the country that talk about specific content and how to implement that content into the classroom. In addition to the speaker, teachers attend several breakout sessions that included pedagogy and additional content.

Science teachers attended the 2015 National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Regional Conference in Reno. Teachers attended professional development seminars to enhance their practice in the areas of project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and STEM. They also participated in workshops to learn how to align their teaching practice to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The 7th grade science department attended a 3 full day training on FOSS Next Generation Life Science kits. During the training, they participated in the facilitating of hands-on learning, integrating ELA and mathematics into science lessons, and using assessment to help plan instruction of the three dimensions of the NGSS Framework.

The special education teachers along with their assigned core team attended the Stetson training over the summer of 2015 in addition to two follow-up trainings in the winter. The training focused on school-wide scheduling for best inclusive practices, differentiation of lessons, scaffolding of activities, and being aware of all of the different multiple-intelligences when lesson designing.

The mathematics and English language arts departments have attended many Saturday workshops to collaborate and develop common units and assessments. As we move into the next year, our staff will be spending the first day of summer collaborating together to plan the School Performance Plan so that

everyone is "singing from the same sheet of music" when it comes to the focus for student achievement. When you walk into any classroom you will be seeing the same types of instructional strategies that engage all students. These strategies will be the focus for the staff so that all students will be asked to think critically, work collaboratively and to be able to communicate their thinking as they work through the NVACS.

#### 4. School Leadership:

The philosophy of the school leadership is quite simple – kids come first. Any decision that is made is always in the best interest of the student. When opening Kendyl Depoali Middle School, the Principal hired, designed structures and policies, and bought supplies with the three words - Relationships, Rigor and Relevance as the cornerstones of everything she did. Relationships had to be built with the staff, students, and parents in order for the learning to take place, and it happens with the staff first. A common language for positive reinforcements for our students was agreed upon by the staff and is still used after 7 years. It is what continues to create a safe learning culture for our students and allows our teachers to have a positive climate within their classroom and reinforce the behaviors that are wanted. Each subject PLC has a lead teacher who meets in district meetings to gather information that is important to be disseminated to their group in order to stay abreast of the district and state curricular information and mandates. This set of teachers meets as a lead group with the administration to make school-wide decisions about instruction, teaching and learning, testing and many policies and procedures that are day to day issues that affect daily routine. One example would be the middle school initiative that Depoali adopted 2 years ago - Project Based Learning. The staff had complete some school-wide training for PBL's on their own and decided that through the advisory program we wanted to help our students become better 21st Century learners. When the district gave all middle schools 4 options to choose from for an initiative, the leadership group decided to choose "none of the above" and instead proposed that we be able to take on Project Based Learning as our school-wide focus as our initiative. The leaders put together a strong proposal and it was accepted from the district. Our school has been doing PBLs ever since. What this means is that all students are being asked to think critically, do in-depth inquiry while solving a driving question that involves significant content derived from standards. The students make their decisions about the project including how they work and what they create and then they present it to an audience that is different than just their teacher. These 21st Century Skills are what is needed to produce students who will be college and/or highly technical and career ready. As a group of leaders, the belief is that all students can and will learn. We, here at Depoali Middle School, continue to work together to produce well rounded students who will be successful at the next level.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

---

Our STRIKE matrix has been the number one practice that has allowed us our greatest success. The STRIKE (Strength, Tolerance, Responsibility, Integrity, Knowledge, and Empathy) matrix is our positive reinforcement system which has given our staff and students a common language to reinforce, reteach or recognize the actions that we all want to see, both behaviorally and academically. The matrix allows our students to know exactly what our high expectations are and allows our teachers to speak in a positive manner when addressing students. This has helped to create a culture of excellence and challenges all students to work at a level that sometimes is uncommon in their lives. Here at school, it is the expectation that they “have the Strength to apply their knowledge to overcome obstacles and succeed”, for instance. Or, show “Empathy by appreciating and recognizing the efforts of all who participate”. These are examples of exemplars within the matrix and would be parts of comments that teachers would make when reinforcing a behavior when seen from a student.

The teachers not only give the verbal praise but give signatures in the students’ planners which are then counted weekly. At the mid-quarter and end of quarter there are rewards that students earn by receiving the signatures. Students also set weekly home goals and parents are able to give signatures. The goal is to have every student receive 5 signatures a week and it is also the goal to have teachers reinforcing and giving 5 signatures a period. This Positive Behavior Intervention Support system has created a culture and climate that has allowed a safe learning environment especially for the biggest middle school in the district. This year with close to 1200 students it has been very important to make sure that all students feel safe so that they can concentrate on learning. With the rigor of the NVACS and all that teachers are asking of our students, the positive reinforcements for the efforts they are putting forth help reinsure what they are doing and help them to persevere through the work. Along with the specific contingent praise students receive through the STRIKE language, our teachers have embedded the district’s Social and Emotional Learning standards which dovetail nicely with our PBIS. Students are becoming more self-aware and are managing their emotions. They are building relationship skills and becoming responsible decision makers. All of these components are allowing our middle school students to be successful in and out of the classroom both academically and behaviorally.