



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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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. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 20 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 25 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
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	0	0	0
<b>1</b>	0	0	0
<b>2</b>	0	0	0
<b>3</b>	0	0	0
<b>4</b>	0	0	0
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	196	180	376
<b>7</b>	217	189	406
<b>8</b>	216	225	441
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	629	594	1223

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 87 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 8 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 7%

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

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, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	36
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	61
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	97
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	1336
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Korean, Filipino, Portuguese, Mandarin, Japanese, Arabic, Armenian, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Punjabi, Russian, Thai, Turkish, Urdu, Ukrainian, Pashto, Gujarati, Taiwanese, Serbo-Croatian, Bengali, Telugu,, Tamil, Marathi, Kannada

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 16%  
Total number students who qualify: 196

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %  
93 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>23</u> Autism                 | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>2</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>14</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>20</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>4</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>4</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	54
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	25
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	8

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.

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
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 2017.

<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.

Lawson Middle School is committed to providing a welcoming, student-centered learning environment where we strive to meet the diverse needs of our entire student body. We foster positive relationships throughout our learning community built upon respect, collaboration, perseverance, compassion, and humor. We encourage students to be innovative thinkers and problem solvers in order to contribute positively in the global community.

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

We are a public school and follow district established attendance zones by home address.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Lawson Middle School opened as the fifth middle school to join the Cupertino Union School District twelve years ago at a time when district-wide enrollment was expanding. Few opportunities exist in education as the innovation and visioning that can come with opening a new school. Highly compassionate teachers were recruited in order to achieve high levels of emotional and social support. The high academic performance of our students rests heavily on strong family and cultural values, coupled with a rigorous academic program. We place a strong emphasis on the social and emotional support of our students.

The school was built around a program that supports connections amongst students, staff, and parents. We build our master schedule to ensure students are housed in smaller groups with fewer teachers and classes to navigate. Staff members coordinate calendars, projects, and assessment dates in order to scaffold the acquisition of time and task management. Two full time academic counselors are available to students. Students may submit a counseling slip for themselves or a friend at any time and someone will respond immediately. Counselors role in the intervention process is critical. We use shared documents to collaborate with teachers to introduce intervention, track data, and monitor subgroups like special education students and English language learners. Each Wednesday we conduct a two-hour staff meeting, where we ensure no more than thirty minutes are set aside for nuts and bolts, so the rest of the time can be dedicated to checking in on student needs and interventions. In the classroom, students may receive direct support from one of our paraprofessionals, while also receiving differentiated instruction from the teacher. Should a student continue to struggle, they are referred to our Intervention Strategies Team. This team includes administration, counseling, speech and language pathologist, resource and Special Day Classroom (SDC) teachers, therapists, and school psychologist. This meeting affords another opportunity to exhaust any and all tier-one interventions. Our ability to collaborate quickly and efficiently has maintained a high rate of success for our students both academically and emotionally.

One of our hallmark programs that fosters a smooth transition to middle school is WEB, which stands for “Where Everybody Belongs”. From the time our students enter as sixth graders, they are greeted by staff members and eighth grade peers ready to support the transition to middle school. WEB is a middle school orientation and transition program that welcomes 6th graders and makes them feel comfortable throughout the first year of their middle school experience. Built on the belief that students can help students succeed, the program trains mentors from our 8th grade class to be WEB Leaders. As positive role models, WEB Leaders are mentors and student leaders, who guide the 6th graders to discover what it takes to be successful during the transition to middle school and help facilitate 6th grade success.

Positive personal identity is critical to the success of all middle school students. We very much want students to experiment with all types of academic and non-academic activities in a low-risk environment. We offer a robust electives program including a traditional arts wheel (woodshop, cooking, art), band, orchestra, choir, foreign language, student leadership, coding and web design, and video production. We also have student-led clubs ranging from Nature Club to Chess Club to even Future Business Leaders of America. Students can choose to participate in Speech and Debate, Math Olympiads, Science Olympiads, Arts and Crafts Club, and even Karaoke Club. Experiences in electives and clubs often lead students to more dedicated and systemic choices in high school, which in turn ultimately influences college and career pathways.

We are also deeply proud of the way we involve our parents in the community. Many of our after-school activities attempt to connect our student population with the greater community, and in some cases, the world. Last year we hosted our first ever Multicultural Day. Students selected which countries would be represented, then formed planning teams under the guidance of parent volunteers. Each country was asked to include a food sample, traditional craft, music playlist, and dance or ritual. As our student population navigated each country, they filled out a passport to learn about the various countries. Inspired by Multicultural Day, we reimagined a traditional Math Night for students to include parents. Our goal was to focus on the application of mathematics with complex word problems, puzzles, proofs, and mathematical tasks. Parents had to solve complex problems alongside students without relying on traditional algorithms, so as to better understand the shift to Common Core Mathematics. It was fun to watch the parents struggle

with application of some of the more complex concepts.

The partnership with our staff, students, and parents has created a truly child-centered philosophy of education that strongly supports the academic, social and emotional success of every student at Lawson.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

This section is best prefaced by the fact our school has integrated a one-to-one model of technology integration over a six-year period, utilizing the iPad as the primary device assigned to each child. Professional development (PD) has been framed against the SAMR Model for the purpose of ensuring technology use is meaningful and transformative.

#### Reading / English Language Arts:

Our reading and writing program utilizes the Lucy Calkins Units of Study writing curriculum and the Inquiry By Design (IBD) curriculum. Both sets of materials are based on a workshop model, minimizing direct instruction and emphasizing student collaboration and individual growth, with the teacher playing the primary role of facilitator of learning. The direct instruction that does occur is extremely targeted in its approach. The bulk of time is spent gathering, summarizing, and synthesizing new information for the purpose of demonstrating understanding. Products to demonstrate understanding include written essays, digital projects, speeches, and portfolios. The following are examples culled from teachers. Students utilize an interactive clipboard with post-its, where students can write and organize thoughts on a topic as well as add resources to substantiate their claims. Students are writing mentors to a 4th grade class at another school. The 4th graders share writing pieces and students give targeted feedback. Students also create teaching point lessons customized for their 4th grader. Students film each other performing a skill, and using the app Explain Everything, break down the skill in the video to critique and self evaluate their own process. They then set goals to practice, and re-film at the end of the unit to see if there is any improvement.

#### Mathematics:

Teachers utilize College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM) for daily instruction. CPM is a research-based and Common Core-aligned curriculum, building upon 25 years developing problem-based, student-centered materials embedding the mathematical practices within lessons focused on big ideas and mathematical connections. Included in the textbooks are appendices and digital tools designed to help teachers and students with standards that might otherwise be missed or require supplementing in the transition to the CCSS grade level standards. An emphasis is placed on the development of conceptual understanding and the relationships in mathematics prior to introducing the algorithm, such that students understand mathematics in ways that provide for greater application rather than simple computation. The following are examples culled from teachers. Students create an annotated video explaining and demonstrating their understanding of a math concept (e.g. proportional relationships). Students design a house using GeoGebra software where they demonstrate understanding of complex translations, rotations, dilations and reflections. Students watch a video about a DJ's profitability in relation to linear equations. Next, they work on a Desmos Picture activity where they create graphs, tables, and manipulate the pictures to hang perfectly on a wall (extension of linear equations). Next, students relate that to figures, graphs, tables, and linear equations while doing a pattern analysis. Students create a video to explain how to find the 100th figure in the pattern and post it on Padlet.

#### Science:

We began the transition to Next Generation Science Standards with a more inquiry-based approach to science, relying less on a traditional textbook, and more on exploratory labs coupled with learning about best practices in research. We are beginning the process to identify curriculum district-wide more suitable to an inquiry-based curriculum. We will be piloting materials in the 2018-2019 school year. The following are examples of daily classroom learning activities. Students record video for lab data/documentation for review and analysis. Students use interactive science websites to learn about various topics. Most recently they used Inside Earth Interactive where students could compare the layers of the earth to their milky way lab. Milky way lab demonstrates different layers that cannot be seen by the naked eye under the crust. Students create a balloon car, race the cars in class, video the race, and explain how Newton's laws are shown in the cars they made.

## Social Studies:

Our social studies curriculum outlines three significant historical periods. Sixth grade students learn relevant content encompassing ancient civilizations. Seventh grade students learn content from Medieval and Early Modern Times. Eighth grade students focus on United States history. Layered over content, students develop important skills in the areas of spatial and chronological thinking, research, evidence, point of view, and historical interpretation. The same writing standards accountable to our language arts classes are in place as standards for excellence in our history classes when students write to demonstrate understanding. The following are examples of daily classroom learning activities. Students create an animation that demonstrates understanding of a government process. Students compile research to answer their own questions regarding the French Revolution. After which, they present their findings through a multi-media platform. Throughout this process the teacher is performing check-ins through Google Docs to chat with each group in and out of school to provide feedback and performance improvement. Students create video documentaries, including whiteboard explainer videos, skits with green screen, and Explain Everything style videos with relevant images and voice-over recordings explaining concepts.

From these examples, one can conclude a strong emphasis has been placed on inquiry and investigation across all content areas. In particular, our use of technology provides a tremendous amount of choice and voice in how students represent their thinking and understanding.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

As previously shared, our school adopted high ratios of access to student technology devices. We have primarily used the iPad and have conducted extensive PD over the years framed against the SAMR Model. We were even bestowed the honor of Apple Distinguished School. Our technology integration is based on the standards all students will have choice in how they make their thinking and learning visible, participate as respectful and appropriate digital citizens in the community, and engage in learning through the phases of consuming, creating, curating, and connecting. To that end, we have involved all stakeholders in upholding these standards. We have adopted the curriculum Common Sense Media in order to ensure access to grade-differentiated units spiraled across eight key topics including self-image and identity, cyberbullying, digital footprint, and creative credit and copyright. The lessons include interactive activities, videos, and assessments. The program takes a whole-community approach, with resources for parents and community members. There is a strategic focus on online security, identity and safety. Additionally, we offer parents education on how to manage the iPad at home, including family contracts, boundaries with social media, web content filters, and the ScreenGuide app where parents can limit screen time, set time-out, and hide/show apps.

Further expanding on our instructional goals, we set standards for application in the classroom across four areas:

**Access:** students can apply supplemental information to further their understanding using research, primary sources, virtual museums, simulated environments, archaeological sites, and other written text & media.

**Assessment:** students can choose greater options to demonstrate their knowledge better aligned to their individual learner profile using videos, podcasts, presentations, audio recordings, cartoons, simulations, and collages.

**Inquiry:** students investigate, and articulate solutions to complex problems using digital resources and online manipulatives.

**Analysis:** students question, research, hypothesize, experiment, document, analyze and publish current research, through digital labs and collaboration.

We conducted a two years study of our technology integration program and were able to document significantly high quantitative and qualitative data sets supporting the positive impact technology has made

on teaching and learning from the student and teacher perspective. The comprehensive study is available online through Google Drive.

We also have a robust Physical Education program for all students at every grade level as a stand-alone single period class. Our program goes far beyond sports and physical activity. We strictly adhere to the California Standards for Physical Education and the emphasis on understanding and applying the principles of fine and gross motor skills, as well as the application of sociological and psychological concepts. By incorporating technology, students can set fitness goals, collect and analyze personal health data, and draw conclusions about appropriate next steps to improve overall health. Teachers also couple personal health with explicitly teaching the idea of growth mindset.

Most importantly when considering the impact of a middle school program is to evaluate the electives program. We offer a significant amount of variety by grade level. Entering sixth grader, students can choose the applied arts wheel, which includes exposure to cooking, woodshop, art, coding, public speaking, and business and marketing. Other choices include band, orchestra, and choir. When students move to seventh grade similar options are available. By eighth grade, other options become available. In addition to previously listed electives, students may conclude their music experience in competitive advanced ensembles. They may also take various leadership classes responsible for video announcement production, yearbook production, and leadership development in school-wide activities and connectedness. Students may take our technology course, where they learn advanced coding, programming, javascript, html, and game design. Lastly, students may elect to take a high school equivalency course in Spanish or French. The elective program is where students can truly begin to identify interests, which highly influence high school, college, and career pathways.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Lawson has undergone a multi-year process of PD in the area of sound assessment practices. Sound assessment is a pedagogical approach to guide how formative and summative assessments are given and relied upon to inform both teachers and students. Coupled with the explicit use of technology, our assessment feedback has become very timely, often providing students direct feedback instantly to help them move to the next level of understanding or mastery. Using low-risk assessments that serve to inform progress without the attachment of points or grades, we allow students to improve in their performance prior to receiving a formal grade. Multiple apps such as Kahoot!, Quizlet, Quizizz, and Peardeck, provide instant feedback. Use of such applications can quickly assess individual student understanding, whole class common understanding, and provide platforms for collaborative groups to work together and receive timely guidance from the teacher. Formal summative assessments also extend far beyond traditional tests. We often measure comprehensive understanding through the creation of products. These may include videos, posters, brochures, models, podcasts, ebooks, and portfolios. Our goal is for students to represent thinking in a highly personalized way. By ensuring transparency in learning targets, essential questions, and through a process of backward design and spiraled curriculum, students remain clear about expectations and learning outcomes.

Our high achieving students have multiple opportunities to extend and challenge themselves. Our math program allows for early acceleration into high school equivalent Algebra and Geometry. We have multiple pathways to acceleration each year, such that students entering sixth, seventh, and eighth grade can continue to challenge themselves if they demonstrate readiness. We use multiple measures to assess readiness beginning at the end of fifth grade. We rely on the Northwest Evaluation Association Map Test, or NWEA as it is more commonly known. We couple this with The Silicon Valley Math Initiative's Performance Tasks, which measure ability to solve complex math problems and articulate thinking with clarity and efficiency. By ensuring high performance on both measures, we can accurately determine whether or not a child can understand complex math at a deep conceptual level, or more simply at a computational level. We feel strongly computation is not enough to perform at high levels in high school math courses, application must be robust as well. By ensuring students are more accurately placed, we challenge students at their level, and support those who need additional time or intervention.

We also believe in offering support to our students that may struggle across multiple academic areas. We have a Boost elective available to students. The Boost teacher works directly with the teaching staff to coordinate support, scaffolding organizational and time-management skill development. Students are most often offered this class through the School Success Team Meeting (SST) process. Through this process, we involve staff, parents, counselors, and child to identify areas of strength and needed improvement. We couple interventions with timeline to evaluate success according to data, and then expand interventions if necessary when we do not see improvement. Our SST process is built against the tenants of the research-based Response to Intervention, or RTI, model.

We also track student success through a process of revisiting a data matrix at staff meetings that considers multiple measures of success. We first identify any student who scored below standard on our state-wide Smarter Balanced assessment. We check those students against databases for special education and English language learners (ELL). These become our first cohorts that we track regularly. We then identify students who scored below standard on our statewide Smarter Balanced assessment, but are not identified as special education or ELL. We ensure they are in our SST process, or begin the process, if necessary. We then monitor these students weekly through our staff meeting/development time. We couple classroom data with summative grades, and use the SST process and progress reports to involve teachers, parents, counselors, and the student in applying interventions.

In the last two years we have completely changed our English language development support classes as well. We now offer a sheltered English/language arts class coupled with a full period of language immersion. We dedicated an entire FTE to be sure the same teacher can support our ELL students, and collaborate with teachers supporting ELL students in the mainstream setting. Because this is our largest group showing an achievement gap, we wanted to dedicated the resources to supporting this population.

Indeed our school demonstrates high levels of achievement on local and state-wide assessments. Our goal is for high-achieving students to approach greater levels of rigor and sophistication in their learning. We ensure teaching and learning revolves around critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, or the educational philosophy of the "4 c's" as it is known. Through projects and products, students are pushed to represent deeper levels of understanding in their learning supported by a highly collaborative environment in the workshop model.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Two years ago, we completely re-wrote our core values. Over the course of several months, our leadership team worked with the entire staff to create core values we all fundamentally support. By using a process of consensus-building, we were able to not just reach a majority of staff who felt strongly about what we wrote, but were able to get buy-in from all staff that the way we articulated our core values was accurate. We developed the following statements built around six key words:

Compassion, Humor, Collaboration, Perseverance, Respect, Relationships:

We value compassion, and seek opportunities to foster empathy and sympathy amongst all learners. In our dialogue with parents and students, we are mindful of and attentive to the diverse needs of our community.

By incorporating humor in the classroom, students and staff are provided with the opportunity to view an authentic version of each other, fostering a welcoming, engaging, and safe environment for all. Humor is a tool to bolster and celebrate children.

Collaboration prepares students for a global society where working together is not only necessary, but also promotes innovation and unity.

Students and staff acknowledge failure as a tool, not a label. In our classrooms, we foster a growth mindset that supports perseverance through risk taking, and encourages students to view mistakes as an integral part of learning.

By cultivating respect, students and staff feel safe to share their individual perspective through the learning process. Students lead with integrity, drawing on their moral compass to advocate for self and others.

We foster relationships among students, staff, parents, and the community that lead to positive outcomes in both academic and nonacademic settings. Students develop trust through a variety of relationships, seeking support as needed and transforming support into success.

This year we partnered with the Santa Clara County Office of Education to join with other schools in the program Positive Behavioral Support Systems, or PBIS. The team consists of members from each facet of staff. We have teachers, instructional aides, counselors, and will include parents in the next phase of the program. With guidance from the county, we have involved students and teachers in addressing the following questions: What are Lawson's school rules/behavior expectations and the consequences for "breaking" school rules? What are the challenges of our current discipline plan? In what ways could Lawson benefit from rethinking discipline? The team developed the Bolt Matrix which stands for "Be Respectful, Own Your Actions, Learn Together, Treat with Kindness." It stands to mention our school logo is a lightning bolt. Staff and students drafted examples of how a student could demonstrate the elements of Bolt in classrooms, common areas, restrooms and locker rooms, and in cyberspace. The next step is to involve Student Cabinet in identifying what incentives could be implemented to reward positive behavior. The team will develop these incentives and also identify additional ways to track behavior that goes beyond the disciplinary data we have been using to measure behavior on campus.

Other projects linked to our core values and PBIS include summer art projects to beautify our campus. Our core values will be graphically represented on the staircases leading to the second floor of our building. Additionally, our outdated bathroom stalls will be repainted by student graphic designers to capture our core values through words and images.

While we place a strong emphasis on student wellness, we also want to make sure teachers are well taken care of and involved in high-level decision-making within the organization. One of our favorite rituals is the "Affirmations, Kudos, and Information" section of our weekly staff meetings. Staff members offer

praise to colleagues for hard work, special projects, individual leadership, and support. Additionally, administration meets twice a month with our Faculty Advisory (FAC) and Leadership Committees. FAC is responsible for drafting school policy and procedure. The team also ensures adherence to the teaching contract. Leadership Committee will research and development new instructional initiatives. The administrative team is committed to using transparent protocols with all staff to garner feedback. Consensus with a minimum of eighty-percent buy-in is the target prior to implementing any new process, procedure, or initiative.

## **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Our family and community involvement stems from two highly important parent groups; our PTA and School Site Council. PTA contributes a significant amount of money to our school through a one-time parent ask. They also coordinate a significant amount of volunteers, whom we rely on deeply. In partnership, we have shifted the focus of the PTA budget from primarily supporting school-wide social activities to more directly funding school instructional programs and experiences. Over the course of the last few years PTA has purchased numerous iPad applications to support language arts and math. They have increasingly supported science through materials for labs and dissections. One of their largest budget items is for our Ancient Artifacts assembly. Sixth grade students are immersed in realia and artifacts from the time periods Early Man, Egyptians, Ancient China, and Ancient Greece. PTA was also integral in making our Multicultural event and Math Night highly successful. By including teachers in PTA meetings, parents also get to hear directly from educators about programs in the classroom. This direct connection to staff has a tremendous impact on the confidence in our school felt by our parents.

We have also reimagined School Site Council to more directly support programs. School Site Council meetings continue to be a place where our master plan instructional goals, materials, resources, initiatives, and budget are presented. While this is an important role of the committee, we have also solicited their direct support in rolling out new program. We will be offering our first ever “All STEAMed Up” Career Day. We intend to have parent and community volunteers come and present to students. The goal is for volunteers to speak to how they incorporate the elements of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) into their daily work flow. We will also help volunteers frame their presentation to include some type of activity the students can engage in to better understand the connection to STEAM.

Lastly, we solicit parent feedback through a series of surveys administered throughout the year. Hanover Research provides a detailed report on areas of strength and weakness. We bring the data back to our Leadership Team and School Site Council for feedback and initiative planning.

## **3. Professional Development:**

Ongoing and personalized PD has been critical to our success. Our longest standing focus on PD has been in the area of technology. We worked with Apple over a five-year period to train all teachers in the implementation of a 1:1 program. The training most explicitly tied technology to Project Based Learning. Teachers have become experts in designing and implementing learning experiences where students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge. Our work culminated in the honor of Apple Distinguished School, which in turn led to multiple school visits by districts and schools all over the United States. We have been able to share best practices in a digital community of like-minded and enthusiastic educators.

In the last three years our PD has evolved to include a more differentiated approach to topics based on needs assessments conducted by our administration and leadership team. Overwhelmingly when asked what topics interested our staff, they focused in on assessment, Project Based Learning, and the Workshop Model. Wanting to combine these topics with our focus on technology, we conduct series of whole day PD and micro-PDs at staff meetings to shift practice. When teachers are asked to develop new learning activities, lessons, and units, we frame the design against the SAMR model. The SAMR Model helps teachers align technology integration to levels of sophistication in what students are asked to do or create.

The lowest level is substitution, then augmentation, modification, and redefinition. An example of substitution may be taking a traditional note taking document on paper and moving it to the computer or iPad. Redefinition may be studying the effects of mass-farming on the quality of soil in states like Nebraska and then video blogging with actual farmers in the area to receive information and feedback.

Administration relies on regular walk-throughs to ensure the teaching staff is taking advantage of PD opportunities.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

Our school has developed a philosophy of shared leadership since the inception of our school in 2006. We have consistently had a leadership team composed of teachers to help guide administration in the decision making process. Our current principal joined the team two and a half years ago. Since that time, we have increased the number of needs assessments used to solicit whole staff feedback. The process of decision making has become much more data driven. We want to ensure whole school decisions are reaching levels of eighty and ninety percent buy-in. We do not want to rely on a simple majority. Through this process we have relied on shared leadership to restructure and enhance our PD, provide clarity to the budget process, redevelop our mission and core values, strengthen our technology integration, and adopt and implement new curriculum in English language arts and math. The feedback loop has been critical to our ability to respond and course-correct through processes of implementation.

Next academic year, we will be restructuring our leadership model again. We have had a tremendous amount of support from central office due to supplemental common core transitional dollars and staff. We will be moving to a more teacher supported leadership model with educators released from the classroom and compensated for additional duties. While any change can present challenges, we are encouraged by the opportunity to rely on the incredible talents of our staff.

Our PD focus areas for the 2018-2019 school year will continue to emphasize enhanced use of technology. We will be extending our work with PBIS to more directly impact our students through incentives, student leadership, and community outreach. We will be evaluating a new science curriculum, as well.

More than eighty percent of our population consistently scores at standard or above standard levels on state-wide testing and classroom summative assessments. This makes it challenging for administration to rely on these traditional measures of success. Therefore, our data tracking system becomes critical to ensure our smaller population of struggling students do not fall through the cracks. Administration couples this data set, with classroom observations to ensure high levels of teaching and learning.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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In the interest of promoting college and career readiness, we have developed over the course of several years a portfolio initiative that involves students, staff, parents, and professionals in the community. Throughout the year, students reflect on their progress in each of their classes. Middle school is a time of significant change for all children. Some of their entries and reflections are about their personal growth, while others are academically related. Through presentations and personal interviews with community volunteers, students showcase their achievements from their years at Lawson. This activity provides an opportunity for students to examine academic and social growth in middle school, engage in a process of self-evaluation, identify strengths and needs for improvement, build self-esteem, reflect on the importance of selected assignments and life events, and validate their efforts via the attention of an adult volunteer.

Portfolio Day is a special occasion for students, faculty, and adult volunteers. Students are divided into groups of four or five and assigned to two adults from the community. Each student shares autobiographical information along with the most valuable work from their digital portfolio in a ten-minute presentation. Adult participants provide positive feedback, ask pertinent questions, and help the students to celebrate their achievements. Teachers dedicate time over the course of the year to help students develop the skills necessary to reflect on growth through their writing. Students are taught how to construct documents like resumes and autobiographies. They also have multiple opportunities throughout the year to develop presentation skills. Our focus on developing these skills helps prepare our students for their portfolio presentations, but it is consistently the passion of our students that elevates presentations to such a remarkable level.

All grade levels participate in some variation of presentation. The arc of growth in maturity and sophistication is phenomenal from sixth to eighth grade. Nervous sixth graders transform into competent and poised young adults ready to conquer High School!