



## **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. 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

---

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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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
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	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	68	61	129
10	71	65	136
11	61	56	117
12 or higher	60	55	115
<b>Total Students</b>	260	237	497

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 88 % White
  - 1 % 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: 4%

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	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	484
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

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

Belarusian, Lao, Spanish, Urda

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 24%  
Total number students who qualify: 119

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %  
56 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>4</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>49</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>1</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 9
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.	19
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.	5
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 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	96%	95%	96%	96%	95%
High school graduation rate	98%	95%	97%	96%	98%

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	114
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	61%
Enrolled in a community college	25%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	6%
Joined the military or other public service	3%
Other	4%

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 challenge all students to reach their highest learning potential through a diverse curriculum, differentiated instruction, and authentic assessments. We will foster a strong work ethic, academic integrity, and a plan to become productive members in a global 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**

---

Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School (SB-L HS) is located in a thriving and growing suburban community adjacent to a large urban community. The community of Sergeant Bluff is a semi-diverse population both ethnically and socioeconomically, comprised of families with a strong focus towards education and high expectations of academic success. This expectation of success helps to create a sense of urgency and pride within our school to succeed and continue to pursue a tradition of excellence. As our district grows and becomes more diverse in our population, the expectations within the building help foster a strong passion for achievement for all backgrounds regardless of ethnic or socioeconomic status. Our relationship-building programs and invested teachers also add to that sense of community. We truly believe in and strive to always improve upon our Warrior P.O.W.E.R. (Positive-Ownership-Well Prepared-Engaged-Respectful).

SB-L HS values its tradition and history of achieving both academically as well as in the many extra/co-curricular activities it provides. This tradition focuses around our building mission statement and goals, which were created by our staff and are periodically reviewed and revised for continued growth.

Our mission: To challenge all students to reach their highest learning potential through a diverse curriculum, differentiated instruction, and authentic assessments. We strive to foster a strong work ethic, academic integrity, and a plan to become productive members in a global community.

We value that mission and challenge all our teachers and students to grow in every aspect of it in both the classroom and extra/co-curricular activities. We continually work to find avenues to reach students where they are and grow them from there with a keen focus on both 1) school climate/culture and relationship-building, 2) rigor and relevance of concepts, disciplinary processes, life skills, and content.

A common theme at SB-L HS is that all students are held accountable for their learning with an expectation of achievement. This focus partially stems from a strong building leadership team (BLT) leading professional development moving us forward toward our mission as well as fostering learning that assures student achievement. The Teacher Leader Compensation (TLC) program has provided us the opportunity to even better utilize our teacher leaders in roles as instructional coach, initiative leaders, and mentors. Our BLT uses anecdotal, observed, and statistical data from several sources to choose our direction. Currently, we are focused on students' conceptual understanding, literacy across all classes, collaborative learning, mentoring and executive functions interventions, and school climate/expectations to reach our goals.

Within our collaborative communities of professionals (PLC's) where we work to improve our pedagogy, it is our belief that successfully implementing and embedding the Authentic Intellectual Work Framework (AIW) into our teaching and learning over the last seven years has had a broad positive impact on student achievement. The focus on Conceptual Understanding, Higher Order Thinking and Substantive Conversations changes the teachers' approaches to planning/instruction and changes the students' perspective to "learning means something beyond memorization or repeating a procedure."

The use of many different instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction, quality questioning, literacy strategies, 1:1 technology tools, and inquiry-based learning strategies makes our PLC work invaluable in the success of our students. A long-standing practice in our building is also the use of a modified block schedule. Because it has been in practice for so long, the faculty has honed the ability to use the longer block very effectively for student learning. The more recent implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) now helps us reinforce positive achievement and provide a tiered approach to meeting more needs of students both academically and behaviorally.

Another key is that our teachers develop positive relationships with students, which creates a culture where feeling included and being successful is an inherent expectation for everyone. Many of our clubs/activities were initiated by and are run by teacher volunteers and most of our teachers attend extracurricular events to support students. At school, teachers are assigned an advisory made up of 4-5 students from each grade level with whom they work or converse weekly throughout the student's high school career. Within the advisory, teachers (advisors) have the opportunity to help students develop both academic and post-

secondary goals, to share our Iowa Assessment goals and to test and team up for academic challenges (build, cook, write, solve, or create) in different content areas. We have found that all these things help to create a culture that supports academic goals as well as fun, teamwork, and relationship-building. Our advisories provide a “homebase” and one more adult advocate for every student.

Building those positive relationships with students and holding them accountable for their learning is a key to success. To accomplish this, our staff must feel ownership, gain focus through our mission and building goals, and take action steps to make it happen. Creating a culture with high expectations and working together with a common focus helps us better promote a very positive experience for both our students and staff and fosters that academic achievement we all desire. It comes down to never seeing our status quo as good enough.

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

---

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

The core curriculum offered at Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School aligns directly to the common core standards and is focused on the bases of inquiry based learning. Within each of the core areas, the sequence of classes offered is designed to allow students the ability to focus their learning towards their interests in preparation of either post-secondary or career ready opportunities. Sequencing of these classes allows students the opportunity to take advantage of advanced placement, along with both online and college classes taught by teachers within the high school. This means many opportunities for students to advance their learning and preparation of post-secondary education.

English Language Arts offers eight year-long courses for students to meet the 4-year ELA requirement to graduate. The courses range from Reading Proficiency focus to a technical career focus to college course literature and writing. During Professional Working Community (PWC) time, we created unit concept maps, which center around a primary concept and the supporting essential questions and Iowa Core standards for that unit. These also identify the higher-order thinking, demonstrations of learning, and texts to be included. We are in the process of developing these maps to focus on uses of Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) standards as well. Our block periods in English language arts encompass at least 3-4 of the language arts strands (especially vocabulary, grammar, literature, writing or speaking) with specific focus and intent given to each and then woven together for conceptual understanding. To achieve conceptual understanding and reach multiple learning styles, we blend a variety of text clusters (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama) from a variety of sources. We incorporate literacy terminology when communicating with students to bridge the vocabulary gap. To maintain positive classroom environment and student engagement/achievement, we use the APL instructional strategies and coordinate as a team on rubrics, policy, and weighting of assessments.

Students are required to take 3 years of mathematics. We align our curriculum with state standards and let that guide our instruction in the math department. Our classes are designed to scaffold throughout their high school careers. We use consistent teaching approaches to structure classroom design that allows for expectations to be similar throughout the department. Reliance on AIW data and suggestions drives our increased higher order thinking questions and discussions in the classroom. We use technology to explore and design some inquiry-based lessons and with our online textbook. Guided practice is both cooperative and individual. Every new teacher in our building receives APL classroom management strategies training, and we use it in our department to draw focus, formatively assess, and engage learners.

Students are required to take 3 years of science. We have aligned our curriculum with the Next Generation Science Standards and allow that to guide our science instruction. Our primary AIW focus in science has been on substantive conversation within our classroom to increase student achievement during all instruction because it lends itself to the inquiry inherent to thinking like a scientist. Our incorporation of inquiry-based learning allows students to engage in material and to help them use higher order thinking to explore science. This leads them to develop their conceptual understanding. We meet collaboratively during PWC's and PLC's to develop appropriate curriculum to meet the Next Generation Science Standards and Authentic Intellectual Work. The science department offers a variety of required and elective courses to meet students' needs and interests, including Advanced Placement. This provides multiple pathways of coursework depending on students' career goals. With use of Authentic Intellectual Work, the department strives to improve tasks and instruction to help better our student performance.

The Social studies department includes more than the state minimum of Social Studies courses with 3.5 years required coursework. We as a department are in progress with the implementation of new Social Studies Standards that are to be in place state-wide by 2020. We use PWC time to align our department courses with scope and sequence under the new standards. We also use primary and secondary resources in all courses. It is important to us that we align the curriculum with the use of current event resources (online videos, newspaper articles, magazine articles, etc.) Social studies lessons go through the peer and self-

evaluation process within our AIW multi-content groups for Task, Student Performance, and Instruction to improve student achievement through those areas.

We believe that including more engagement and learning skills of College-Career Readiness (CCR) through Kagan cooperative learning strategies within our curriculum has helped support CCR of all students. In senior social studies, units include financial aspects that come with college and adult life and advocacy and with perspectives in debates. ELA classes apply the skills of advocacy and understanding perspectives through panel discussions and Socratic Circles and skills of organization, responsibility, feedback, and communication through particular focus on research writing and long-term authentic projects. Science and math have placed more emphasis on the inquiry-based learning and the problem-solving and persistence involved. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs such as Project Lead the Way (engineering/design), ProStart (restaurant management and culinary arts), and Money Management (financial literacy) address career specific skills areas as well as broader skills in CCR. Advanced Placement course such as AP Chemistry and AP US History, our in-house College courses in ELA, and our online offering in conjunction with our local colleges also build the College and Career Readiness of our students.

Guidance counselors and advisors use the core classes and advisory to incorporate CCR knowledge and skills. They address goal setting, employability, selecting a college, applying for scholarship, military options, applying for financial aid in classes. Students also learn to understand themselves through their online interests, values, learning, and career survey. Students make a 4-year plan and post-secondary plan. In advisory, our guidance department has incorporated College Application Day, College Alumni presentation day, five CCR key discussions, and a College-Career Decision Day to build awareness and smooth transitions to college or career.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Visual arts coursework is one of our options to meet elective requirements to graduate and may be taken at any time in a student's high school career although some have prerequisites because they range from introductory to advanced. Our visual arts coursework is formatted to develop many essential skills such as time management, creativity, problem-solving, appreciation for the artistic process, understanding of artistic concepts and fine art and awareness of art used in the real world (graphics, web design, advertisement, etc.)

Performing arts coursework is another option to meet electives requirements to graduate and may be taken in any year of high school. Band and Mixed Choir are offered every day as opposed to A/B block in order to get more frequent practice in this performance-based course. Band and choir course, along with lesson times, serve as a launch pads for other elective activities such as show choir, jazz band, smaller ensembles, and individual and large group contests. Guitar class and keyboarding courses replaced traditional introduction to Music Appreciation and have created a unique way to infuse the art appreciation curriculum for students to experience. However, Music Theory I & II is still offered for those students who might consider a music major or musical career. These courses all develop differing levels of skills: Time management, Cooperative learning, Discipline, Confidence, Personal Responsibility, Respect, Pride, Patience, Musicianship, Team-building and Fine Arts awareness

Physical education (one semester per year) and health (1) are requirements to graduate and may be taken any time during 9-12. Nutrition is incorporated in both the required health course and in the Family Consumer Science (FCS) elective courses. All general aspects of healthy living such as coping techniques for mental stressors and anxiety as well as CPR certification are included in health and PE. General PE courses expose students a wide variety of life-long skills and weightlifting courses focus on proper and safe technique and methods for strength-building. With the use of a variety of competitive games and sports, students grow in teamwork, enjoyment, skill, and interest. FCS courses at SB-L HS are centered around foods, cooking, nutrition, and management as consumer or a professional. FCS courses incorporate communication skills, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

ProStart is the multi-level culinary arts program that drives our FCS. All courses are elective options with prerequisites built in and can be taken at any point during a student's four years in high school. Students

complete coursework in nutrition, kitchen essentials, culinary arts, safety and sanitation, communication, teamwork, nutrition, restaurant management, purchasing, and inventory and cost management. Students also learn critical life skills that apply in all jobs, including teamwork, problem-solving, customer service, public speaking, interviewing and accountability. Culinary arts and hospitality management colleges in the nation have articulation agreements with ProStart, which allow students to earn credit toward introductory college courses and to have mentors from the culinary field. ProStart also involves opportunities to compete in restaurant management and culinary arts. This past year, the SB-L HS's ProStart team won the State competition and competed at National level in Restaurant Management.

Foreign language, which is Spanish I-IV at this time, is open to all students 9-12 regardless of academic standing as there are no prerequisites. It is considered an elective class that is not required to graduate from SB-L HS. However, all students can benefit from foreign language instruction. Everyone has the opportunity to acquire language proficiency to the best of his/her individual abilities. Each student is required to work with self-discipline. Many colleges and universities require foreign language instruction as admission or exit requirement. With this in mind, students who elect to take foreign language should be ready to take on the challenge of a rigorous class in which learning skills are required.

Project Lead the Way (PLTW) is open to any student and is considered an elective credit. It is a powerful STEM/Engineering program that SB-L has offered its students for nearly a decade. Students can take a series of one-year courses throughout high school that helps them be better prepared to enter into an Engineering/Design major/field. PLTW classes are project-based and demand a lot of energy and focus from students, as there is always work to be done each day. They are nationally certified classes that give students dual-credit as long as they perform well on their national end-of-course assessment. The students see and understand all the different aspects of engineering, the design process, and programming used to invent, create, and innovate. Students have designed and build a number of items used in our school every day.

Computer Literacy is an elective class required for all students to graduate. Besides the introduction to Microsoft applications and tools, computer literacy develops many life skills needed within the 21st-Century workforce such as digital literacy, creativity, problem solving and team building strategies. A current focus within the technology curriculum is offering a coding program of study which we believe will allow for more opportunities for technology access for all students.

Money Management is a one-semester financial literacy course required to graduate. This course was recently recognized by Next Generation Personal Finance (NGPF) as a Gold Standard School recipient. Money Management informs students in grades 11-12 of the wide range of topics that deal with finances in business and personal use. Topics include financial institutions & banking services, credit in our economy, saving & investing, risk management, and personal financial management. Year-long Accounting (10-12) is a beneficial to both the college-bound and work-bound student because it introduces students to “the language of business” as well as learning lifelong skills relevant to all careers and personal use. Advanced Accounting/Marketing & Finance is a one-year course (prerequisite: accounting), which targets students interested in careers of accounting or business. Students apply the principles of accounting to managing and record-keeping the SBL HS school store. Students get “hands on” experience in running a business. Introduction to Business (one semester for 9-10) covers a wide range of topics that are a part of our economy, government and business world. Units covered in the course consist of our economic system, business types in our economy, career exploration and values and goals, consumerism, labor and government.

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

Within all Professional Learning Communities at Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School, we encourage teachers to challenge themselves to answer four guiding questions regarding students and their work with them: What is it we expect all students to learn? How will we know when they have learned it? How will we respond when they don't learn it? How will we respond when they already know it? Working through the lens of these questions keeps the focus on students' needs and the instructional strategies necessary to meet those needs to achieve the desired instructional goals. Under the umbrella framework of Authentic

Intellectual Work, we believe that the positioning of staff and the use of a broad spectrum of tools and strategies help us to increase proficiency for all students.

Although we struggle with a shortage of teachers like most schools, we try to combine and position the staff we do have in the most constructive ways possible. A special education teacher serves on every core area Professional Working Community to better incorporate that perspective and those strategies in the approach for that area. We also have pairs of special education teachers and core content teachers teaching together to meet different needs. We feel this improves the support for IEP and other students. In addition, our faculty has worked on incorporating differentiation strategies for several years, based on students' learning styles, interests, or readiness. Scaffolding complex concepts in manageable and logical chunks also promotes the success for all students.

Despite some inherent challenges, we have found that 1:1 technology helps teachers improve instruction to meet students' individual needs with resources for communication such as Google Classroom or literacy database, such as Commonlit and Newsela (text sets with lexile level alternatives, read aloud and highlighting tools, font size alternatives, questions). Online textbooks provide supplemental tools such as interactive practice, tutorials, visuals, etc. Currently, members of our staff are experimenting with Illustrative (Open) Math (real world problems/inquiry) and Defined Learning (STEM) (project-based learning experiences). We are striving to engage the minds of all students no matter if performing above and below grade level.

Beyond the digital tools and instructional strategies, however, our teachers who help students learn the strategies for processing, notetaking, organizing, studying, and communicating for themselves are our most powerful strategy. Those executive functions remain key to success as a learner and as an adult. The use of cooperative learning structures, quality higher order questioning, guided inquiry, and modeling have become staples for many teachers as ways to better engage minds in authentic learning. We sincerely believe that any success with strategies we have had is owed to an intentional combination of the culture of high expectations, growth mindset, a sense of school pride, online and digital tools, cooperative and social learning opportunities, authentic projects and performances. This combination is moving us toward our continuing goals with student achievement and growth.

Teachers use both formative and summative assessments to drive their instruction within the classroom. Formative assessment tools - like Edpuzzle, Kahoot, Quizlet, BrainPop, NoRedInk, and a variety of exit slips/assessments have given us some improved daily data on how our students are doing in order to adjust instruction. We have also learned how valuable students' ability to self-assess is in the improvement process. Many are incorporating this and the practice of relearning, revising, and re-assessing in their courses. Currently, the ACT and Iowa Assessments are our primary standardized assessment data. More explicit sorting and analysis of that information, along with data from the Iowa School Report Card, is our current assessment goal. Our teachers and administrator have started a thorough item analysis of Iowa Assessments to identify prime learning targets AND to brainstorm how every content area can contribute to this improvement effort. Our sights are set on improving our College and Career Readiness Growth, especially in reading, and on continuing to close the achievement gap.

The achievement gap is 10.7 for our FRL, IEP and ELL subgroup with a proficiency rate of 85.7% compared to all other students with a proficiency rate of 96.4% according to our 2017 Iowa School Report Card. Over the last three years, this gap has continued to close from a 31.1% proficiency gap in 2015 to a 10.7% proficiency gap in 2017. On that same report card, our school was identified this year as high performing (top 8% of high schools in Iowa) based on several factors such as proficiency, CCR, attendance, graduation rate, and staff retention.

Continually closing this gap and continuing the high performance of our students at SB-L, we believe, has a direct correlation to our building focus on: Authentic Intellectual Work framework, purposeful relationship-building with students amongst our staff, incorporation of diverse strategies to fit specific needs and an unwavering expectation that all students can achieve. This strong culture translates into students who want the same high achievement and are accomplishing it. We are excited to continue our efforts.



## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

At Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School, we take great pride in creating an environment that encourages students to grow academically, socially and emotionally. Our faculty's Value Statements focus on being Accountable, Flexible and Team-Oriented, which helps translate into a positive and supportive working environment. We believe that teachers feel valued because they have ownership in creating our values, our mission, and our goals. Building teacher leaders play an intricate role in planning and leading professional development. Teachers feel autonomy because they have choices within our professional development, and we ask teachers (beyond the lead team) to lead sessions in professional development in their areas of expertise.

This feeling of value translates into the climate where our support staff, teachers, and administrators are present in the halls (lined with student work), greet students by name, voluntarily sponsor clubs, help students before and after school, and attend many of their extra-curricular events. The staff members are very invested in our students and have had a direct and positive impact on the students with whom they work on a daily basis.

Working toward these high expectations has been accomplished through many strategies and programs. For many years, the high school has been involved with a Renaissance Program designed to hold students to high expectations for academics, behavior, and attendance and positively reward those who meet and exceed those expectations. Our newer program Positive Behavioral Initiatives and Supports (PBIS) provides a tiered approach to meeting and exceeding behavioral and academic expectations. Within the PBIS program, SBL HS believes strongly in our Warrior P.O.W.E.R (Positive, Ownership, Well-Prepared, Engaged, Respect) statement. Warrior POWER can be seen in all areas of the high school whether it be in the classroom, gym, field, court, lunchroom or parking lot with a focus on motivating students to achieve at a high standard of both academic and behavioral achievement. We believe these programs have had positive impacts in motivating and engaging students to be the best they can be.

Advisory teachers and the school-wide advisory period has also been important in motivating and encouraging students to achieve academically and grow both emotionally and socially. The focus within the advisory is to help students create an academic plan for now and a college/career plan for the future; this fosters conversation and building positive relationships with students. Our academic and athletic advisory challenges set up students to work together in teams, communicating and participating socially and effectively for a common goal. The work our advisory teachers do in combination with the counseling department's focus on College and Career Readiness and hands-on support in planning futures. It is ongoing work, but all of these programs and individuals contribute to a culture where people know and invest in kids and create a climate of high standards and support as much as possible.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School (SB-L) works closely with our families and community members with a focus on student success and improvement. The support that our community and parents provide to our high school is invaluable and appreciated. Our open-door philosophy to parents and community members lends the opportunity for staff to form strong working relationships with both parents and community business leaders focused on the success of all students at SB-L.

We believe that creating an environment in our school where both parents and community members want to be involved is extremely important to the success of our students' achievement. Several parents of students from the high school represent and participate in our District Advisory Committee. They volunteer their time to advocate for needs the high school may have or concerns to address.

We have also successfully reached out to our community business leaders by creating several Career and Technical Education advisory boards to advise the many Career and Technical Education programs we

offer at SB-L regarding curricular programming that best meets the needs of the business sector within our community. These positive working relationships with business leaders have led to great opportunities for students at SB-L, such as job shadows, work experience opportunities and internships. With the implementation of our TAP (Transitional Alliance Program), we have strengthened our ability to work collaboratively with parents and business leaders. Because we believe that community involvement and building relationships are extremely important, we are currently pursuing a school-based mentoring program that will use adult mentors from our community called Mentoring Teammates. This mentoring program will allow another avenue for our community to be impactful in the success of students at SB-L High School in the near future.

Communicating effectively with parents regarding their students' academic achievements and/or challenges is also important in supporting student achievement. Our scheduled academic conferences with all parents are actually led by the students themselves so that they can take charge of opening the discussion between parent, student, and advisor. Although a telephone conversation or these face-to-face meetings are the most effective, technology has also allowed us to communicate at any time about a child's progress. Parents have access to their students' information through a parent portal within Infinite Campus, our student information system, which allows them to see grades, attendance and behavioral incidents on a daily basis. Many of our teachers have course websites or Google Classrooms where parents are invited to explore and follow the assignments, results, and resources for each course. Our guidance department and many of our activities also use social media to be keep parents and community in the loop. Last, Sergeant Bluff is very fortunate to have a very active community newspaper that does a fantastic job reporting on the many accomplishments and celebrations of Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School and its students.

### **3. Professional Development:**

The professional development provided for our teachers at Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School is a contributor to academic achievement for all students. SB-L High School's professional development focus comes from our Building Leadership Team (BLT) and an open-minded administrative leader who together lead professional development that we hope is impactful in moving us forward toward our mission as well as fostering learning that assures student achievement. We try to use anecdotal, observed, and statistical data, such as Classroom Implementation Progress walk-through's (AIW), teacher needs surveys, Iowa Assessment analysis, and Iowa Core Standards to choose our direction. Currently, our initiatives and professional development are centered on developing conceptual understanding, building literacy across all content areas, using collaborative learning, adding mentoring and executive functions interventions, growing our school climate/expectations, and increasing College and Career Readiness.

One of the most effective professional development initiatives at SB-L High School that continues to positively impact student achievement and school improvement and aligns directly to our high academic standards is the full implementation of the Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) Framework. Our cross-curricular professional learning communities (PLC) work within the AIW framework focused on the pedagogy of teaching through structured and collaborative scoring of tasks teachers use with students, completed student work, and the observation of teachers actually teaching. The AIW Framework has served as the backbone for most of our professional development activities at SB-L High School for several years, whether it be a focus on questioning strategies, cooperative learning strategies, literacy strategies, technology strategies, etc. Our Area Education Agencies also support this framework and offer continued training related to improving in the AIW standards.

The AIW sessions are incorporated alternately on weekly early-out Wednesdays with departmental professional working communities (PWC) where teachers take their department work on new standards, strategies, and AIW to the application level. PWC's develop their own goals and plans within the building goals. Along with our weekly sessions, we use full days of professional development throughout the year for work on the above bulleted areas, we use our instructional coach for individual and staff development, and we encourage participation in outside training opportunities often throughout the year.

We want our staff at Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School to have a strong and clear vision of where they want to go as an educational institution. This vision stems from our collaboratively created mission and

building goals, which in turn, drive effective professional development that can have a positive influence on student achievement.

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

School leadership at Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School is centered around a philosophy of collegial collaboration that focuses on student achievement and is accomplished within a culture that fosters the professional opportunities that meet the needs of our students, educators, and community. This leadership takes many forms: District Advisory Council (DAC) (community members, administrators, and building teacher representatives), Building Leadership Team (BLT), Teacher Leaders (TLC) -full-time instructional coach, initiative leaders, and mentors, Initiative Lead teams, Professional Learning Communities and Professional Working Communities. The structure of school leadership must have vision, encourage a sense of ownership and empowerment for staff, create opportunity for action steps and progress, and maintain accountability for movement toward our goals. Leadership must be open-minded yet driven.

The building lead team and many other teachers have served as a major part of the leadership within SB-L High School and the district for years in many capacities. However, the recent implementation of TLC program across the state has afforded more defined teacher leadership roles for goal setting, data collecting and analyzing, planning, and training alongside the administrator. Our lead team works off the mission, goals, focus areas, and initiatives and off a chart of roles and responsibilities that incorporates the initiative teams led by these and other teachers. It also includes the teachers who voluntarily serve on those teams. An example would be our initiative teacher leader who trained as an Authentic Intellectual Work internal coach and leads that team of teachers and the related professional development.

When teachers have seen the data and reasoning, the organization, and their voices being heard, they have jumped on board with many initiatives, new standards, training, and implementation over the years. SB-L High School incorporates opportunities for teachers to lead professional development sessions and for other teachers to choose the best sessions for their individual needs. Their teacher leadership in the classrooms drives any success we have had because they have the most opportunity to positively impact students. Beyond leading in the classroom, 70% of our staff volunteer on educational initiative teams and 66% of them sponsor/coach one or more student activities. Our principals set the tone for this investment in students as well. They know students by name, they spend every lunch period with the students, and they are frequent visitors in classrooms. Administrator and teacher involvement is important to our sense of team and community with our students. Students notice.

Our instructional leader (principal) values collaboration over control and initiative over directives. Our assistant principal supports academics by effectively addressing student behaviors that deter learning in the classroom. The culture of leadership with the staff is one of taking their own initiative and running with new ideas as long as they are good for students and support the core standards and building goals. This is all part of growing teacher leaders and creating the culture we want for students to flourish.

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

---

We believe at Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School that successfully implementing and embedding the AIW Framework (Authentic Intellectual Work) into our teaching and learning has had broadest positive impact on student achievement and stands as the hallmark of our academic success. This framework has evolved into an umbrella for professional development, including most of our other instructional initiatives. The focus areas of Conceptual Understanding, Higher Order Thinking, Substantive Conversation and Inquiry Based Learning, along with other authentic intellectual work standards, have helped to transform the teachers' approaches to planning and instruction as well as to encourage students' perspectives that learning means conceptual understanding over memorization or mimicking a procedure.

To better understand the impact of AIW, we must explain in more detail how this framework works. When done right, this structure creates a very collaborative and professional group of educators working together to truly become better with the craft of teaching. The focus is infusing into teaching the ability to facilitate learning rather than simply to dispense knowledge. Colleagues meet bi-weekly within their cross-curricular Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to score, with a very structured rubric and process, something where a teacher feels he or she is not getting the desired results. They score the item for 3-4 standards within the framework. These standards align closely to 21st Century skills and the deep-learning elements of the Common Core curriculum. This scoring can occur with a task that a teacher is asking students to complete or with the actual completed student work or with the instruction where students were asked to process the learning.

When the PLC team has completed the scoring, they share the scores and reasoning with everyone in the team, and then work collaboratively together to help the teacher with ideas for improvement, which is the teacher's initial purpose. This brainstorming activity, working together as a team of professionals to help a teacher improve, has proven over and over again to have a positive impact regarding the achievement of students not only in one classroom but also positively impacting student achievement building-wide. All the teachers have developed a deeper understanding of these concepts, and many have embedded that understanding as an inherent aspect in developing and reflecting on their own instructional plans. The key is that AIW is not just a single strategy or just a scoring session or just an isolated program. It is, rather, a framework in which to incorporate many different strategies and tools to get what we want for our students - deeper learning at a conceptual level where it can be authentically transferred to other aspects of life, and we can accurately assess their progress. AIW data also serves as a launch pad for our professional training and collaboration as we progress.

Working within this framework at Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School has probably had the broadest influence on creating a culture that seeks improvement and empowers colleagues to work together collegially for the ultimate goal of student achievement.