

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):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 1 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	56	48	104
1	48	53	101
2	51	42	93
3	42	62	104
4	72	60	132
5	61	71	132
6	77	73	150
7	82	74	156
8	75	108	183
9	84	83	167
10	71	84	155
11	65	86	151
12 or higher	56	77	133
Total Students	840	921	1761

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4 % Asian
 - 26 % Black or African American
 - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 57 % White
 - 6 % 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: <01%

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

N/A

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	9
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	1740
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<01

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
21 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, French, German, Russian, Turkish, Hungarian, Portuguese, Latvian, Punjabi, Lithuanian, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 16 %
Total number students who qualify: 286

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %
63 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>7</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>14</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>29</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>3</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 36
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	12
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	114
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	14

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 16:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	100%	98%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	117
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	96%
Enrolled in a community college	2%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
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. 1988

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

To provide a developmentally appropriate learning environment in which high academics, comprehensive arts education, and the celebration of individuality and diversity enables each child to achieve as a learner, a person, and a valuable member of our society.

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

Lusher Charter School families represent the socioeconomic, religious, cultural, racial, and artistic diversity upon which the school and city of New Orleans are built. Students transferring after kindergarten come from public, parochial, home, and private schools throughout Orleans Parish.

Prior to the fall of 2017, Lusher functioned as a school within a school. At the request of the Orleans Parish School Board, the attendance district was dropped with the entering class in 2017-18. With this change, students are admitted through the City-Wide Access School (CWAS) process. As a “school-within-a-school,” (a school with both an attendance district and a citywide component), Lusher first admitted students from its surrounding neighborhood. Current grades 1 through 12 contain a sizable representation of neighborhood students. After the neighborhood students were enrolled, the remaining students were admitted through the CWAS process.

The CWAS component of the application process has applicants qualifying through a matrix comprised of academic performance -- grades, national percentiles in math and reading achievement tests, and for kindergarten and first grade, attendance at a parent curriculum meeting in lieu of student grades -- and an arts profile indicating student and family interest in the arts.

Under the CWAS process, qualified siblings are admitted first. Remaining spots are divided between qualifying city-wide and Tulane University-affiliate applicants. When more students qualify than there are spots, a lottery is held.

PART III – SUMMARY

Lusher Charter School is a kindergarten through twelfth grade public charter school with 1,750 students across two campuses. It is recognized for excellence in academics, arts, athletics, and social-emotional learning. Lusher's students hail from all areas of New Orleans and represent all walks of life. The school's core values of kindness, respect, responsibility, and hard work are nurtured at every grade level. These values, a focus on well-being, and a balanced program have led to Lusher's consistency as one of the highest performing and most sought-after schools in Louisiana.

Lusher was founded in 1913, originally offering kindergarten through sixth grade at the Willow Street campus. In 1961, Lusher became the second New Orleans school to integrate its student body. The students who bravely integrated the campus remain important members of the school community. In 1990, Lusher expanded to the historic Carrollton Courthouse, adding seventh and eighth grades.

In April 2005, Lusher collaborated with Tulane University and petitioned the Orleans Parish School Board to add a high school but was denied. With overwhelming support of the staff and parents, Lusher continued to pursue the dream of expanding its program by applying to becoming a charter. As Hurricane Katrina roared ashore in August 2005, the charter application was one of the most important possessions to be evacuated with its administrators. Within weeks, Lusher had a plan to reopen and lead the renaissance of New Orleans schools and the greater community. As the first school to be granted charter status post-Katrina, the newly created Lusher High School, along with Lusher Middle School, moved into the vacant Fortier High School campus on Freret Street in 2006.

The post-storm years were a time of rapid growth and development. The Golding Performing Arts Center was built in 2007 with funds raised by a Parent-Teacher-Student Association-sponsored capital campaign. In 2008, Lusher received a generous donation from New Orleans Saints quarterback, Drew Brees, to build a sports field. The Brees Family Field remains the center of athletic life at Lusher. In 2014, a FEMA-sponsored Stabilization Project provided renovations to both campuses.

Lusher's program engages students and challenges them to think critically, analytically and creatively; it provides students an opportunity to discover and develop their talents and become confident, expressive learners. In the elementary and middle school, a time of rapid mental, physical, and emotional growth, students experience a rigorous academic curriculum grounded in arts integration. Students entering high school can choose an area of specialization with either a Certificate of Artistry (CA) focus in the arts, or an Area of Concentration (AC) focus on math/science, humanities/communications, Project Lead the Way (a four-year program in Biomedical Science or Engineering) or arts. In addition to offering more than twenty Advanced Placement (AP) classes, Lusher is one of two schools in the state to offer students the innovative AP Capstone program. A partnership with Tulane University allows qualifying juniors and seniors to enroll in Tulane courses and earn free college credit. Lusher offers its students more than fifty clubs and twenty-seven sports teams. The Lusher Lions have brought home five varsity state championships in track, cross country, swimming, and soccer.

Since 1982, the number one rule at Lusher has been to "Be Kind," and there is as much emphasis placed on social-emotional learning as on academics. Students in the elementary school have weekly Caring Counts meetings focused on empathy, problem-solving, and building relationships. As a result, Lusher was the first school in the state to be named an Ashoka Changemaker School. The middle and high schools have an advisory program whereby each student is linked to both an adult adviser and a group of their peers to discuss social issues and academic practice. This inventive approach ensures continued support throughout students' school careers.

In 1988, the first National Blue Ribbon awards given to a New Orleans-area school went to Lusher and to two other public schools. This designation has been celebrated throughout Lusher's proud history -- on brochures, on bumper stickers, on the cover of the yearbook, and even on sweatshirts. This honor is reflected in Lusher's mission and in its core beliefs, which have evolved over time and insist upon high expectations for everyone in the learning community. Just ten years after starting its high school, Lusher is listed among

the “Best High Schools” in the country in "US News and World Report." Lusher’s average ACT score is 24 and the average graduation rate is 100%. Last year, 87 of 117 seniors (74%) graduated with college credit. The Class of 2017 earned more than \$22 million dollars in scholarship and merit awards, more than any public, private, or parochial school in the Greater New Orleans area.

Since receiving the first Blue Ribbon award, the school has grown from an elementary program with 550 students into a thriving K-12 with 1,750 students. An incremental growth from a part-time arts enrichment program to a full-time, professional arts department has led to national recognition, which includes being named an Exemplary Arts School by the National Arts Schools Network.

Lusher Charter School is proud to be a center of academic excellence in New Orleans. Through our mission of celebrating cultural diversity through high academics and the arts, Lusher remains at the forefront of educational innovations. We continuously strive to change the lives of our students and improve the greater community.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Lusher’s curriculum emphasizes complex texts, problem solving, investigating, and writing across all grades and content areas. Louisiana’s standards-based curriculum is presented in progressions that allow for grade-to-grade vertical alignment. The school is responsible for choosing and implementing curriculum that prepares students to be college and career ready.

The school’s innovative, arts-integrated, rigorous curriculum is designed to meet and support a diverse population of struggling, average, high-performing, and gifted students. Differentiation is key to challenging and supporting these diverse needs; instructional design is rooted in following Carol Tomlinson’s recommendation of the “teaching up as opposed to watering down” curriculum.

Teachers’ self-created curriculum maps and syllabi provide road maps for each subject. Curricular resources include textbooks, Louisiana curriculum resources, technology, and additional resources that guide each student to reach the standard at his/her level.

Authentic, integrated, and investigative learning in the K-5 program bridges to the middle school’s experiential program, which allows students to earn Carnegie Units before reaching high school. This pathway gives high school students the flexibility to choose from twenty-two Advanced Placement (AP) courses and the opportunity for concurrent enrollment at Tulane University.

The core of the K-12 curriculum is arts integration, which connects an art form to a subject area. The mutual-reinforcement of the art form and the academic content results in interdisciplinary connections and a strong understanding of the art form and the subject.

In addition to the seamless integration of the arts, each subject includes the following:

Reading/Language Arts:

Beginning in kindergarten, students learn the writing process and apply their skills in all subjects. While very young students publish class books, middle and high school students publish literary magazines, "Graffiti" and " Street," in addition to the student newspaper, "The Post Diluvian." Fourth and fifth graders attend a daily writing class that provides foundational writing skills while connecting to grade level content. Students enter middle school with strong skills that include an opportunity for English I credit. AP and college courses are offered in high school. The common thread K-12 is the integration of complex texts, close reading across content, and writing across the curriculum.

Mathematics:

The K-12 curriculum is based on conceptual understanding, fluency, and mathematical applications. Fourth and fifth graders are preassessed to place students in a compacted curriculum class that is accelerated and enriched. This bridges students to the middle school program that includes a blended 6th/7th grade curriculum and prepares them for the introduction of Algebra I and Geometry in 7th and 8th grades. High school students can take AP and college courses, including AP Calculus AB and BC. Khan Academy, iReady, and many other technological tools support and enhance the school’s differentiated model. The school also offers competitive extracurriculars of Academic Games, chess teams, and Robotics.

Science:

The curriculum is based on disciplinary core ideas, crosscutting concepts, and science and engineering practices. Beginning in kindergarten, students conduct investigations, apply their content knowledge, and connect across the curriculum. Literacy and math standards are integrated to ensure that students are reading and responding to complex texts and applying mathematics.

Beginning in elementary school, students participate in Project Lead the Way (PLTW), a pathway that engages students in hands-on projects and activities and empowers them to solve real-world challenges.

PLTW courses continue throughout middle school. Students entering sixth grade, are equipped for rigorous laboratory investigations that prepare them for AP courses such as AP Biology or AP Environmental Science, and college courses ranging from Modern Physics to Neuroscience while in high school. Biomedical Science and Engineering are offered as Areas of Concentration (AC) for high schoolers interested in continuing the PLTW pathway.

Social Studies:

The curriculum ensures that students understand history, government, economics, law, and geography. Introduction to research begins at the elementary level and skills build, which leads to extensive research at the high school level. Complex text and writing are integrated across all grade levels.

The school has a strong focus in service-learning, school governance, and partnership. High school students must earn 80 hours of community service by graduation. Service projects are carried out at every grade level, with regular opportunities for older students to partner with younger students in authentic ways. Fifth graders participate in surveys to write a school action plan. Middle school student council officers run morning meetings and organize service projects. High school student council members make decisions representative of the student body.

High School and College and Career Readiness:

Students take at least one AP course before graduation. Qualified juniors and seniors may enroll at Tulane University free of charge and earn college credits. These classes are taken at Tulane and with Tulane students. Students earn a Tulane transcript and gain valuable college experience. Lusher graduates may enter college with as many as 24 college credits. Among the class of 2017, 74% graduated with college credit. Lusher students are recruited by many of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the country.

Although Lusher is a college-preparatory school, its mission is to prepare students for college and career. Its PLTW tracks in Engineering and Biomedical Science offer opportunities for exploration of professional and technical careers in high-demand Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. The Guidance Office ensures opportunities to pursue non-college bound opportunities, such as the military.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Arts:

At Lusher, the arts support each student's personal, social, and academic development; they also strengthen students' critical thinking, problem-solving, performance, and goal-setting skills. All students experience the arts at Lusher. Twenty-four professional artists present a fine arts curriculum and collaborate with academic teachers to bring integrated arts into the classroom. A support teacher at the lower school ensures arts integration is infused across the curriculum to build the foundation for specialized training in the 6-12 program.

K-4 students attend dance, music, theater, and visual arts exploratory classes weekly, while fifth graders choose two areas of specialization for the year. K-5 after-school "Lagniappe" classes are provided as well as audition-based classes in Orchestra, Dance, Theater, Drums, and Vocal Music in grades 3-5. Students in grades 6-12 use their exploratory and elective courses to hone in on specific areas of interest. Middle school also offers Dance Troupe, Drama Troupe, and Orchestra for audition-based opportunities. Middle school students may take a full year of the art of their choice (CA Prep) to make an informed decision of which courses they would like to pursue in high school. High school offers Dance Ensemble, Dance Corps, Dance Company, Orchestra, Jazz Band, and Chorus for audition-based opportunities.

High school students may earn a Certificate of Artistry (CA) in addition to a four-year high school diploma. A CA in Creative Writing, Dance, Media Arts, Music (choir, jazz band, orchestra, symphonic band), Musical Theatre, Stagecraft, Theatre, and Visual Arts is a focused, four-year program of study. Students acquire concentrated, in-depth knowledge and experience in the discipline. A student may use a CA to pursue conservatory and college programs. For four years, CA students attend double blocks of art classes, as well as additional blocks after regular school hours, resulting in 100 minutes of instructional time per day in their chosen art form.

Physical Education and Health:

The physical education (PE) program supports the school's mission of developing the whole child. Every K-7 child attends a daily recess period and either weekly (K-5) or quarterly (6-7) physical education classes with structured activities. Eighth graders may take a PE elective. These classes integrate health lessons. High school students take one semester of health and three semesters of physical education. Additionally, athletic PE is offered to varsity players in multiple sports.

Organized sports begin in fifth grade, and students may join middle school sports such as soccer, swimming, and flag football. Twenty-seven sports teams are offered to middle and high school students. These teams have competed and received regional and state championship honors.

Foreign Language:

Foreign language prepares students for the global economy of the future. Instruction in Mandarin Chinese is offered in kindergarten through twelfth grade by native Chinese teachers provided by the Confucius Institute at Xavier University. High school students have the opportunity for a two-week summer study program in China through the Institute.

Middle and high school students are offered French and Spanish, including Honors and AP. Foreign language students develop advanced listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills through school visits to France, Spain, Peru, Canada, and Saint Barts.

Technology/Media/Library:

K-2 students attend library classes weekly to build literacy and research skills, and students in grades 3-8 collaborate with the librarian and core academic teachers on student research. High school teachers also collaborate with the librarian, but the library is primarily used for independent research. High School students have access to Tulane University's library and database through our unique partnership.

Technology is used throughout the program in all grades and content areas. Portable technology carts, with iPads and Chromebooks, are located throughout both campuses to compliment the classroom and library computer stations. The wireless network allows students and teachers to use technology for research, practice, and presentations. Classrooms have smart boards, interactive projectors, document cameras, printers, and other tools. Engineering classes utilize advanced design software and 3D printers. Biomedical classes utilize medical equipment in classrooms and laboratories. Media Arts classes use cameras, video equipment, and advanced editing software. Computers are available for long-term use for students in need.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Curriculum and learning experiences in each course/class provide all students with challenging and equitable opportunities to develop learning skills, thinking skills, and life skills that align with the school's purpose. Differentiation is used to meet the varied needs of students.

Planning:

Planning is the cornerstone of instructional delivery, so teachers write and annually edit curriculum maps and comprehensive syllabi that guide instruction. Weekly and daily plans are based on road maps, and include opportunities that are differentiated through process, content, and product. Schedules that include common planning time, extended planning days, and vertical alignment meetings facilitate focused planning.

Subject integration includes writing and responding to complex texts in all subjects, arts integration, and cross-curricular opportunities. Teachers also create specialized plans such as arts integration and Project-Based Learning (PBL) unit plans, which are created in teams.

Explicit Instruction:

Explicit instruction begins with essential questions that teachers share during daily instructional delivery. Delivery is focused, connected to previous lessons, sequential, and clear. Instruction is scaffolded and

allows for modeling, exemplars, guided practice, and independent practice with feedback.

Indirect, Interactive, and Independent Instruction:

Student-centered instruction provides a high level of student involvement, and teachers facilitate instruction throughout their lessons. This provides opportunities for interactive and independent inquiry, and often includes subject integration. The arts integration model allows for facilitation, high student engagement, and independent exploration. Students are challenged to think and create.

Differentiation:

Instruction is designed to “teach up” and meet multiple instructional levels. Student choice is built into the program. Elementary students use differentiated "Must Do" and "Can Do" activities, and middle school students have daily academic challenges. Student choice is core to the high school program, as differentiated projects are based on student selection.

PBL begins in kindergarten where students work collaboratively to investigate a guiding question. It offers opportunities to differentiate by interests, readiness, and learning profile. This is used to provide challenges, authenticity of learning, research, collaboration, critical thinking, and empowerment.

Assessment and Response to Intervention:

Instruction and assessment are inextricably linked, and instruction includes regular use of Total Participation Techniques (TPTs), exit tickets, and other methods to determine where students are for formative assessment.

While an emphasis is placed on formative assessment throughout instruction, teachers also administer summative assessments at the end of their units. All K-12 students take quarterly assessments that are used to adjust instructional plans and determine individual needs.

Teachers utilize GradeCam and Kahoot for quick feedback on assessments. Older students use their phones or computers to send answers to teachers. In the lower school, formative and summative assessments are sent home weekly with feedback in the form of “glows” and “grows.”

Upper elementary, middle, and high school teachers use Google Docs so that instructors and peers can “comment” and give feedback on writing tasks. Assessments are also used to determine hot lists for intervention and to guide instruction.

Response to Intervention (RtI) teams monitor progress of students requiring additional academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports. This support is extensive and multi-layered, and this approach has moved a long list of students, from those who are struggling to those with college scholarships.

Opportunity Rooms allow students in grades 3-5 to retake assessments after remediation. Office hours and the Learning Resource Center (LRC) offer the middle and high school students support before and after school. Students in high school may also attend a writing lab for support. Student Centered Action Plans (SCAP) in the middle school document student and teacher perceptions regarding student progress and develop a joint plan for the student, teacher and parent.

Maintaining High Performance:

Lusher has the unique challenge of maintaining and pushing high-performing students higher through differentiation and a focus on student engagement, critical thinking, and empowerment.

Students have entered challenging competitions and earned numerous awards in activities at the local, regional, and national level in Academic Games, Chess Team, Quiz Bowl, Literary Rally, and Robotics.

Middle and high school students have many opportunities for accelerated, advanced placement, gifted, talented, honors, and college courses. Students have been recognized nationally as writers, scientists, artists, mathematicians, and changemakers. The National Student Poet in 2015 was a “Lusher Lifer,” a student who attends the entire K-12 program. The past three first place winners of the Greater New Orleans Science and

Engineering Fair hailed from Lusher. Lusher's 2015 student winner went on to compete at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, placing 2nd of 2,600 participants. As part of the award, NASA and MIT named an asteroid after her. The mindset that creates such thinkers, creators, and activists begins with a K-12 program geared for high performance.

The school created a visionary team that includes teachers and administrators. This study group is researching and designing a schoolwide cluster model that will take differentiation to the next level, providing high achieving and gifted students with improved instruction. The team's five-year plan includes a proposal for professional development specifically designed for high-performing students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Project Pride is a positive plan of school-wide values. The principles are Be Kind; Do Your Best Work; Be Responsible; Respect People and Property. These cornerstones are woven through all grades. During Morning Meeting, students gather for announcements, games, and music. Parents also attend this community-building event that promotes social-emotional growth, school spirit, and “Learning the Lusher Way.” A New Orleans musician, and Lusher parent, wrote a song by that name more than 20 years ago and over the years it has kicked off many mornings with its inspiring message.

Social-emotional growth is promoted through weekly Caring Counts meetings at the elementary campus and through advisory groups in middle and high school. These meetings serve as an opportunity for students to discuss tough issues with the guidance of a trusted adult.

To motivate students and promote their academic growth, they are offered the opportunity to take an advanced math path that includes Algebra I and Geometry by 8th grade. Eligible 8th graders may earn high school credits in math, foreign language, and English. The middle school also offers a Project Lead the Way (PLTW) engineering course, exposing students to the nation’s top STEM program, in addition to the vast arts offerings.

The high school curriculum offers twenty-two AP classes and two PLTW pathways, Engineering and Biomedical Sciences. This is in addition to the Certificate of Artistry program, which is a pre-professional study of art in a conservatory setting.

Lusher operates a strong student support program complete with Response to Intervention (RtI) teams, speech support, visual impairment support, student aids, and more. Students are evaluated for Individual Educational Plans (IEP) and 504 plans. When a student does not qualify for special education programs, Lusher assists them through study halls and support classes. Tulane students tutor daily in Lusher’s Learning Resource Center (LRC). An ACT prep class is embedded within the junior year.

Teachers are valued in many ways. An anonymous survey of staff, conducted by nola.com, resulted in Lusher being honored as a “Top Work Places” award recipient. On-site yoga classes promote wellness of the staff. Middle school teachers are encouraged to “walk and talk” with the principal on the Brees Field track after school. A devoted Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) hosts luncheons and events for teachers during conferences. Teacher birthdays are recognized with a hand-written card and candy. Each May, Teacher Appreciation Week is one of the PTSA’s grandest celebrations. The administrative team is committed to supporting the efforts of teacher leaders. Teachers are stakeholders in Lusher’s visionary team and hold seats as board members on the PTSA. Last year, Lusher invested \$134,000 in professional development. Not only are learning opportunities supported, but teachers are encouraged to curate their own PD.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Lusher hosts multiple opportunities for families to connect with the school. The school hosts Open House, Back to School Night, quarterly parent teacher conferences, monthly parent coffees, and more. Weekly communication happens through the Lusher Letter, The Middle School Matters Blog, and the high school letter. School Messenger is used for email communication and parents access grades and attendance through PowerSchool. Teachers host websites, and parents can access Google Classroom. These communication forums, as well as social media outlets, local news outlets, and the Lusher website communicate student accomplishments and milestones.

Lusher has always been proud of and grateful for its exceptionally active parent involvement. Parents are asked to contribute 10 volunteer hours per family; many families contribute far more than the minimum. Every Lusher parent is a member of the PTSA and is invited to attend its monthly meetings, in addition to

the board meetings of Advocates for Arts-Based Education, the school's governing board.

Student success and school improvement is stimulated through multiple partnerships. Xavier University provides instructors for Lusher's Chinese language programs. Other university-based opportunities also exist, such as the concurrent enrollment program at Tulane. Lusher hosts observers and interns from area universities.

Lusher enjoys valuable partnerships with The Ogden Museum of Southern Art, Le Petit Theatre, The Nola Project, and the New Orleans Opera. These artistic partnerships not only offer the Lusher community an opportunity to work with professional artists in professional venues, but also allow the partner organization access to Lusher's facilities and talented population of artists. Lusher has partnered with The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation through their philanthropic work for many years.

Lusher hosts school-wide community events such as its annual Block Party, which showcases student art, and the Crawfish Boil, an annual springtime celebration. Local student teachers, tutors, and programs such as Key Club, Boys and Girls State, Grow Dat, New Orleans Public Library, and the Holocaust Survivors Society, also work with our community.

In 2013, Lusher was one of two schools to join the United Way in developing Mission Ignition, a program that encourages schools to compete for service hours during a one-month period. The program has since grown to include schools from across the state, engaging hundreds of students, and igniting thousands of service hours.

Lusher proudly maintains a unique connection with its graduates. It is quite common for alums to visit and provide updates and highlights of their progress as years go by. A "Where Are They Now" board in the first-floor corridor is full of alum photos and professional and personal accomplishments. "Lusher Lifers" are particularly cherished by long-time faculty and staff.

3. Professional Development:

Recognizing that continuous growth and development of staff is important to student achievement, Lusher invests significant time and resources (\$134,000 in 2017) to professional development (PD). A minimum of eight PD days are held each year. To facilitate PD and curriculum planning, middle and high school teachers have early release time each Wednesday, and elementary teachers have dedicated quarterly extended planning days. PD is often embedded in weekly team meetings. Differentiated PD topics are presented by teachers throughout the year, aligned to teacher interest, expertise, and need.

While faculty and administrators continue to attend regional and national conferences, consult with experts, and take advantage of local learning opportunities, the school has moved to an embedded model that is strategic and sustained over time. Teachers and administrators receive training and build capacity as they become experts at redelivery, support, and feedback for their peers, administrators, and students. In this way, Lusher can maximize the human capital and expertise within its own buildings. Plans are in the works for a "share fair," at which teachers present to other teachers in areas they are knowledgeable.

Professional development aligns with yearly goals determined by student achievement, teacher surveys, and research. All resources and time are aligned to these goals. The goals may remain the same for several years, as it takes time to learn, plan, and implement the initiatives that support them. This has been the case for achieving differentiation, social-emotional learning, assessment, and a shift in disciplinary practices to Love and Logic and Conscious Discipline. The PD plan is a comprehensive one that connects to a long-term vision and includes various levels, with some teachers learning about one focus area K-12, while teachers on another level of the plan learn about areas that interest them. Examples of this might include assessment, student engagement, arts integration, or teaming. The entire K-12 staff had the opportunity to participate in mindfulness training with Vipin Thekk, of the Ashoka Changemaker network of schools. Doug Fisher also presented on the topic of Close Reading. Most recently, staff participated in training with Dido Balla of MindUp.

Growth activities also include the following: book studies on various topics such as resilience and life skills; professional Learning Networks; arts integration training; technology training conferences; feedback observation and coaching by teacher leaders; annual reflections by all staff members; professional development by teachers who “re-deliver” content from external professional development; “Safe Schools” training for all employees; and momentous Institute for Social Emotional Learning/Ashoka.

4. School Leadership:

Lusher is governed by the board, Advocates for Arts-Based Education. This nine-member board includes New Orleans business and civic leaders, current and former parents, and local professionals. The Governing Board monitors the financial well-being of the organization and sets policy when needed.

The Executive Team provides leadership in improving student achievement and meeting the standards of the charter agreement. This is done by monitoring student progress and ensuring that student achievement is at the core of the work. Weekly Executive Team meetings allow administrators to evaluate policy and procedures, and to track necessary changes for the next year. Members of the team include the CEO, principals, CFO, Director of Operations, and Director of Planning.

Each school level, elementary, middle and high, has an Administrative Team that collaborates weekly to improve school wide instruction and solve respective site-based issues that affect the instructional program. They continuously monitor and evaluate instruction. Members include division principals and assistant principals/curriculum coordinators.

Teacher leaders at all levels serve on site-based Leadership Teams that meet monthly to guide academic success. These leaders ensure that research-based practices to improve student achievement are implemented throughout the school. The school also has other leadership teams such as: Arts Leadership Team - This team’s responsibility is to ensure that the arts are infused throughout the program, as reflected in the school’s mission; Department Chairs - This team serves as an advisory committee to the high school leadership team, helping to strategize around initiatives and steer professional development; Counseling Team - High school counselors serve in a range of capacities, including participation on Student Assistance Teams (SAT) and RtI Teams, planning for student orientation and advisories, and strategizing around curriculum and other programs (CA, PLTW, AP); and Caring Counts Leadership Team - This team’s responsibility is to ensure that individuality and diversity are embraced, and social-emotional needs are as important as the academic program.

The Action Planning Team is made up of teacher leaders who volunteer to create action plans based on faculty feedback. Most recently, the group worked on the topics created by focus groups in the latest professional development day, such as communication and connectedness between our two campuses.

The Visionary Team consists of teacher leaders chosen to work with the administration to ensure the school’s vision is prioritized. This group works on visionary changes such as improved programming for high-performing students.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Lusher's mission echoes a strong commitment to social-emotional learning (SEL), and every decision considers the necessity of educating the whole child. It starts with a culture of kindness and a deliberate effort to place emphasis on SEL. To prepare students to face the complexity of the world, they must embrace empathy, leadership, creativity, and teamwork. Whole-child education is a psychological approach that has long been at the root of Lusher's success.

Lusher has garnered national attention for its successful program, including gold medal listings in "US News and World Report"; recognition as a national leader in gold key awards in the Scholastic Art and Writing awards; and the Exemplary School award from the Arts Schools Network.

Everything Lusher does relies upon the ability to set and reach goals, work with others, and make decisions. How could a student create a piece of artwork, solve a complex problem, or engineer a new design without these skills? How can this be done without having empathy for others? How will students cope with the stress of increased workloads and societal changes without an ability to navigate? How do we empower students to be engaged citizens? How can we be inclusive without understanding others? Lusher understands that its academic success depends on non-academic skills.

The "Number One Rule" at Lusher is to "Be Kind," and that is reinforced daily throughout the entire school-modeled, repeated, displayed, and honored. Every student knows that the expectation is to live this rule, not just at school, but in the community.

Discipline is approached through reflection, choice, and logical consequences with the goal of building intrinsic motivation. Throughout the year, students at each grade level are involved in service projects, which is part of the Lusher culture, building empathy and understanding.

The foundation for SEL begins with K-5 student participation in weekly Caring Counts meetings. It is advanced when fourth and fifth grade student leaders, who exemplify the school's core values, participate on the Care to Change Team to lead change. This team is empowered to collaborate with the Caring Counts Leadership Team, which steers the SEL vision for the elementary school.

To continue this development, every middle and high school student is connected to an adult through an advisory program, which is centered around regular meetings to discuss important student issues. Student leaders participate in training through the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Lusher was proud to be recognized as a No Place for Hate® school by ADL.

With sustained commitment to SEL, and the belief that it is instrumental to Lusher's long-term success, the school was deeply honored to be the first Louisiana school to be recognized as an Ashoka Changemaker School, a global network of schools transforming education through a unique skill set that focuses on the head and the heart.

Excellence in academics, arts, and athletics are cultivated in a school community where the words family and kindness mean something. While the strengths of this community are rich and multifaceted, the connections among parents, students and teachers inspire imagination, creativity, and intellectual curiosity in an environment that fosters social-emotional development. Its dynamic force is palpable in our classrooms, in our hallways, in our school yards, and at any Lusher Charter School event.