

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Wayzata Central Middle School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 305 Vicksburg Lane
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Plymouth MN 55447-3941
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Minnesota (MN)

Telephone (763) 745-6010 Fax (763) 745-6091

Web site/URL http://www.wayzataschools.org/cms E-mail clark.doten@wayzataschools.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Chace Anderson E-mail chace.anderson@wayzataschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Wayzata Public School District Tel. (763) 745-5000

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Ms. Sarah Johansen
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. 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):
- 8 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 12 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	224	185	409
7	250	188	438
8	219	206	425
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	693	579	1272

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 20 % Asian
 - 9 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 62 % 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: 5%

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.

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	30
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	27
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	57
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	1193
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %
Total number students who qualify: 156

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
97 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>20</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>23</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>20</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>13</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>7</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>8</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	61
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 21:1

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	96%	97%	97%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

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 ensure a world-class education that prepares each and every student to thrive today and excel tomorrow.

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

Wayzata Central Middle School (WCMS) is part of the Wayzata Public Schools (WPS) system, located in the western suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota. WCMS serves the communities of Wayzata, Plymouth, and Maple Grove. Since opening its doors in 1997, WCMS has adhered to a middle school model that values both academic and social emotional adolescent development. Wayzata Central Middle School has become a model of excellence.

Due to steady enrollment increases spurred by new housing construction resulting from community amenities that are attractive to families with children, WCMS has grown significantly over the last 20 years. The school currently has 1272 students enrolled in grades 6-8. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and socio-economic situations. Approximately 20% are Asian/Pacific, 3% are Hispanic, 9% are Black, 62% are White, and 5% identified as more than one race. In addition, 8% receive Special Education services while 13% qualify for free or reduced lunch.

WCMS prides itself on its contributions to the development of the whole child. High academic expectations coupled with a culture that nurtures adolescents has always been the soil in which WCMS students grow. The WPS mission statement driving our work reminds staff that they will “ensure a world class education that prepares each and every student to thrive today and excel tomorrow in an ever-changing global society”.

One of the keys to high academic achievement is school culture. The social and emotional needs of WCMS students are addressed in a number of ways. First and foremost is the commitment to the middle school model. Children are divided into teams of teachers who become experts in the needs of their students. Teams help a bigger school feel smaller by surrounding the students with adults and peers who know them and support them. Sixth and 7th graders participate in an Advisory period each day that provides activities that are important for student development but fall outside the scope of the core curriculum. Similarly, 8th graders participate in Flex period which blends both academic and social-emotional needs.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an important part providing students with social and emotional assistance at CMS. Staff teach lessons related to behavior expectations and being a contributing member of a positive school community. Our chosen PBIS acronym is PRIDE, which stands for Prepared, Responsible, Inclusive, Dependable, and Empathetic. PRIDE is the lens through which CMS views school safety, student emotional comfort, and readiness to learn. Many PRIDE activities show up in Advisory and students are recognized for their contributions throughout their day. Backing up classroom staff are Central’s Student Services Team of two counselors, a social worker, and a dean. They are tasked with supporting all students, but provide an extra layer of support for those who are exhibiting emotional or learning struggles.

The WCMS Student Services Team also assists staff in a well-developed Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) process. MTSS is a system by which all students are monitored and some receive structured interventions. Intervention plans are created, monitored, and assessed by classroom teachers working in concert with the Student Services Team. Both behavioral and academic challenges are addressed via MTSS.

At the core of every WCMS school day is high academic expectations for all. Many WCMS students score very well on standardized tests. Students regularly take the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) in Reading and Math and the Minnesota Comprehensive Exam in Reading and Math (MCA). Eighth grade students take an additional MCA in Science. The success experienced in these measures can be attributed to a high-quality curriculum, regular classroom assessment aligned to the curriculum, and pedagogical best practices. Teachers work in small teams to create the best possible outcomes for all students. Time is set aside in each day for teacher collaboration. In addition, teachers meet multiple times each week in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) dedicated to delivering the best possible instruction.

Assisting both teachers and students with their responsibilities is our standards based grading system called Grading for Learning (GfL). GfL takes the focus away from accumulating points to generate a letter grade and places it on helping the child understand their own progress through high quality feedback. It forces the

teacher to clearly articulate what growth means in relation to a standard or skill. Students are now able to describe their growth and find their current status on a rubric while also knowing what's next in the learning progression.

Finally, WCMS staff members have access to relevant professional development opportunities that impact their daily practice. WCMS has a Staff Development Leadership Team (SDLT) that creates professional development opportunities that are responsive to real time developments within the school. The SDLT is tasked with carrying out the School Improvement Plan (SIP) by helping teachers develop their skills in targeted areas. This team works closely with the Equity Team and PBIS team. The talented staff at WCMS is committed to growing skills by examining current practices and employing new techniques.

In closing, Wayzata Central Middle School is very proud of how successful its students are both academically and socially. Students attend each day knowing that they will be received by caring adults who understand their individual needs. By addressing both academic and the affective side of school life, the head and the heart, WCMS has emerged as an Exemplary High Performing School.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

WCMS students experience a core curriculum that is content rich, rigorous and personalized. The curriculum reflects the interests and expectations of our community and is aligned to “best practices” and the State of Minnesota Academic Content Standards that include the Language Arts Common Core Standards. Students build skills through a variety of learning experiences including direct teacher instruction, group work, and problem-based/project-based learning. Differentiated instruction and acceleration allow student needs to be met at the individual level. Highly developed intervention services along with a gifted and talented program provide opportunities for students who are performing below or above grade level expectations.

Reading/ English Language Arts

The purpose of the Language Arts curriculum is to support students in developing critical thinking skills through careful reading, textual analysis, discussion, and writing activities. The curriculum uses thematic units to meet and exceed the expectations of the Minnesota State English Language Arts Standards. These courses include both literature and content-rich informational texts. Students write a personal narrative, a realistic fiction story, and a literary essay. These major writing projects plus smaller pieces fulfill the Minnesota State ELA Standards for writing narratives, arguments, and informational texts. Students use anthologies to explore themes and genres of literature, examining text for a deeper understanding of literary elements, author's craft, and theme in literature. This understanding is extended through writing in several genres such as narrative, poetry, and literary analysis. Grammar and usage instruction are embedded during writing instruction. Students study Greek and Latin roots to increase their vocabulary.

Eighth graders take an additional Communications course designed to support the ability to communicate effectively through various modes of writing and speaking, as well as to critically analyze texts encountered in the media. Students study investigative journalism and write a news story as well as a position paper on a relevant community issue. These opportunities fulfill the Minnesota State ELA Standards for writing narrative and informational texts for 8th Grade.

Mathematics

The purpose of the WCMS math program is to deepen conceptual understanding and improve students' skill base in the area of mathematics. Students participate in the College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM) Core Connections Math curriculum where they employ problem solving strategies, question, investigate, analyze critically, gather and construct evidence, and communicate rigorous arguments to justify their thinking. Using instructional materials, students tackle mathematical ideas set in everyday contexts to help them make sense of otherwise abstract principles. Students are taught how to gather and organize information, break problems into smaller parts and look for patterns that lead to solutions. They often learn in collaboration with others, sharing information, expertise, and ideas. Students build problem-solving strategies that apply to most academic disciplines and daily life.

Students are placed in either a grade level math course or an accelerated math course. Placement is based on several criteria including the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA), Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), and FastBridge assessments. Students have the opportunity to move into accelerated courses at several entry points.

Science

The science curriculum includes courses in physical, life science and earth science. Science courses are taught using a hands-on learning approach with an emphasis on lab-based activities. The sixth-grade curriculum focuses on the physical sciences, including the study of topics related to physics and chemistry. Students have an opportunity to apply their knowledge regarding physics concepts to one or more engineering design projects. Seventh grade science is an introduction to the subject of biology with units in basic chemistry, cells, human biology, genetics, evolution, diversity of life, and ecology. The 8th grade science curriculum focuses on the study of earth science, including astronomy, geology and meteorology.

Social Studies

The social studies curriculum immerses students in the studies of history, geography, economics, and citizenship and government. Throughout the curriculum, students engage in historical inquiry, analyze important trends in the world, and develop critical thinking skills as they deepen their historical, civic, economic, and geographic understandings. Beginning with Minnesota Studies in grade 6, students learn about state history and government and Minnesota's role within the larger context of the country. This is followed by United States Studies in grade 7, when students study the country's history and government from 1800 to contemporary times. Social studies in eighth grade culminates in the experience of Global Studies where students apply spatial and chronological perspectives as they study the geography of the world and contemporary world history.

College and Career Readiness

The Wayzata district views middle school foundational in establishing a positive trajectory for career and college success. The exploratory opportunities and soft skills developed in early adolescence bridge elementary literacy with high school level decision-making, which ultimately lead to graduation and post-secondary achievements. Several guiding forces at WCMS have helped prepare students for high school and beyond including: high expectations for all students; believing each student should have post-secondary aspirations; adjusting the Family and Consumer Science (FACS) program to emphasize the importance of college and career planning; providing challenging coursework during the middle years; and facilitating a smooth transition to the Wayzata High School through a multi-pronged effort.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

WCMS students are provided with a variety of learning opportunities with an experiential focus. The exploratory nature of the middle school encore program allows students to identify and develop interests. Two periods each day are dedicated to encore classes. These classes include Art; Music; Engineering, Technology and Design; Family Consumer Science; Spanish; and Physical Education. All of these courses align to college and career pathways at Wayzata High School.

ARTS: (visual and/or performing)

The arts program at Wayzata Central Middle School includes both music and visual arts. Students in all grade levels participate in a required alternate day music class during their time at WCMS. Students choose from vocal music, orchestra or band. Students participating in vocal music develop skills in the choral arts, focusing on higher-level performing skills. Sixth and seventh grade students in band and orchestra are grouped into sectional classes. Eighth graders in these programs join a large ensemble class. All music groups perform several concerts throughout the year. Fifty-three percent of students participate in the vocal music program; 31% participate in band, and 16% participate in the orchestra program.

All sixth graders participate in a nine week visual arts course where they further develop the foundations from elementary art. Eighth graders have the opportunity to elect a semester visual arts course, where they focus on the knowledge and application of the elements and principles of design, visual literacy, art history, and aesthetics. Forty-three percent of WCMS 8th graders enroll in this course.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION/HEALTH/NUTRITION

All students participate in an alternate day physical education class during their time at WCMS. Students focus on individual and group physical activity within a personal fitness/sports based environment. Students study the concepts of heart rate training, health and skill components of fitness, muscles, and goal setting through a variety of learning experiences. All sixth graders participate in a developmentally appropriate family life unit. Eighth graders participate in a semester long health course where students discuss the foundations of health, mental health, drugs and alcohol, nutrition, relationships and sexuality, first aid and CPR.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The middle school Spanish program, a continuation of the elementary Spanish experience, is focused on the three modes of communication, as recommended by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign

Languages (ACTFL). All sixth and seventh graders at WCMS study the Spanish language for one semester. These introductory courses, when combined with the optional 8th grade Spanish course, provide students the opportunity to complete the first level of high school Spanish while in the middle school. This leads to higher levels of language proficiency. Fifty-seven percent of eighth graders enroll in the Spanish course.

TECHNOLOGY/LIBRARY/MEDIA

All sixth and seventh graders at WCMS take a nine week course in Engineering, Technology and Design. In this robust STEM experience, students complete activities that support their technical literacy and understanding of the design process. These skills are developed through robotics engineering, and include coding, 3-D printing and CAD concepts. Students in eighth grade have the opportunity to elect an additional semester of Engineering, Technology and Design. Here students study robotics engineering, wood technology, video production, and graphic design. Forty-three percent of WCMS 8th grade students enroll in this course.

FAMILY CONSUMER SCIENCE

All seventh graders at WCMS participate in a nine week course in Family Consumer Science. Here they investigate concepts related to careers, consumerism, nutrition, food preparation, and wellness. Students develop decision making skills, as well as technical reading and math skills. Interested eighth graders have the option of taking an additional semester course in Family Consumer Science, where the class examines teen nutrition, food preparation, regional and global cooking. Fifty-seven percent of WCMS eighth graders enroll in this course.

OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS

One of the most memorable experiences for WCMS sixth grade students is a week-long trip to Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center located near Lake Superior in northern Minnesota. Students examine environmental science, cultural history, contemporary environmental issues, personal growth, team building, and outdoor recreation.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

The instructional methods, intervention services, and assessments implemented at WCMS are designed to meet the unique needs of each student in the building. All core classroom teachers participate in a professional learning community (PLC) multiple times a week. Grade level teachers work collaboratively to design instruction, evaluate lessons, and examine data. A multi-tiered system of interventions is in place to support student learning. Assessment data drives our practice.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

At WCMS, quality first-time instruction forms the foundation of our practice. Teachers are well-versed in the use of a wide variety of instructional strategies, and are skilled at identifying, diagnosing, and meeting student learning needs. Teachers working in PLCs discuss what strategies they will use when implementing a lesson to maximize student engagement and learning. Instructional strategies are differentiated based on student needs. Strategies utilized to foster priming, processing, and retaining for mastery include anticipation guides; thinking maps; fishbowl; key word notes; TAPS – thinking aloud problem solving; carousel brainstorming; partner reading; final word protocol; jigsaw; key word prediction; think, pair, share; and exit slips.

WCMS maintains a high level of academic achievement by utilizing teacher leaders in job imbedded, teacher directed, teacher led professional development and building leadership roles. Teachers in the school community have created a culture where they model and demonstrate learning strategies for one another. They take leadership roles on committees in the areas of professional development, equity, PBIS and MTSS. They take a strong interest in their students and are dedicated to their success. Teacher commitment to implementing the standard based grading program was essential. This continuous collaboration impacts the culture of the school by increasing staff commitment to student learning. Teachers view themselves as continuous learners and students view teachers as leaders and learners.

INTERVENTION

WCMS uses a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) for students. This begins with additional instruction by the classroom teacher and progresses to more focused instruction, both in increased time and in decreased student-to-instructor ratio. Through school-wide screening using multiple data points, students needing a targeted or intensive approach to learning are identified. Interventions are implemented, progress is monitored and data-based decision making occurs to determine the next steps for each student. The MTSS team monitors students moving through the tiers of intervention.

The WCMS gifted and talented program, provides a variety of experiences to help meet the needs of high ability and high achieving students. The program coordinator works with classroom teachers in all content areas to help facilitate differentiated learning opportunities. Students whose standardized reading test scores are in the 97% or above are placed in a cluster grouping within the regular Language Arts classroom. Gifted seminars are available dealing with topics including coping with stress, perfectionism, and high school readiness.

The WCMS staff also provides special education services for students with disabilities. These services use specially designed instruction by a licensed special education teacher.

ASSESSMENTS

WCMS administers standardized assessments annually to monitor student academic achievement and academic growth. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) assists in measuring student progress towards academic standards. The Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) measures student growth. Teaching teams and PLC members receive student testing results. A data coach meets with each team and PLC to review test analysis protocols. PLCs examine trends and review how they can update their practice to meet the needs of students.

The WCMS leadership team meets at a retreat in the summer to analyze building data trends from these assessments. Three building goals are developed in the areas of reading or math, student engagement and equity. These goals form the school improvement plan (SIP) for the school year. WCMS experienced an achievement gap of more than 10 points between our white and black students. Teaching teams and PLCs received strengths-focused information on the underperforming black students joining their team. Teachers planned targeted ongoing interventions to meet the needs of these students.

District Common Assessments are directly linked to the curriculum at WCMS. They are based on academic standards and are developed by teaching teams within the school district. These assessments ensure that the curriculum is administered with fidelity, and that progress is reported to students and parents on mastery of academic standards.

Ongoing formative assessments continually drive the practice of teachers at WCMS. A wide variety of tools including quizzes, slates, check-lists, exit cards, questioning, discussion, thumbs up, rate yourself, and fist of five are implemented on a regular basis. These assessments provide meaningful feedback for both the teacher and the student.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

There are several ways in which a positive school culture is fostered within Wayzata Central Middle School. Each day students come to school expecting a safe and nurturing environment. WCMS staff make a healthy climate a top priority. They know that middle school students often need as much support with the social and emotional as they do with academics. Students and teachers alike look forward to each day at WCMS. PBIS, Advisory, extra-curricular activities, and our Student Services team offer students motivating opportunities to experience positive culture while things like peer coaching, committee involvement, PLCs, and the Social Committee help staff meet their needs.

WCMS is a PBIS school. A basic underpinning of PBIS is the concept of students understanding what is expected of them. We spend time teaching expectations and celebrating successes through student recognition activities like “You’ve Been Spotted [doing the right thing]” slips from adults to student assemblies to Student Star Breakfasts. Students at WCMS also engage in all types of extra-curricular activities that encompass academics, hobbies, and sports. For example, Anime Club and Breakfast Book Club are two popular activities students enjoy outside the academic day. Within the school day, seminars for gifted and talented students are designed to support the social emotional growth of some of our highest achieving students. We have a Student Council and 8th Grade Student Leadership Team who take on service projects that benefit the school and outside agencies. Finally, our Student Services Team of counselors, administrators and social worker are available to help students with any individual needs.

Staff at WCMS have many opportunities to participate in and influence the school’s climate. Teachers value the work they do in middle school teams and PLCs. They are encouraged to participate in committee work and the Staff Development Leadership Team is charged with producing the School Improvement Plan (SIP) each year. Teachers feel invested in the work at WCMS. Each teacher is assigned a peer coach who is tasked with supporting their development in a non-threatening and non-evaluative way. Lastly, it should be noted that staff hosted breakfasts are very well attended.

WCMS has a healthy culture that values the safety and comfort of students and staff. The culture of the school is a collaborative effort with each stakeholder making a valued contribution.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Wayzata Central Middle School is a neighborhood school serving almost 1300 students and their families. Keeping all stakeholders involved and aware of what is happening at school has been an important part of making sure students feel supported. WCMS interfaces with the community through communication, events, and systems.

Academic progress is communicated via two main electronic means. The Skyward student management database acts as our gradebook, reflecting final marks for classes in a standards-based report card. A learning management platform called Canvas is where students and their families find specifics about how a child is growing over time in various learning activities. WCMS produces a newsletter every two weeks that contains information about what has happened at school and what is coming up. Email communication blasts through Constant Contact provide updates between the newsletters and can help share information during an emergency or other unexpected event. Each spring students and families come from our feeder elementary schools to visit WCMS for orientation. The more comfortable our incoming students and their families are, the better the transition to middle school. Each fall, we host curriculum nights by grade level. These nights allow parents and guardians to see the classroom spaces, hear about the classes, and get to know the teachers. Similarly, parent/teacher conferences are held in both the fall and the spring. Conferences allow parents and teachers to share information, celebrate successes and intervene in a collaborative manner when appropriate.

A couple community partnerships exist outside of the WCMS campus. Interfaith Outreach and Community

Partners (IOCP) are a group our students work with for various service projects. Our recent Student Council teen clothing drive collected hundreds of outfits for teens in our attendance area. In the past, the Student Council has done remarkable work for cancer research by raising over \$19,000 in 2017 for Pennies for Patients (1st in MN). In addition, we are just beginning a partnership with IOCP and the University of Minnesota's CORE program that is designed to grow the strengths of our students from groups that are traditionally under-represented in higher education. Within the building, WCMS staff is supported by an active PTA who fundraise for things that benefit our students and help our students grow their empathy and responsibility through service work.

One of the most powerful ways for stakeholders to feel involved is through everyday communication. Between phone, email and face-to-face conversations, parents are able to access all sorts of information. Pairing that ongoing dialogue with the events, systems, and partnership results in a well-informed community that feels involved in the learning process.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development has been an important part of life at WCMS since its beginning. WCMS has a very active Staff Development Leadership Team (SDLT) that learns about best practice, prioritizes the building's needs, and makes plans to train others. SDLT is a group of teachers from a wide variety of disciplines who meet regularly (twice a month) to discuss the needs of the building with administration. This SDLT is chaired by teachers although administrators are involved in every step of the process. This group also serves to coordinate efforts between committees across the building as well as the needs of the greater district.

To illustrate, recently the SDLT has been working with the Equity Team to get a newly developed relationship building rubric off the ground with staff. This rubric serves as a way for teachers to evaluate their own classroom decisions through an equity lens. SDLT was able to carve out time at both staff meetings and longer PD sessions to share the process. Prior to that, the SDLT provided monetary support for members of the Equity Team to be trained in programming provided by National Urban Alliance (NUA) and subsequently the Pacific Group (Courageous Conversations About Race).

The SDLT's largest undertaking in the past six years has been the graceful transition from a percentage grading system to a standards-based system. This work started with getting staff on the same page about how to do retakes and grading solely on summative work. It eventually evolved into teachers and students thinking differently about their lessons. All of this work was accompanied by whys and hows that needed to be addressed through PD.

Over the years, the SDLT has supported individual teacher requests for PD funding and provided larger on-campus PD sessions. All teachers generate a goal for student achievement with either the principal or their peer coach. Often, individual PD requests relate to the goals. Most recently, WCMS worked with Sarah Rudell Beach on mindfulness topics and learned about Dr. Nadarajan Sethuraju's (Metro State University) poverty simulation work. On-site literacy specialists have contributed many hours of training in the area of fiction and non-fiction signposts as a tool to use in all subject areas.

In addition, the district provides WCMS teachers with the opportunity to participate in the Academy of Wayzata Educators (AWE). AWE courses are created and taught by teachers for teachers. Many teachers participate in Summer Tech Academy to improve their skills in technology related to teaching and learning. New teachers are provided with an additional workshop week to become more comfortable with the culture and expectations of the district. They are also assigned both a New Teacher Mentor (culture) and a Curriculum Mentor (content).

4. School Leadership:

WCMS leadership stresses the district's mission of meeting each student's needs while ensuring high expectations through excellent instruction and curriculum. WCMS creates conditions where students can reach a high standard by placing their needs at the center of staff decision making. The building

administration consists of a principal and an associate principal. Decisions, School Improvement Plans, and PD priorities are set by the Staff Development Leadership team working alongside administration. The teachers are divided into teams and are able to react to the needs of the students. Teacher led PLCs make many decisions about how to address the curriculum while staying within the parameters of leadership and the curriculum itself. Teachers are viewed as the true experts in both interdisciplinary team and PLC conversations because they are closest to the action and often have the most in-depth knowledge of the students.

WCMS is guided by the District's Strategic Roadmap. The roadmap outlines priorities and provides a blueprint for work that should be going on at the building level. It is a general document that provides guidelines for principals and leadership teams to work with. It includes the Mission, the Vision, Core Values, and Strategic Directions. The Mission is our purpose. The Vision outlines what we intend to create. The Core Values are drivers of our words and actions. They are Achievement, Collaboration, Community, Equity, Integrity, and Respect. Lastly, the Strategic Directions provide focus for our resources- Achievement, Each and Every, Personalization, and Health and Well-Being.

At the building level, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) drives much of the work. It sets forth goals based on need appearing in school data. Typically, the SIP has three goals under which appear action steps that need to be executed over the course of a several year period. The SIP contains a Minnesota Quality Compensation (Q-Comp) Goal in math or reading, a student engagement goal, and an equity goal aimed at eliminating the achievement gap. The principal and leadership team use these goals and associated action steps to guide decisions. Committee chairs are teachers. Their work is aligned to the items in the SIP.

A major factor in the success of WCMS is the combination of strong guiding principles from the district and collaboration between principals and teachers.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Wayzata Central Middle School (WCMS) has spent the greater part of the last decade working on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a vehicle to promote excellence in student achievement. Significant time and energy have been invested in PLCs, making them an invaluable part of school life. From a schedule that is conducive to meeting regularly, to the alignment of standards to lessons and assessments, PLCs help WCMS teachers be at their best.

Core teachers at WCMS meet 2-3 times per week with their like subject peers within a grade level. Encore teachers (music, PE, technology, family and consumer sciences, and art) meet less frequently but function effectively in PLCs. So often, PLC work is expected of educators but time is not provided to accomplish the work. This is dedicated time at WCMS. It has become a crucial part of the day for teachers who now produce more consistent and high-quality instruction.

The PLC model is based loosely on the work of DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker. WCMS teachers use the four questions- What is it we want our students to learn? How will we know if they've learned it? What will the response be if they haven't? How can we extend the learning if they already know it? Within those four questions, the use of the pronoun we is not incidental. This work focuses on the use of both leading and lagging data. Improvements have been made to the school's ability to look at student work in real time and use it as a data set to inform instruction. Teachers discuss how a target was addressed and then collaboratively come up with ways to reteach or enrich.

There are many examples of PLC work resulting in positive school change. The move to standards based grading could not have been done without teachers sitting down together in PLCs to unpack standards, align their lessons to assessment, and create rubrics that help students take control of their learning. WCMS teachers make equity work a part of their discussions by using tools like the equity compass developed by the Pacific Group and an equity self-assessment tool recently developed by WCMS staff to help teachers think through the roles bias can have in their day-to-day instructional decisions.

In short, PLCs at WCMS have dramatically changed how teachers go about meeting the needs of students. The old model of teachers planning on their own in vacuum-like conditions has been discarded in favor of a system that encourages collaboration and the use of collective brain power. Students at WCMS experience quality lessons and class work that have been thoughtfully developed by a team. PLCs are key to the success of WCMS.