

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. Brad Preheim

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

Official School Name Armour High School - 01

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 605 3rd Street PO Box 640

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

Armour City SD State 57313-0640 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Douglas County

Telephone (605) 724-2153

Fax (605) 724-2977

Web site/URL http://www.armour.k12.sd.us

E-mail brad.preheim@k12.sd.us

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*Mrs. Andrea Powell

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail andrea.powell@k12.sd.us

District Name Armour School District 21-1 Tel. (605) 724-2153

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 Mr. Larry Ymker

(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	6	8	14
10	2	9	11
11	7	6	13
12 or higher	9	6	15
Total Students	24	29	53

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90 % White
 - 0 % 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.

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	0
(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: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 28 %
Total number students who qualify: 15

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
5 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>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 28
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.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 9:1

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	97%	96%	97%	96%	98%
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	11
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	36%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	55%
Found employment	9%
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.

The Armour School, in partnership with the community, will provide each student the opportunity to develop intellectually, emotionally, physically, and socially in a safe environment.

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

Armour School District's mission focuses on being a partner with the community in helping students develop intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially in a safe and orderly environment.

Armour High School is located in the community of Armour, South Dakota. Armour is a small, very rural community of 750 people located in the south-eastern area of the state and lies 42 miles southwest of Mitchell. The community is agriculturally based and many of our students come from families of farmers. Armour is the Douglas County seat and home to the Douglas County Hospital and Prairie Health Clinic. The district is 128 square miles and has two bus routes of 35 and 40 miles in length. There are two school sites. The elementary building contains pre-school as well as grades K-8, and the high school building consists of grades 9-12. Total enrollment for the district is 172 with an enrollment of 55 students in grades 9-12. Approximately one-third of the students in the district live in low socio-economic households and receive lunches that are free or at reduced cost. South Dakota has an open enrollment policy for students. Therefore, a portion of the student body consists of students who live outside of the district who choose to attend Armour HS.

The school is the focal point of the community. The community rallies around all events and supports the school in all endeavors. For the past 10 years the school board has passed a tax opt-out, which means the local taxpayers must pay well above the state tax rate required for the school district. This has been done with the full support of the community, and even though most members of the community are struggling financially, they do so willingly. There is a Parent and Teachers Together organization which works together to provide open-house and other community education programs. The community financially supports our "Lead the Way" program which recognizes student leadership and service. Many community members are mentors for students, especially in support of our senior capstone projects. Music boosters and athletic boosters, as well as the Community Foundation, are very involved in supporting our students and programs.

Academic achievement runs high in the Armour School District. We pride ourselves on accomplishing this in a friendly and positive environment. We are one of many small rural schools in South Dakota. Small size means limited resources, but we more than make up for that by providing a rigorous curriculum taught by highly qualified and caring teachers, providing real-world projects and experiences, and involving parents and the entire community in educating each child. To expand our curriculum, we provide many distance ed opportunities. We have four distance ed labs which provide two-way video and audio, and we provide each student with a personal laptop tablet. Our small size ensures a great student/teacher ratio. Teachers have strong connections with the students. Education is personalized, and our Teachers as Advisors program helps foster the teacher/student connection. Any student can choose to participate in any or all teams, organizations and activities, and are an integral part of each, regardless of ability level. Students at AHS do not "fall between the cracks."

AHS has had 100% four-year graduates for the past 12 years. The state average during that time has been 83%. All teachers are highly qualified and 35% have at least a master's degree. Smarter Balanced scores for the past three years are high with ELA scoring on average 13% above the state level and math scores 29% above the state average. The numbers are almost identical for academic growth as well. Armour's ACT scores consistently rank above state and national averages. Over the past two years, as well as this year, 100% of our graduates will have earned the National Career Readiness Certificate. Ninety-three percent of our current seniors have earned college credit through our dual credit agreement with universities and tech schools. State high school attendance averages are 79% while Armour High School's daily attendance rate averages above 93%.

While it is true that students at Armour High School consistently score very high on state and national assessments, these scores themselves are not something we spend much time worrying about. While we are proud of our consistency of achieving high scores, our belief is that if we prepare students with rigor and with the goal of preparing them for study beyond high school and for success in the workplace, the scores will take care of themselves. We do see value in the data that the scores provide, and we regularly analyze

the data and use it in curriculum and professional development decisions, as well as to identify individual student needs.

At AHS we believe that learning goes well beyond the academic arena. We provide many co-curricular opportunities for our students. Because we are so small in numbers, most of our students are involved in many or all of these organizations. No student, regardless of ability, is turned away from any activity. Armour has a long history of athletic success. Our music and drama departments are recognized state-wide as examples of what can be accomplished in a small school. Eighty-two percent of our high school students are involved in our music program. There are many other groups and organizations in which students are actively involved. Emphasis is placed on real-world experiences, and we work with the community in finding mentors, internships, and assistance with our Lead the Way, SkillsUSA, and Senior Capstone Experience projects.

Most of all, the Armour community and school have the reputation of being very friendly and welcoming. Together, we have created a culture where everyone works together and is committed to the education of every child.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Armour High School's core curriculum is directly aligned to South Dakota State Standards as well as National and Common Core Standards. The focal point of all curricula is to ensure college and career readiness. This includes preparation for further study as well as preparing students for career level entry. We believe in teaching students to understand the content to ensure transfer of skills across all settings. Emphasis is placed on providing our students with experiences that promote exploration and innovation while including authentic opportunities to practice these skills. In addition, numerous dual credit courses are made available to help prepare students for post-high school education. Technology is seamlessly incorporated into the curriculum. All classrooms have promethean boards, all students are issued laptop tablet computers, and other technologies such as GPS, plasma cutters, CNC routers, etc. are part of appropriate classrooms. Teachers build much of their instruction around problem-based learning. Cross-curricular assignments are routinely implemented and partnering with community members and businesses is encouraged to make learning authentic and practical. All South Dakota regental universities and technical schools offer numerous dual credit courses at a reduced cost and most juniors and seniors take advantage of this opportunity. For example, 93% of AHS seniors are taking dual credit coursework during the 2017-18 school year.

English Language Arts

The English curriculum at Armour High School challenges students to gain mastery in reading, writing, literary analysis, and listening and speaking skills. Four years of English are required. These include four semesters of composition and grammar, three semesters of literature including contemporary, American and British, and a semester of speech and presentation. Students are expected to read with understanding and fluency, to write to communicate for an assortment of purposes, and to listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations. Students engage in the reading of classic and contemporary texts including drama, fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. Research papers are written progressing to a senior research paper which is integrated with their year-long senior capstone project. Technology integration is a seamless but important component of the English curriculum. The ultimate goals for our ELA program are to foster a passion for reading and learning and for students to attain the skills needed to communicate effectively in post-secondary education and on the job.

Math

Mathematic coursework at AHS is designed to challenge each student to reach their full potential in the study and understanding of mathematics. While the state only requires three years of math, AHS students are strongly encouraged to take four years of math courses. While all students follow the Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II path, the speed at which they do so is accelerated when appropriate, with many completing these courses during their first two years of high school. Following completion of these courses is a fourth course which includes trigonometry, math-analysis and calculus concepts. Most students also take at least one dual credit math class during their senior year which may include AP Calculus, college math coursework, or technical institute math coursework. Emphasis is placed on problem solving and technology is deeply integrated into instruction and student work. Peer tutoring is encouraged and arranged. Students develop and demonstrate their understanding through collaborative and problem-based approaches which further develops 21st century skills and application to real-world applications.

Science

Armour High School's science department goal is to foster curiosity and apply scientific thinking to real-world problems. All courses emphasize student collaboration via inquiry-based activities, laboratory exercises, collaborative activities, and discussion of the influence of science and technology on society. Students are required to take three years of science, but most exceed this requirement. Courses offered include physical science, biology, advanced biology studies, anatomy and physiology, chemistry and physics. Following physical science and biology, students are scheduled in science courses designed to best meet each individual student's needs to develop skills for college and career readiness. At every level, STEM concepts are embedded in the curriculum. Students are engaged in problem-based learning with the

goal of developing lifelong learning skills. Activities are designed to be authentic, with opportunities for community-based learning.

Social Sciences

Our social studies curriculum challenges students to be informed, engaged, and active global citizens. Inquiry is at the heart of the social studies curricula and the coursework prepares students to be informed citizens able to support their arguments with historical data. State requirements are two and one-half years of social science. AHS requires three years, which includes world history and world geography taught simultaneously, U.S. History, and U.S. Government. While the state only requires one-half year of government, we require a full year which not only covers the U.S. Government standards but also a study of state and local government. In addition, students study current government issues and the U.S. government's interaction with other nations around the world. Field trips, class projects, classroom debates, and hands-on projects encourage critical thinking and infuse 21st century skills. Presentations are a regular part of the class allowing students to practice public speaking. Further enhancement comes through dual enrollment courses, most commonly psychology and sociology.

College and Career Readiness

All curriculum at Armour High School is designed to support college and career readiness by offering the foundational skills needed to be successful. Lessons are designed to have value beyond school. Students are challenged to develop a thirst for knowledge and to see the importance of becoming lifelong learners. Reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills are built into each course and grade level and focus on critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Instructional technology is integrated to enhance these goals. A year-long senior capstone project is a graduation requirement and culminates in a finished product and presentation in which each student can demonstrate the knowledge and skills they developed during their four years of high school. Using SDMyLife and working with a teacher/advisor, each student develops a personal learning plan that is revisited at least annually. All students work to earn National Career Readiness Certification. SkillsUSA is an active organization within the high school that teaches students the soft skills necessary to be job ready. In addition to local counseling and career activities, a career coach is brought in monthly and works with all students developing career exploration, job-shadowing experiences, and mentorships, as well as exploring partnerships with post-secondary institutions, businesses, and industry.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The music department of AHS is recognized as an exemplar for what can be accomplished in a small school. Eighty-two percent of our students are involved in the music program. We have two full-time music instructors, which is rare for a small school in South Dakota. Our groups, large and small, consistently score high in contests and have been honored by being invited to perform at many state and multi-state events. Band consists of concert band, jazz band, marching band and pep band. Vocal groups include mixed, women's, honor's, as well as many smaller ensembles. Each year the drama department puts on a full play and/or a musical as well as a one-act play that consistently qualifies for the state competition. Graphic arts are made available to students via the SD Virtual HS.

In health class students explore a variety of topics including making healthy choices, mental health issues, social health, human development, nutrition, fitness, substance abuse, disease prevention, safety and first aid. This is a required class for all students. Physical Education is required and is instructed with an emphasis on providing our students with the tools and skills to be lifelong active adults. Activities incorporate muscular endurance, agility, flexibility, cardiovascular health, and body awareness. In addition, students learn and participate in a variety of life-long sports that they can enjoy long after graduation. All students must be trained and certified in CPR as a graduation requirement.

Spanish I & II are offered at AHS. Students learn basic functions of the language and become familiar with elements of Spanish cultures. As they progress through the curriculum they strengthen their Spanish communication skills. Additionally, students explore the culture, history, art, and literature of Spain and other Spanish speaking countries.

Technology education is a strong component of the curriculum offered at AHS. The district prides itself in providing current technology both physically and instructionally for our students. All freshmen are required to take a Foundations in Technology course. Web design and graphic arts courses are available. All classrooms have interactive promethean boards, all students are issued school purchased current laptop tablets, and teachers use technology seamlessly as STEM is an emphasis across curricular areas. The industrial technology department offers the following semester courses: Intro to Drafting and Design, Intro to Architecture and Construction, CAD, Cabinetry, Intro to Manufacturing, Building Trades, and Engineering Design and Development. All courses are CTE (Career and Technical Education) certified. Students utilize current technology including a 3D printer, CNC router, and a CNC plasma table. Emphasis is placed on real life projects, engineering, and troubleshooting. With oversight from local plumbers, electricians and construction workers, students built an addition to the school. The library is current and is a valuable technological and printed material resource.

The business program prepares students to become capable of personal economic self-sufficiency. Accounting I and II provide the development of skills for successful entry-level employment as well as further study and advancement in careers in business and finance. Personal finance provides students the skills necessary to plan, budget, and save for financial success, as well as the proper use of credit. In addition, students are taught the value of saving and investing. A stock market simulation is implemented.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Teachers at Armour HS are invested in meeting the unique needs of every student. Therefore, teachers differentiate instruction and employ a variety of methods for delivering instruction. A broad use of assessment data is analyzed to understand both the varied needs of our students and the effectiveness of our curriculum. Teachers in grades K-12 do curriculum mapping collectively to identify curriculum gaps and overlaps and then make the necessary changes. Data digs take place on an ongoing basis. AHS receives an annual state report card which provides demographic and academic data, qualifications of instructional staff, and standardized test score results. This report card is made available to all stakeholders in the community.

Our principle objective is to engage students in their learning. Teachers provide hands-on experiences that require students to use multiple learning skills and higher order thinking to give real meaning and provide real world applications to their learning. All seniors must complete an intensive senior capstone project to synthesize and demonstrate the skills they have developed throughout high school.

An emphasis has been placed on the process of moving toward mastery-based learning to better meet the needs of all learners. Short-term and long-term learning goals are clearly and consistently communicated to students. While instruction is well-planned based on the SD State Standards, Common Core Curriculum, as well as our data, teachers maintain flexibility, responsiveness, and creativity in the classroom to better meet the needs of all learners. All students work with the principal, counselor, and a career coach to develop Personal Learning Plans using the Career Cruising software. This PLP is developed prior to the start of their freshman year and revisited on an ongoing basis until graduation. All teachers have included Project Based Learning into their curriculum. Block scheduling providing 90-minute class periods has been implemented for appropriate classes. Providing technology to help enhance and individualize instruction has been a point of emphasis. Promethean boards are present in all classrooms and each student is issued a laptop with touchpad. The entire campus is wireless.

Armour HS's small class sizes allow us to more easily identify students who are falling behind. Small numbers also allow teachers to spend more time working with individuals and small groups. Peer tutoring is another method which is utilized. All our teachers regularly make themselves available before and after school to work with students. A Teachers as Advisors program pairs teachers and students together for academic and advisory purposes.

For students working well above grade level, many of our programs provide acceleration. Work-related experiences and capstone experiences are individualized to challenge each student. Advanced Placement and dual credit college courses are encouraged and participated in by many of the students. The South Dakota Virtual High School has allowed us to offer advanced coursework to our high achieving students.

AHS has an agreement with Northern State University to provide college prep coursework through three separate live two-way audio and video labs in our building.

If a teacher identifies a student that they believe may need special services, a referral is made and an Individual Education Program team consisting of parents, student, general and special education teachers, related service staff, and administrators meet to review the referral and determine if an evaluation for special education eligibility is required. If needed, the team develops an IEP or appropriate 504 plan. In all instances, the least restrictive environment is implemented. We believe in inclusion, not only in the classroom but in all our co-curricular activities and student life in general.

A variety of assessments is used by the instructional staff to provide sound, data driven decisions including the DakotaSTEP and Smarter Balanced assessments. Interim formative assessments are given throughout the year providing us a global measure of early and midyear progress, identifying specific areas of strength and weakness, and assess skills of incoming students. Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICA) yield overall scale scores and performance level designations. Interim Assessment Blocks (IAB) assess smaller sets of targets. ACCESS for ELL students is administered to assess comprehension and communication skills of English Language Learners. MSAA is given as the alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities. In addition, all students take the National Career Readiness Certificate assessment to identify work related skill development. The PSAT, ASVAB, and ACT assessments are also regularly administered. Several classes and workshops are presented to help students prepare for the ACT.

All teachers develop Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for the year targeting areas of student growth and achievement. Teachers regularly use summative assessments including teacher-created tests and quizzes, exit-entrance slips, and writing assignments that are graded using teacher-created writing rubrics. Formative assessments including portfolios, group discussions, journal entries, question of the day, reading logs, kahoot, group projects, and peer/self-assessments are used on a regular basis.

All of the methods above result in AHS consistently performing at a high level. Small class size, an emphasis on creating a positive environment, and a very dedicated instructional staff that challenges each student to excel have been the main reasons we have been able to maintain this high level of achievement.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

While Armour HS has achieved much success in academics as well as co-curricular activities, it is the fact we have done so in a warm, relaxed, and enjoyable environment that we are most proud of. The emphasis is not on high test scores but rather on creating a culture in which everyone is valued and important. Academic achievement is a byproduct of this culture. Although academics are always of utmost importance, we believe that helping a student develop socially and emotionally is equally important. Teachers feel supported through the school's collaborative environment. We refer to us collectively as a family and our actions are proof that we truly are. We believe everyone who enters our building should feel safe and welcome.

We have the advantage of being a small school in a small community. This results in personalized relationships between administration, teachers, and students. Most teachers coach or are advisors and leaders in clubs and organizations. They have the same students for four years. Every member of the staff, not just the teachers, has relationships with, and genuinely cares about each and every student. The same can be said about each other. Students can always be seen voluntarily hanging out in teacher's rooms before and after school.

A "Teachers as Advisors" program is in place in which three teachers meet with approximately a dozen students made up of three or four students from each grade level. Collectively this group discusses keys to academic success, social issues, anti-bullying strategies, etc. In addition, these same teachers serve as advisors to their three seniors on their senior capstone projects.

In addition to the academic arena, students take advantage of the many clubs, teams, and organizations that are made available. An amazing 98% of our students are active in at least one co-curricular activity. The vast majority of our students are in many if not almost all of them. Everyone is welcome to join, regardless of ability level.

Every effort is made to recognize students. There is a "Student of the Month" and each grade level has a weekly "Effort Award" recipient. We have a "Lead the Way" program which is a vehicle used to recognize and reward students who demonstrate leadership, strong character, integrity, and service to other members of the Armour School community. Staff and student council members issue tickets to deserving students throughout the year, and then a school wide celebration recognizes deserving students at the end of the year.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Within our mission statement it states, "...in partnership with the community..." We embrace that philosophy and a relationship of trust and support exists between school, families, and the community at large. The school is the focal point of this small community.

Armour has a Parents and Teachers Together (PTT) organization that is active. This organization holds an annual open house at the start of each school year. This open house not only brings families, teachers, and students together in anticipation for the school year, but community organizations are represented and present as well. This group also brings in speakers and provides programming geared towards school and family issues. Other family nights are conducted throughout the year including 8th grade parent meetings in preparation for high school, financial aid workshops, career preparation, among many other areas of interest and concern.

Athletic booster and music booster organizations are very active. The Armour Community Foundation is a strong partner of the school and currently is in the process of helping purchase a new speaker system for the school. The Armour Lions are another partner who supports the students. For example, they send students to the HOBY Leadership camp annually. The local first responders are organizing a Student Impact

program on safety which will be held on our campus and will have students from many other districts in attendance. There is a very strong 4-H program in our community. Every five years the community and school host an all-school reunion which is a several-day event. Many organizations provide thousands of dollars in scholarships to our graduates. Members of the community provide job-shadowing experiences for students and voluntarily serve as mentors and judges for our senior capstone projects.

The students are involved in the community as well. The student council conducts two community blood drives annually. Students conduct clothing drives and food pantry drives. Recently, as part of one senior's capstone project, student volunteers spent days painting houses, building wheelchair ramps, etc. within the community. Students volunteer at the local theater and nursing home. The National Honor Society and Fellowship of Christian Athletes groups are engaged. The students conduct an annual Veteran's Day program.

We believe in keeping the community and parents informed. This includes monthly newsletters, a school website, and a digital calendar made available to all patrons. The Parent Portal allows parents to see their child's grades, missing assignments, attendance records, and other school information.

An example of partnering with community was the building of an addition on to the school by our Buildings Trades class. Local contractors, construction workers, plumbers, and electricians volunteered to help monitor and advise as this addition was designed and built by the students themselves. This addition not only added classroom space but contains a community meeting room and bathroom facility.

3. Professional Development:

The goal of our professional development is to directly enhance each teacher's ability to improve student achievement. The majority of professional development is teacher and data driven. Other PD addresses state-driven changes. Administrators and teachers work together to make PD decisions and create identified workshops and training. Teacher professional growth, goals and feedback regularly determine PD topics. Each teacher can request and participate in professional development activities throughout the year. Staff surveys are utilized to identify needs. Data digs conducted annually along with regular data collection and analysis help identify areas of need.

Teachers and administrators often lead professional development workshops. When appropriate, we use a Train the Trainer model in which a staff member will participate in a professional development activity and then facilitate, reflect and share their learning with staff. Not only is professional development provided at the local level, but also at the educational consortium and state level. We have partnered with three neighboring small school districts to form the SD Innovation Lab Schools. One of the benefits is the ability to pool resources and staff together to provide more economical and valuable professional development opportunities.

In recent years, several areas of professional development were particularly targeted. One of these was curriculum mapping resulting in teachers working together to align instruction and curriculum, vertically and horizontally. Problem-based learning was another area of development and training. Other areas of emphasis have been differentiated learning, mastery-based learning, Student Learning Objectives, and the Common Core curriculum. In addition, professional development concerning student wellness and the changing social context are ongoing priorities.

Collaboratively, instructional staff and administration have identified setting instructional outcomes, using questioning and discussion techniques, and using assessment in instruction as professional development priorities for the current school year. Early release days have been scheduled to make these professional development experiences available to all instructional staff.

4. School Leadership:

AHS is a very small rural school. Therefore, the administration consists of a superintendent and one principal. Both wear many "hats." The principal serves as the instructional leader, maintains order and

safety, promotes the district's goals, and supports the teachers and the students. In addition, he is the test coordinator, career counselor, and often substitute teacher. The principal is very involved with leading teachers and students to reach high goals. This includes guidance in curricular decisions, professional development, classroom management, and constructive evaluation using the Danielson model.

The superintendent ensures that personnel is in place and that we have the resources of time and money to ensure that the staff can work in a highly effective manner. The school board has set policies that support our mission and the superintendent sees to it that these are enforced fully and fairly. While serving these roles, she is very present throughout the campus and has developed a friendly relationship with the students and staff.

While academics and providing a safe environment are at the forefront of our mission, the principal places a high emphasis on creating a warm and friendly environment and one in which everyone is valued. The culture that has been created has resulted in a trust and openness between administration, teachers, students, parents and community. Both administrators not only know the teachers and students by name, they know their personalities, likes and dislikes, hobbies and interests, and they probably know their families as well. Everyone in the building refers to us as a family, and we act as one. This is the advantage of living in a community of 750 people and working in a high school of fewer than 100 students. Personal relationships with students, teachers, and community members are key factors in our ongoing success.

The principal believes in a shared leadership model. Teachers are given a great deal of input in policy and decision making. Teachers feel safe and trusted and are allowed much autonomy in the classroom. The administration believes in hiring and retaining good teachers, and then giving them the support, resources, and environment they need to facilitate student success. Student opinions are valued and encouraged as is input from the community. This allows a "buy-in" which makes change and improvement easier to attain.

Decision making is always made with the main focus being on the well-being of the student. This certainly includes decisions affecting student academic achievement. Equally important to the administration is making decisions by acting with integrity, fairness and ethical practices which includes considering social justice as well as the district's culture. While the principal believes in shared decision making, he is not afraid to make the hard or unpopular decision when necessary. This is done only after ensuring that everyone feels that their input was valued.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

For the past nine years, every student who graduated from Armour HS has completed a senior capstone project. Our senior projects allow the students the opportunity to consolidate and showcase the learning from their high school years into a meaningful and relevant project. It is their venue to connect with the world outside of school and to demonstrate that they have the skills to go on to further education and/or enter the workforce. The projects increase the rigor of the high school experience and allow students to see the connections between what they have learned and the application to their future lives.

Each senior has three faculty advisors. The student must create and present a proposal that demonstrates a “learning stretch” and the project must be approved by the advisors and principal. Each student must find and work with an adult mentor from outside of the school or their family who is an expert in their project’s subject matter and is willing to help them through the entire process.

There are four main components to the program. Each student creates a project of their choice that integrates research and synthesizes what they have learned in a culminating learning experience. Work on this project must take place outside of the normal school day and follow the strict guidelines of rigor provided in the project manual. Each student writes a research paper requiring them to demonstrate proficiency in conducting research and writing about a topic related to their chosen project. The third component is the creation of a portfolio which includes among other things documentation, project journal, reflection papers, evaluations, references, resumé, and evidence of work. Lastly, each senior must create and give a presentation to a panel of judges from outside the school faculty. Students meet regularly with their advisors and mentor throughout the entire process. The entire faculty contributes to the overall capstone evaluation.

While not a requirement, numerous capstone projects over the years have been career choice related. Many others have been centered around community service. One student collected and delivered school supplies to elementary schools in Africa. This current school year a student raised funds and with the help of all student volunteer labor painted a house, built a wheelchair accessible deck, made another house much more handicapped accessible, and cleaned up a piece of community property, all for disadvantaged community members. Recently, a student conducted several pharmaceutical medicine awareness days for elderly to help them find more economic alternatives and ensure that they were taking the correct medicine and doing so properly. Students have written books, recorded music, constructed buildings, taught CPR classes, provided supplies for first time parents, conducted Special Olympic events, increased cancer awareness, and many other outstanding projects.

We are very proud of our senior project program and believe that it synthesizes the skills the students have acquired into a culminating learning experience. Through this multi-faceted experience, our students have learned to think critically, solve problems, set goals, conduct research, develop a plan, and communicate effectively.