

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Tim Pahl

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

Official School Name Hancock Public School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 371 Hancock Avenue

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

Hancock MN 56244-0367
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Stevens County

Telephone (320) 392-5621

Fax (320) 392-5156

Web site/URL http://hancock.k12.mn.us/

E-mail tim.pahl@hancock.k12.mn.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*Mr. Paul Carlson Mr. E-mail paul.carlson@hancockisd768.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Hancock Public School District Tel. (320) 392-5621

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. Barry Nelson
(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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	15	13	28
K	11	16	27
1	14	15	29
2	20	9	29
3	14	17	31
4	11	13	24
5	20	15	35
6	15	12	27
7	13	21	34
8	16	8	24
9	15	15	30
10	16	14	30
11	16	8	24
12 or higher	11	7	18
Total Students	207	183	390

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 88 % White
 - 2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: 5%

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

Note: Due to increasing enrollment, as of 2015, Hancock Public School has closed open enrollment August 1st of each year.

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	16
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	340
(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: 4%
17 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 26%
Total number students who qualify: 103

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %
75 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Autism | <u>19</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>2</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>14</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>6</u> Developmental Delay | <u>29</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>8</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>10</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>2</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 8
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.	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	17
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 15:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	96%	93%	93%

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 2018.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	19
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	53%
Enrolled in a community college	21%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	21%
Joined the military or other public service	5%
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.

Hancock Public School exists to develop in all students the skills, knowledge, and passion to be life-long learners.

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

PROUD PAST-PROMISING FUTURE: For 146 years Hancock Public School has been providing an outstanding educational experience for area students. Thanks to the commitment of our staff, amazing community support, and strong parent involvement, we are a small school with a growing student population. Consistently high academic performance, outstanding athletes, and excellent band and choir programs bring recognition and visibility to our school and more importantly to our rural community. For people outside of west central Minnesota, the school may be one of the few things-if not the only thing-that puts Hancock on the map.

The statement above greets people when they go to our website, and it sums up what Hancock Public School is about. Hancock Public School is the heart of our community. While all the small schools around us have consolidated with other districts, our community takes great pride in the fact that we are one community/one school district. We are a small rural district located in west central Minnesota. Hancock Elementary consists of 230 pre-K through 6th grade students. Hancock Secondary consists of 160 7th through 12th grade students. Hancock Elementary and Secondary are located in one building. The District serves 89 square miles surrounding the community of Hancock. The majority of our students come from two parent families. While we have seen growth in the number of English Language Learners our district serves, this growth has been slow and steady, allowing us time to obtain the resources necessary to fully meet the needs of these students and families.

While most rural schools are experiencing declining enrollment, Hancock Public School is experiencing growth. Over the last 20 years we have passed three bond referenda. One in 1999, another in 2013, and the last one in 2018. The average percentage of district residents voting in favor of these builds was 84.3%. This indicates overwhelming support for our school. With this support comes the expectation from our community that our students will receive nothing short of an excellent education. An education that prepares students to “develop the skills, knowledge, and passion to be lifelong learners.” To ensure the development of these skills, Hancock Public School offers a wide variety of academic opportunities to its students. We offer classes that range from Robotics to History and Techniques of Officiating American Athletics. We also offer 17 concurrent enrollment/College in the Schools (CIS) classes for college credit. Students can earn up to 54 college credits in the areas of Agriculture, Math, Business, Computers, English, Speech and Literature. Other opportunities include Business Professionals of America, FFA (formerly known as Future Farmers of America), Yearbook, Knowledge Bowl, O-Ambassadors, and Math Masters, just to name a few.

Hancock Public School is “the small school that makes a BIG difference.” The district has been recognized for the academic achievements of our students by a variety of entities. Our students consistently score well above the state average on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA). This past year, Hancock Elementary scored above the state average on 10 out of 11 MCA tests. Hancock Secondary scored above the state average in every subject area tested at every grade level. We were 17.5% above the state average in math, 18% higher in reading, and 14.8% higher in science. In 2018, Hancock Secondary was also recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for “Excellence in Four Year Graduation Rate.” In 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019, 100% of those students that remained at Hancock Secondary from grades 9 through 12, graduated. For the last three years, both the football and boys’ basketball teams have won the Minnesota Football and Basketball Coaches Association Team Academic State Championship for Class A. The members of these teams had the highest combined grade point average of any Class A school in Minnesota.

There are a number of reasons for this academic success. We provide an after school program called Catch-Up Club, where students receive one-on-one help. Our Child Study Team meets monthly to discuss the needs of students who are struggling. They share strategies and interventions designed to help improve student’s academic performance and behavior. Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s) meet monthly. Together staff analyze test data, align curriculum, and review Essential Learner Outcomes (ELO’s). The Leadership Team meets every other month. They share ideas related to team building, professional development, community engagement, and climate and culture. Finally, staff meet to work with students before school, during lunch and after school.

One of the factors that has a significant impact on the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral growth of our students is our size. Our average of fifteen students to one teacher allows staff to communicate daily about the performance of students, and about any challenges that students may be facing. Many of our high school staff have the same students from seventh through twelfth grades. This allows staff to build strong rapport with both students and parents. It is these connections that allow us to meet the needs of every student, every child, no matter what their talents or skill level may be. Every individual within our school district working together as a team towards this goal is what has allowed us to excel.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Hancock Public School’s Reading/English Language Arts courses utilize a standards-aligned curriculum and incorporate a variety of lessons for grammar, reading, and writing. Our Wonders elementary reading/language arts curriculum is aligned with state standards and embeds science and social studies standards through genre studies, vocabulary intensive instruction, and guided reading groups. Differentiated instruction is used in leveled centers within Daily 5. Daily 5 includes independent reading, listening to reading, word work, writing, and partner reading. This promotes peer teaching and independence through the use of multiple media. We incorporate IXL (online personalized learning experience), Accelerated Reader, RAZ kids (online guided reading program), and Spelling City within centers. These programs allow us to progress monitor, identify weaknesses, and then modify and reteach. FASTbridge is used to identify students who could benefit from Reading Corp and Title 1 services.

The 7-9th grade students focus on grammar fundamentals, research citation, and how to compose an effective essay. Upon completion of 9th grade the student will be able to correctly identify parts of speech, communicate effectively, comprehend various forms of literature ranging from fiction to nonfiction, and appropriately cite and incorporate sources into their writing. The 10th-12th grade students delve deeply into American and European literature, master detailed research reports, and have a strong focus on career skills with resume and cover letter writing. In addition, qualifying students in grades 10, 11, and 12 can take CIS courses that include: Interpersonal Communication, Public Speaking, Composition I and II, American Literature, World Literature, and Social Media Communication.

Every effort is made to engage all learners. One way that this is accomplished is through the use of multiple teaching strategies including whole-group, question and answer, role-playing, peer teaching, research, and lecture. Another way we enhance student learning is by inviting guest speakers into the classroom on a regular basis. Examples include editors from our local newspaper, a Vietnam veteran, a poetry professor, and a Holocaust survivor. At all grade levels, writing and speaking skills and activities are incorporated into our curriculum, allowing students the opportunity to practice these important life skills.

The language arts and communications department utilizes Northwest Evaluation Association’s (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). This assessment allows us to measure a student’s achievement and academic growth, independent of grade, across time in the areas of reading and language. With this information we are able to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of individual students at their level. Data gathered from the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA), ensure that our students have the skills to perform at grade level. It also provides the information necessary to modify and align curriculum as necessary.

1b. Mathematics:

Mathematics at Hancock follows a standards-aligned curriculum beginning at the elementary level. Teachers utilize state standards testing to identify areas of focus and strength amongst their students and plan their instruction accordingly. The curriculum incorporates regular review of past topics, as well as, practice for new concepts, and teachers provide modified assignments and enrichment opportunities appropriate to each. Teachers supplement textbook based instruction with leveled math centers, self-paced and student-driven computer based activities (such as IXL Math, XtraMath, and Prep Dog), cross-curricular projects, and student-led lessons. These lessons maintain a significant level of rigor with the goal of preparing students for high school.

Our high school curriculum includes 7th grade Pre-Algebra, 8th grade Algebra I, 9th grade Geometry, and 10th grade Algebra II. 11th and 12th grade students can pursue up to 14 credits of college-level coursework (College Algebra, Introduction to Statistics, Trigonometry, and Pre-calculus) or choose traditional math

courses (Advanced Algebra, Foundations of Math). Minnesota graduation standards require three years of math that must include Algebra II; Hancock course offerings go beyond what is required by the state as students can pursue four full years of coursework from grades 9-12 and all students take at least a year of math beyond the minimum Algebra II requirement.

The math curriculum provides numerous opportunities for enrichment. Students practice introductory coding through Arduino Uno software and Khan Academy's Hour of Code, incorporate art into projects like tessellations for geometry and "stained-glass windows" with linear equations, and graph through interactive computer applications like Desmos. We also incorporate math-based technology like graphing calculators and Geogebra and require students to present project-based individualized assessments like the career and math applications for 11th grade Advanced Algebra.

The pace and rigor of the courses is constantly adapted according to the needs of the students with adaptations that range from modified notes and assignments with the assistance of paraprofessionals and Special Education staff to coordinating an independent study for a particularly exceptional student. Those needs may be identified through formal and informal classroom assessments, MCA and NWEA results, or from other school staff. The math teachers are accessible, meeting students before and after school, and posting assignment outlines, lesson notes, and study guides online for students to access. The curriculum, opportunities for enrichment and extra practice, as well as instruction encourage individual growth results in standardized test scores that consistently improve from one grade level to the next.

1c. Science:

At the elementary level, science-based standards are taught with thematic units that rely heavily on inquiry-based learning. In addition to hands-on Foss Kits, students explore the Minnesota Science Museum, go on environmental field trips, host a science fair, and learn from life science examples in the classroom. Students are encouraged to investigate, question, and experience the world of science. This fosters their natural wonderment about how the world works, and stimulates their interest in science at the secondary level.

At the secondary level, the science core sequence begins with 9th grade Physical Chemistry, continues with 10th grade Biology, and offers optional upper-level courses in Anatomy and Physiology, Advanced Chemistry, and (in 2019-2020) Physics. Curriculum is periodically adjusted to provide maximum achievement on NWEA's MAP assessment.

Physical Chemistry is a survey of the important concepts of general physics and chemistry. Laboratory work is a significant part of the curriculum. In recent years, the laboratory work has shifted from "cookbook" types of labs to a more inquiry-based approach. Assessment is based on laboratory work, lab reports, and tests.

Biology surveys the wide variety of organisms on Earth. With recent advances in genetics and gene sequencing, a significant portion of the course now encompasses deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), ribonucleic acid (RNA), and gene expression. Students experience laboratory work involving DNA extraction and genetic equilibrium calculations. Assessment is based on projects, laboratory reports, and tests.

Anatomy and Physiology is a systems-based approach to the human body. Students also partake in a health career exploration component, which has helped many Hancock students to make the decision to pursue medical technology and health careers. Assessment is primarily based on tests, although there is also a dissection laboratory component.

Advanced Chemistry is designed to prepare students for success in college chemistry. All major concepts of general chemistry are discussed, with an emphasis on stoichiometry. Laboratory work is a key part of the course content and assessment.

Historically, Hancock students who take all four science classes are well-placed for success in college. For example, in the Class of 2018, 15.79% of the graduating seniors enrolled in four-year Bachelor of Science

programs after opting to take both advanced science courses at Hancock. These students had a Fall Semester 2018 average college GPA of 3.95.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Our elementary social studies curriculum emphasizes project based learning to aid in the instruction of everyday content. Subjects that are taught are aligned with state standards and include civic engagement, geography, government, history, and economics. These social studies topics are also reinforced through our reading curriculum that integrates themes and ideas encompassing various social studies content. This introductory instruction lays the foundation for future learning to take place on these subjects in secondary grades.

The social studies curriculum for students in grades 7-12 engages students through a variety of courses centered on the state standards. Students in grades 7 and 8 explore early American History and Geography. Students in grades 9-12 are offered required curriculum consisting of Civics, Contemporary American History, World History, Government, and Economics. Our social studies curriculum allows students to study a wide variety of topics, view events from multiple perspectives, and enhance critical thinking skills to help connect the past to the present to make learning as relevant as possible. We offer an educational trip for students and parents to take a tour of historical locations in Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and New York.

The social studies curriculum implements differentiated instruction into each course by utilizing a multitude of strategies such as designing lessons to engage students from each learning style, assigning students to work in pairs or groups, and designating projects to highlight specific skills by offering student choice. Technology is widely used in order to increase student engagement and provide for a more student-centered and hands-on approach to learning.

Students are assessed in a variety of ways in social studies courses consisting of projects, discussions, daily assignments, and tests and quizzes. This data is used to identify and confirm that students are meeting the required standards of the course. Students are also assessed by their use of various skills such as comprehensive writing, public speaking, problem-solving, and analyzing documents to further their individual performance in all subject areas.

In addition to the previous curriculum, students are offered History of Officiating American Athletics. In this course, students learn the rules and officiating mechanics of various sports. This provides them with the career training needed to officiate athletic events.

1e. For secondary schools:

Hancock students prepare for the future with ample college credit courses and career-oriented opportunities. Besides the 54 college credits available through in-house coursework (29 are offered in core areas alone), students hear from authors, newspaper editors, farmers, and other professionals, compose resumes and compile references, learn the economics of a college education, present applications of mathematical concepts to career aspirations, practice investment savviness with stock market research, and explore health and medical field opportunities and requirements. Further, Hancock offers several core-area assessments to assist in college and career planning, including the American College Test (ACT) and Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT).

Academic development support includes academic advising, goal setting and an individual guidance portfolio for each senior. The career and college development curriculum used is Career Pathways. Other college and career planning activities include campus visits, career fair, college fair, college representative visits, and financial aid informational meetings. Our School-to-Work program includes job shadowing, career search training, and assistance in connecting to future employers. In August of each year, the principal meets with all juniors and seniors and their parents to review credits, finalize schedules, and discuss future goals.

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

The core curriculum areas taught in preschool are language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The Preschool Early Literacy Indicators (PELI) are used to assess alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension. We use interventions and progress monitoring in addition to our McGraw Hill Wonders literacy curriculum to help each student. The Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (MN Early Childhood standards) are met through small group instruction, large group instruction, hands-on learning centers, and literature. Students who have attended our preschool program score significantly higher on their first standardized tests than their classmates, who did not attend preschool.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Media Center

Recognizing that reading is crucial for learning, all students and staff have access to the library every day. We are continuing to add to our bilingual/Spanish book section as our demand increases. Links to online K-12 resources (Ebooks Minnesota, Electronic Library for Minnesota (ELM), Infobase Learn360, and MnKnows) are provided on the media center's page on the school's website.

Business and Computer Technology

Hancock offers business courses in Accounting, General Business, College Accounting, and College Personal Finance. Students in grades 7-9 are offered courses in computer technology, desktop design, and digital media. High school students are offered College Introduction to Computers, College Tech Ethics, College Spreadsheet Applications, and College Information Technology (IT) Essentials. Using the Computer Information System Company (CISCO) Networking Academy, IT students are prepared to enter college having a background in hands-on technology and network design and implementation.

We have had a Business Professionals of America (BPA) program in Hancock for seven years. The competitive team for BPA has had students advance to national competition each year.

Industrial Technology

Students take an introduction to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) class in junior high. We offer elective courses to the high school students including Woods, Trades and Careers, Drafting, Engineering, Mass Production, and Robotics. These classes all include top of the line technologies which include three-dimensional (3D) printing, industry-level design software, and computer numerical control (CNC) machines. Classes include guest speakers that help educate students on career options and create networking opportunities. We are in the process of constructing a new technology workshop that will include 3D printers, CNC routers, computer aided drafting lab, laser engravers, and vex robotics stations.

Physical Education Program and Health

We offer a Health and Physical Education (PE) program that is focused on educating each student to be a physically, mentally, and socially well-rounded individual. Elementary students participate in PE five days per week. Each class is 25 minutes long. PE class is provided every day for the 7-10th grades, with electives as requested for 11th and 12th grades. Each class has approximately 53 minutes of instruction time that is provided for 152 students throughout the year. We accommodate all students regardless of ability.

Spanish

Hancock offers a two-year Spanish Language and Culture elective program to students in grades 10 and 11 with a total enrollment average of sixty-one percent. Classes are taught using a balance of traditional and non-traditional curriculum which engages students of all learning styles and academic abilities. Our program not only meets Minnesota college preparation standards, it also gives students a competitive edge in rural and urban job markets.

Band and Choir

Our music program provides students with optimal opportunities to be involved in the fine arts. Kindergarten through 6th grade students are required to have three 25-minute music classes each week. Seventh graders are required to take General Music for one quarter. Choir and band meet first period for junior high ensembles and fourth period for senior high ensembles. Rehearsals are 53 minutes and ensembles meet every other day. All band and choir students have lessons weekly outside of rehearsal time.

Eighty percent of our senior high population participates in choir and 64 percent of students in grades 5-12 participate in band annually. Hancock Secondary has consistently received superior ratings at annual Large Group and Solo/Ensemble Contests. Students have the opportunity to participate in Swing Choir, Pep Band for athletic events, summer band lessons, marching band, solo and ensemble contest, and the annual Cake Walk event. Students can also apply to participate in Honor band and choir opportunities.

Art

Our neighboring school districts begin art education in middle school, whereas Hancock offers one semester of 53 minute art education per week to students in grades 1-6. Hancock offers a variety of art classes for students in grades 7-12 including middle school art, studio art, and yearbook. We will expand our art program with three dimensional art in 2020. While fine arts in education are being cut in many districts, our school continues to support and grow our program.

Agricultural Education

Agriculture (Ag) and manufacturing employ more than thirty-five percent of our district's population. Our Ag Education program prepares students for the world of work. Courses include: College Animal Science, Welding, Introduction to Agriculture 7, 8, and 9, Fluid Power, Biotechnology, Natural Resources, Small Engines, and Food Science. We manufacture and sell car trailers. We have full-time Ag, Industrial Technology, and Business instructors, and offer curriculum typically offered at much larger schools.

3. Special Populations:

Hancock teachers are dedicated to differentiating instruction within their general education classrooms. All students complete NWEA's MAP assessments to assess academic growth and areas of individual need. Within this testing, teachers offer multiple test sessions, frequent breaks, and extra time to complete the tests. Curriculum is designed and adjusted according to students' unique needs. Hancock teachers recognize that not all students are performing at expected grade level. Students who demonstrate the need for additional support are offered tier 1-2 interventions such as modified fill in the blank notes, accommodated tests that are read aloud to the student(s), retesting, repetition of directions, and text-to-speech dictation for typed reports. Tier 3 interventions used in the resource room include the Science Research Association (SRA) reading comprehension program and the AGS Basic Skills program that covers core content in Math, Science, and Literature. Students have access to Odysseyware which gives them the ability to earn credits for failed or incomplete courses. Students are able to receive individualized support because of Hancock's small class sizes. Students described as gifted and talented can take advanced course work, complete enrichment activities, and are allowed accelerated independent study. CIS courses are offered to qualifying students.

Child Study Team (CST) meets monthly to provide support for teachers of students struggling with behaviors or academics. The CST works together to develop an action plan to help teachers implement interventions for these students. A specific academic program that is utilized is Edmentum, which is used to target specific skill deficits. If a student continues to struggle after continued, intensive tier two supports have been unsuccessful, the student may be referred for a special education evaluation.

For students receiving special education services, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team meets annually to develop an IEP. The IEP addresses needs in math, reading, writing, functional skills, daily living skills, social skills, behavior support, and transition support.

Hancock Public School offers English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. Administration has taken proactive steps in providing for the current and projected increase of non-native speaking students. A licensed English Language Learner (ELL) professional and bilingual support staff work with ELL students based on their needs and level of English fluency. Students new to the district, who indicate that English is not their first language, receive a state-mandated language skills assessment. Those students new to the country with little or no English language exposure are given up to four hours of English instruction a day. ELL students currently make up 4% of our student body.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

When people unfamiliar with our district find out that we are a small, rural school that is growing they always ask, “What sets your school apart from other schools? What makes it special?” Our response is always, “The culture within our building.” It all starts with staff that are fully committed to supporting one another and working together in the pursuit of excellence. With this expectation fully embedded into the pre-K-12 culture, not one single member of our education community can accept being average.

Our culture highlights equality, potential, emotional attachment, and positivity. Because pre-K through twelfth grade students are located in one building, there is a natural interaction between students and staff. Some of these interactions include senior high students working with elementary students as reading partners, Homecoming candidates going into each elementary classroom to promote school spirit, and high school students acting as lunch buddies for elementary students. The relationships formed because of these interactions make transitions easier and foster a sense of belonging and community. Students and staff come together to celebrate each other’s achievements. School-wide pep fests are held to recognize accomplishments. School Board members serve lunch during the year to connect with students and staff. At our annual end-of-the-year Academic Awards, staff, community members, and representatives from various secondary institutions present awards and scholarships. Staff present quarterly Character Awards to students who have displayed responsibility, respect, effort, honesty and caring. Our K-12 Caught in the Middle of Achievement Awards are announced weekly for students that have done something that reflects positively on themselves, the school or the community. A senior high and junior high Student of the Month are chosen by staff because of their exemplary citizenship, positive attitude, and dedication to academic excellence. Hancock coaches select an Athlete of the Month to acknowledge not only athletic achievements, but also the sort of exceptional character traits - perseverance, integrity, selflessness and sportsmanship - that make them leaders on the field, in the classroom, and throughout the community.

Over 96% of our students are involved in multiple activities. This involvement keeps students engaged in the school community and ensures their support of one another. Staff recognize the value in all of our activities, so they communicate with each other and support our students by respecting their busy schedules.

A conscious effort is made by administration to ensure that staff at Hancock Public School feel supported and valued. Every year team building activities are scheduled on a workshop day. This creates a bond between staff both new and senior. Staff have participated in escape rooms, climbed rock walls, and maneuvered elevated ropes courses. In addition to these activities, our district reimburses tuition costs, provides time for monthly PLC’s, and encourages staff to search for professional development opportunities.

When issues arise, administrators intervene so that teachers can focus on teaching and students can focus on learning. Students, staff, administration, and school board members value one another and work together for the good of the whole.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

A famous athlete once said, “The difference between involvement and commitment is like ham and eggs. The chicken is involved; the pig is committed.” Our students, teachers, families and business members are truly committed to and engaged in Hancock Public School. Our community bleeds maroon and white, one school/one community.

Parents and community members serve on school committees. Our World’s Best Workforce District Advisory Committee is composed of two teachers, two students, an administrator, three parents and three community/business members. Members provide input on student achievement goals, improving instruction, and curriculum. Our Curriculum Committee includes community members and reviews new

curriculum. Our School Board is transparent and continually shares accurate information about the district with our residents. They are one of the primary reasons that our operating levies and bonds have passed with overwhelming support.

The Hancock Education Foundation provides financial support to staff that want to try something innovative within their classrooms. Past donations funded flexible seating, Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, and Math (STEAM) materials, and scholarships. The Music Mothers and Hancock Athletic Association have used their funds to purchase a sound system for the gym, guitars, risers, and sporting equipment. Our FFA and BPA invite area business leaders in to conduct mock interviews with our senior high students, and area business leaders regularly invite our classes to visit their facilities or listen to speakers.

Additional school/community engagement activities include: Community leaf raking, the Cake Walk, Post Prom, Marching Band performance on the 4th of July, the Homecoming parade, the FFA sponsored Night with Santa, Early Childhood Family Education activities, our elementary STEM program, and classroom parent volunteers.

The resources found on the school website are tailored to meet the needs of our families. They include useful links associated with student grades, MCA test prep, digital citizenship, tutorials, safety, and individual teacher websites.

A variety of information is shared with parents and community members through our student information system. Staff use this system to email out progress reports every two weeks. Notifications related to missing assignments, low grades, and weather are also disseminated to the public through this system.

More common means of communication are also used. Staff is excellent at sharing successes, awards and achievements, and other school related information through our local newspaper. Staff call and email parents on a regular basis. Administrators have an open door policy, and everyone from staff to community members, feel comfortable stopping in to share ideas, ask questions, or express concerns. Honest interactions, support, and caring have allowed Hancock Public School to develop a sense of engagement and commitment that is more representative of a family than a school.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development is embedded in the Hancock school calendar. Eight district-wide, two-hour staff development opportunities are scheduled across the school year. The time is set aside by a combination of late-starts and staff workdays. Each staff development opportunity is linked to the next, creating an ongoing process. Cooperative staff planning for staff development is driven by student assessment data and identified staff needs.

PLC's provide the structure for the delivery, processing, and analysis of student assessments and staff learning. Like a crafty athletic coach, the principal regroups and reorganizes teachers based upon the intended outcome for each PLC opportunity. The recombination matches individuals' abilities to the task at hand. Each group is a balance of experience and inexperienced instructors. Whether organized by topic, curriculum area, or grade level, different experienced teachers are assigned PLC leadership roles.

The model used for the initial PLC organization is based on Minnesota State Standards and measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA's). These academic standards are deconstructed into specific benchmarks. These benchmarks are identified in grade level curriculum maps. MCA test specifications are used to select Essential Learner Outcomes (ELO) with the expectation that the ELO's will be taught to mastery using various presentations with multiple assessments across the learning year.

The PLC's are used to focus and realign ELO's between grade levels and content teachers. Joint planning and shared assessment outcomes result in adjustments to instruction. Analysis of annual MCA results drives the cycle reset. Annual staff surveys and input regarding PLC effectiveness reshape the cycle.

In addition to PLC's, two additional staff development initiatives stand out. A unique Hancock practice, supporting professional development, is the district commitment to reimburse staff for tuition for course work in addition to the more traditional salary increase for completing advanced degrees.

The second is an annual area common in-service day that creates a cost-sharing opportunity to bring leading keynote speakers to the prairies of west central Minnesota. Cooperative planning leverages resources. Area colleagues share their expertise in a multitude of breakout sessions. The process amplifies the expectation to "walk-the-talk" of good practice.

4. School Leadership:

Hancock Public School is a small K-12 school with one principal, a part-time superintendent, and a part-time activities director. The principal is the primary leader directing all facets of instruction and student programming. The small school structure is a significant advantage for communication and ownership of the school culture, values, and vision. Our holistic K-12 model of student engagement emphasizes that all staff are teachers of reading and the daily interaction between all students from the youngest Pre-K students up through the seniors. Older staff and students are expected to be good role models for their younger counterparts.

The principal prioritizes processes to preserve uninterrupted class instruction to maximize time on task. He is exceptional in hiring new staff and uses a collaborative hiring team involving a committee of experienced teachers. The principal provides an in-service for all new teachers the week prior to the instructional year. Each inexperienced probationary instructor is assigned an experienced mentor. Formal meeting times are set aside for the mentors and the probationary teachers. The probationary teacher's mentor interaction log is shared with the principal periodically.

Overall the teaching staff is a balance between probationary inexperienced teachers, experienced new teachers, and long-term teaching staff. Hancock's superior student assessment scores are not due to special programming only, but to committed teachers accepting the responsibility for each student's learning.

The school board has a high level of ownership empowered by the community. They represent and reflect the community's expectation for excellence. The Board expects staff members to passionately engage students and prepare them for future success. The superintendent creates a financial plan to provide resources to allow hiring experienced teachers and is also a guide providing mature advice to the school board, principal, and staff.

The following are just a couple of the many possible examples that demonstrate how Hancock ensures a focus on student achievement:

A unique policy at Hancock is the membership and role of the attendance committee that sets a strong expectation about school values. The committee addresses poor attendance by students. The committee membership is made up of the K-12 principal, two school board members, and one teacher. Both the student and their parents have to meet with the committee outside the academic day with the goal of improving the student's attendance and performance.

The community, administration, and staff have worked to create a STEAM initiative in the district. New chemistry, industrial technology, agriculture science, and STEAM labs have been financed by a public vote. Staff have been hired along with a future funding commitment from the Hancock School Board to provide the on-going resources to support academic success.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Hancock, “the small school that makes a BIG difference,” is so much more than a banner on our website. We have a small K-12 school approach with a simple focus to do it right. We care. We communicate. We connect.

Our practice of promoting school connection is essential to our success. Blum (Educational Leadership, 2005) makes a strong research based case for school connectedness impacting attendance, graduation rates, and student achievement. We affirm those findings. Ninety-six percent of K-12 students are in attendance on instructional days. In 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019, 100% of those students that remained at Hancock Secondary from grades 9 through 12, graduated. Students consistently score above the state average on the MCA test. At Hancock, high expectations for learning combined with strong teacher support, develop positive student-adult relationships setting the stage for passionate engagement resulting in exceptional assessment scores.

Engagement is one of the three expectations the Hancock School Board identifies in the district mission statement. Co- and extra-curricular activities provide one window to examine how engagement fosters connectedness at Hancock Public School. Ninety-six percent of our students are engaged in co- and extra-curricular activities. Students have many opportunities to generate connections with their classmates, their teachers, their school, and their community.

As a small school, Hancock students get the opportunity to practice a variety of skills in multiple settings. Large high schools provide a wide range of classes and learning choices for students, but students often focus on one activity. At Hancock, on any given day, a student may lead a parliamentary procedure practice for an FFA contest in the morning, play a trumpet solo in the music contest during the day, and start on the basketball team that same evening. Each activity provides the learning and application of real-life skills. Cooperative goal setting, teamwork, interpersonal communication, and performance leadership are parts of a wide list that prepares students for a work world in which collaboration is essential to productivity.

School connectedness provides a safe place to risk. As our students grow through adolescence toward adulthood, we operate as a small functional family. Feeling safe fosters student innovation and creativity. The culture created allows us to work toward common goals with little drama.

The small school setting has distinct advantages: an engaged staff that knows and cares for all students, direct communication due to a flat administration structure, and connected students that attend class and graduate with high achievement. This is what makes Hancock Public School a National Blue Ribbon School.