

U.S. Department of Education
2019 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. Chris Arent

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

Official School Name Sidney High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1101 21st Avenue

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

Sidney NE 69162-1930
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Cheyenne County

Telephone (308) 254-5893

Fax

Web site/URL https://www.sidneyraiders.org/

E-mail chris.arent@raidermail.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Jay Ehler

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail jay.ehler@raidermail.org

District Name Sidney Public Schools Tel. (308) 254-5855

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. Thomas VonSeggern

(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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	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	48	44	92
10	44	49	93
11	50	39	89
12 or higher	52	53	105
Total Students	194	185	379

*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 10 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 87 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 12%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	26
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	46
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	385
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
3 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: 40%
Total number students who qualify: 151

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %
26 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>8</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>5</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: 7
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	3
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.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
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	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	89%	95%	97%	94%	99%

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	94
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	54%
Enrolled in a community college	34%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	3%
Joined the military or other public service	3%
Other	0%

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

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

To empower students with knowledge, skills and abilities to become productive citizens by providing a culture of opportunity, responsibility, effort, and excellence.

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

Sidney High School is located in the beautiful Nebraska panhandle. Sidney is a rural school district surrounded by open plains and blue sky and is in a community of approximately 6,800 residents. It serves just under four hundred students and has a total staff of just over forty. Sidney High School has high expectations for academics which leads to above average ACT scores, a high college going rate, high graduation rate and recognition in 2017 and 2018 as one of Nebraska's top schools. We are proud of our students and staff as they have shown tremendous resolve and leadership throughout the community, as our community has seen changes due to Cabela's being purchased in 2017 by Bass Pro and the subsequent changes in employment for many in our community. Sidney High School has teamed with other community entities such as the Cheyenne County Chamber of Commerce and the City of Sidney Economic Development to demonstrate to all the meaning of #thepowerofus and that if we commit to working together we can continue to grow our great town and school.

Sidney High School provides a well-rounded education for students who wish to advance their education either in a four-year college, university, or through a technical program. The District shares staff with Western Nebraska Community College and Nebraska Wesleyan University in order to extend the opportunities for students. The district has invested resources that allow students to develop skills in using technology and academic growth. Small class sizes allow for educators to develop a relationship with the students and to provide for meeting individual needs. Inclusive Special Education assistance is available as well as pull out classes. Students participate in sports, award winning musical activities, clubs, and organizations and serve as assistants to teachers. A school to work program is available. The Career Pathways program allows students job shadowing and internship opportunities.

We are excited to offer standards based curriculums for all of our content area courses where each is based in the Nebraska College and Career or content area standards. In the non-content areas courses, we also use Nebraska state standards or national guidelines. In doing so, we can guarantee that our students receive an education where our students can be competitive within our state and nation-wide. Each teacher then uses the curriculum to develop effective lessons that provide students with learning environments that are supported by direct instruction, technology based activities, and student centered learning opportunities that encourage student engagement and decision making. We were fortunate to have been involved with the Nebraska ACT pilot program before the ACT became our state test for eleventh graders. This opportunity provided us with multiple years of data to reflect on the impact of our curriculum and instruction on student performance. Our teachers use their high familiarity with the state standards and their alignment to the ACT to determine areas of growth and focus in our day to day learning goals for students. Teachers from ninth through twelfth grade are able to construct class level assessments that align with state standards and the data from these curriculum based assessments are used in department level professional learning opportunities to enhance our local curriculum. In addition, we use the NWEA MAP at the ninth grade level to help support our ability to differentiate at the individual student level and to drill down to specific standards to identify areas of strength and need within our curriculum.

Sidney High School has been accredited since 1916 by the AdvancED organization and currently resides in a school building that will be ten years old in August of 2019. Sidney High School offers a comprehensive extra curricular program that is competitive in our region and statewide winning two state titles and two state runner ups in the past four years. We also have a highly successful choral program that has achieved nineteen straight years of superior ratings at District Music Competition. Our choral program is also recognized nationwide as we have had several performers who have received recognition as a national choir selectee and this spring will have the opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City with renowned composer and conductor Eric Whitacre. Our Chorus was invited after representatives from Carnegie and Mr. Whitacre saw a performance of our choir that had been posted to YouTube. Our non-curricular clubs also demonstrate success. Our Journey Through Our Heritage Group has been active for the past four years and regularly attends competition at Metro State University in Denver. Our group has won the championship three of the past four years while finishing third the other year. Our staff and students are committed to the many facets that are required to demonstrate their heritage and what it means to our

students. They do so in an eloquent fashion that represents Sidney and the Great State of Nebraska very well.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The English and Language Arts Department at Sidney Public Schools prides itself on maximizing the potential of all students. Courses offered include English 9 for all 9th graders, World Literature for all 10th graders, American Literature, Composition, Creative Writing and English 11 for all 11th graders, English Composition and British Literature that is offered to all 12th graders for both high school and college credit as well as English 12. All courses are taught with a focus on college and career ready standards. This is achieved by developing quality curriculum that meets standards while also differentiating for students of all abilities and interests. Most importantly, the department strives to instill in each student a love for words, both written and spoken. Teachers work hard to expose young people to works, both famous and lesser known, from writers that represent different countries, races, points of view, and socioeconomic stratas. The goal is to give students a window to the world and encourage them to grow intellectually.

ELA teachers use scores from NWEA MAP, Pre ACT and ACT to determine the skill level and preparedness of students for more rigorous material. Standards are aligned with earlier grade curriculum through quarterly curriculum meetings and each teacher keeps a year at a glance document that is updated monthly. All of these components are combined in a one to one environment with explicit and direct instruction that has a high degree of engagement and effective use of instructional strategies. All teachers in the ELA department are highly qualified with one teacher having a master's degree. Two courses are provided for seniors that include dual enrollment opportunities from the Nebraska Wesleyan Honors Academy. Students are provided feedback through Google Classroom which allows teachers to edit and comment on student writing. This interaction provides more timely and meaningful feedback that allows our students to grow in their writing and presentation abilities. Journalism is also a focus of our ELA department with the yearbook being self sufficient financially and completely created by students with an instructor who is certified in journalism. The journalism class also provides a monthly magazine electronically that features our students, staff and activities.

1b. Mathematics:

Sidney High School offers a comprehensive math program. Course progression includes Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus/Trigonometry, Calculus and College Algebra. Calculus and College Algebra are offered for high school and college credit. Advanced students can also access the University of Nebraska Lincoln High School for courses such as Calculus 2 and Statistics. At Sidney High School, one hundred percent of Sidney High School students take the ACT, compared to nationally where fifty five percent of the 2018 graduates took the test. With all students taking the ACT, we were able to score at the national average for the class of 2018, with a 20.8 average score. This is an excellent demonstration as to the effort of our students and teachers as they work through the course of their careers here at Sidney High School.

Some of the main factors that we as a staff are able to contribute to help our students be successful are differentiation, a common language, our use of technology, our ability to offer dual credit, and our highly qualified instructors. Each of these factors is a crucial part to our student's success at Sidney High School. As educators, we differentiate our instruction to meet the needs of all visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. We are sure to present each lesson in a manner that each of these learning styles are met, and we are willing to get students hands on experience with the varying topics.

One major factor in the success of the math department, is our common language across the many different courses. Each teacher understands and uses the same terminology across all courses, thus greatly benefiting our students as they move from one teacher to another. This can be difficult at times, but with our constant use of technology and our collaboration in the math department it has become second nature. Lastly, our students have the opportunity to take two different dual credit courses throughout their time as Sidney High

School, providing with the ability to enter into college with up to six math credits that they can transfer towards any degree that they choose. Each of our teachers are highly qualified for their positions and have earned degrees in Mathematics Education. Across these three teachers there are two master's degrees, one of which is in Mathematics, while the third teacher is currently pursuing theirs.

1c. Science:

Earth Science is taught to freshmen at Sidney High School. We use the Layered Curriculum method developed by Kathie Nunley as our primary learning vehicle. This differentiated menu-style of learning allows the student some choice in assignments and requires students to orally defend their knowledge of those assignments as a formative assessment. If the student is not fully proficient in their understanding, the teacher can clarify and/or reteach on the spot. The goal of Layered Curriculum is mastery of knowledge so students are expected to work until they are fluent in the curriculum skills and knowledge. Teachers analyze the student's working knowledge and give credit when fluency has been achieved. Students who do not achieve mastery are expected to stay after school or participate in our schoolwide ACES program on Fridays.

This year's freshman class is integrating the new Nebraska College and Career Ready standards which includes Science and Engineering projects, Cross-Curricular integration and new Disciplinary Core Ideas. The goal is to incorporate more STEM education into Earth Science and involve students in self-created Inquiry Labs.

The life science division of the science department provides students with broad exposure to many biological systems and processes; giving students a deeper understanding of the natural world. Aside from our general Biology courses, we offer students upper level introductory courses to anatomy and physiology and environmental sciences. Students are engaged in laboratory based instructional research, fieldwork (e.g. Hospital tours, Range Judging, and Envirothon competitions), and coursework with real-world applications.

In physical sciences we offer Chemistry I, Chemistry II, and Physics. These courses are geared toward the students on the college career track. Each class is designed to familiarize the students to concepts that are present in college courses. They are taught at a high level of rigor and the success of our former students in college are a testament to their effectiveness. In order to keep up with the latest trends in STEM careers we have introduced a Robotics club, which competed in the BEST robotics challenge.

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

In the World Geography classroom, students learn map skills and the Five Themes of Geography. They apply the knowledge by using a variety of types of maps, completing skills assessments and creating some of their own maps. They undergo studies about the physical and human geography of the world, collaboratively working to analyze the impact of world events on both. Through video, online explorations, and textbook study, students gain a better understanding of the regions of the world. A culminating experience in world geography is the creation of an imaginary country, which allows students to apply knowledge they have gained. Data from assessments, both daily through checks for understanding and more formally, at the end of each chapter, guide instruction and pacing.

American Government is a class for juniors and seniors. Standards covered include: learning about our constitutional rights, what political party they are affiliated with and how to be an educated voter, which level of government is appropriate for dealing with issues, and how to make contact with an elected official to propose change. Every year students attend County Government Day, which allows them to see how government functions at the local level. This opportunity also allows students to explore possible careers. Student learning is assessed through a variety of tests using google forms, as well as multiple projects/presentations.

World History is a class for juniors and seniors. Standards covered include: discussing influences of the Italian Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation, discussing the revelations of the European Age of Exploration, research projects on the different absolute monarchs of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the NBRS 2019

revolutions of the 18th century. In today's age of information, it is difficult to separate truth from fiction. One of the features of the class is to read primary documents and work to understand what about that document "could" be true or false. This skill will help students analyze the truth of modern information. Student learning is assessed through a variety of tests using google forms, as well as multiple projects/presentations.

The American History class focuses on U.S. History from The Reconstruction Era (1860's) to the Present Day. The standards covered include: the Civil War, the Reconstruction Era, the Progressive Era, American Imperialism, WWI, the Great Depression, WWII, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movements, the Vietnam War, the Conservative Resurgence, and the War on Terror. The material is covered in a variety of ways including lectures/discussion, projects, videos, and primary document activities. History builds upon itself. Every major event and decision in the past leads to what happens in the future. Student learning is assessed through daily note quizzes, discussion, assignments, projects and tests/exams.

1e. For secondary schools:

Our Career Pathways program is designed to provide real life skills and work experiences to Sidney High School students who have found an interest in a specific pathway based on the six Nebraska Standards for Career Ready Practice. It is also a program designed to enhance community partnerships and create opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to become productive citizens. Students and employers have the opportunity to participate in an internship and/or a job shadow experience depending upon employer and student availability. An internship includes a more structured, in depth and regularly scheduled experience. Job shadowing provides students with the opportunity to identify career interests by observing the daily routines of workers in a limited time frame.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The Sidney High School Fine Arts Department has a number of quality programs designed to educate and enrich the lives of students at Sidney High School. Sidney High School offers a comprehensive Fine Arts program that includes extracurricular offerings for speech and one act competition as well as an annual school musical. Fine Arts week is celebrated every fall and spring and student artwork is updated monthly in the boardroom at our administrative offices.

The music department boasts over one hundred twenty students involved in either Instrumental or Vocal Music, with many involved in both. Courses are also offered in music history and music theory. The Instrumental program offers training in Concert Band, Pep Band, Marching Band, and Combo. The Vocal program offers participation in Concert Choir, Advanced Vocals, as well as two select groups for students who wish to deepen their musical understanding and who wish to compete in local, regional, and national competitions/performances. All of the above groups routinely earn high ratings in District adjudicated events, and for the last twenty years, the Concert Choir has received all superior ratings from all judges for every performance. Recently, the choir received a prestigious invitation to sing at Carnegie Hall with famed conductor and composer, Eric Whitacre. In addition to the performance classes listed above, Music Theory and Music History courses serve to round out the overall music instruction for students who wish to pursue music collegiately and/or professionally. All the music courses offered provide students with musical training as well as helping them develop skills such as concentration, persistence, attention to detail, and teamwork.

The art department at Sidney High School supports students who want to continue their art studies in post secondary education through job shadowing in local art related fields as well as dual credit offerings in design. Courses are offered in general art, painting, 3D art, multimedia, photography, fundamentals of design and graphic design. Many former students have continued their art studies at Western Nebraska Community College with current faculty serving as adjunct professors in drawing and design. Students in

the art department have been successful in juried shows earning awards in the Visionaires High School Show at the Western Nebraska Art Gallery and the Nebraska Scholastic Art Competition.

In the Career and Technical Education department at Sidney High School, the variety of courses range from Woods Manufacturing, Construction Processes, and Computer Aided Drafting to Automotive Technology, Welding Processes and Metals Manufacturing. The class sizes can include anywhere from seven students in advanced programs to twenty in entry level manufacturing courses. The overall goal of our department is to provide the skills and training for our students to utilize either as a foundation for further education in a trade school or directly out of high school in the high demand skilled trades areas such as construction, automotive, and welding. There is a substantial need for individuals with skills in all types of trade areas and we make sure to inform our students of the countless possibilities in those career fields. As well as prepare them with the tools to be successful as they move into college or directly into a career. Although some of students that come through our department do not always go into a trade we feel it necessary to make sure all individuals leave with core skills that make every person employable including accountability, reliability, honesty and the capability to follow through with what they start. Our department provides opportunities for students to extend their learning past the classroom. We maintain an active chapter in SkillsUSA, bring in trades people to speak, provide a construction class that partakes in residential construction projects, have a booming auto club, and are in the beginning stages of RaiderMade Manufacturing that places students in various types of building and business roles.

Sidney High School provides Spanish as an elective to students who wish to study a world language. We offer four levels, so students are able to pursue their language acquisition throughout their entire high school career. Nearly all of students in the program continue on to study Spanish for a second year, but then most students go on to diversify their education in other areas. Our curriculum is proficiency-based. Some of our methods are speaking in the target language as much as possible, using physical gestures and movement to tie new words to meaning, practicing vocabulary through meaningful conversation by asking students personalized questions and reading stories in the target language. In year one, students read two beginning-level novels during the year, and in year two, three novels are covered. Students summative evaluation at the end of each year comes in the form of a standardized proficiency test (the Avant STAMP Assessment) which shows their progress in reading, writing, listening and speaking in Spanish each year. Our goal at the end of at least two years in the program is for each student to earn the Nebraska Seal of Biliteracy by achieving a minimum of an intermediate low rating in all four areas on the STAMP Assessment. This Seal of Biliteracy honors the student's achievements and can provide evidence to prospective universities and employers that the student is proficient at that intermediate level. In 2018, our second year awarding it, thirty one students earned the Seal of Biliteracy.

3. Special Populations:

The special education department at Sidney High School is working for students to be exceptional in all aspects of education at an individualized level. The program within our building consists of four highly qualified special education teachers and five paraeducators. All members of the team are working towards student success while being caring and compassionate. We also have supportive building level leaders who hear concerns, provide direction, and also invest in the progress of the department and the students that qualify for the services we provide.

Our department is unique because each teacher has a specialized role. Students' needs in the general education classroom range from requiring accommodations only to needing 1:1 para support for their shortened day. Staff members are successful at meeting the variety of needs because they are placed in positions that utilize personal strengths. The alternative education program provides students with credit recovery options and an alternative avenue for graduation through an online learning platform. The life skills classroom provides the students with more significant needs with instruction in social skills and functional life skills while still incorporating academic learning. Other service providers such as occupational therapists and physical therapists are also essential members of our team. Together, we help students meet academic, social/emotional, and executive functioning goals that transition them into adults that can be contributing members of their community.

As the team works to help students meet goals, we also have a strong vision for expanding the special education program and meeting the changing needs of our students. It is a priority of the staff to remain flexible and put the students first by adjusting programming within the scope of the department. Opportunities for change and growth are valued and developed as a collaborative team. We utilize professional development opportunities to broaden our understanding, gain new ideas, and put the most current research into practice. Our department is a reflection of the staff and students, who all make a difference everyday.

We are working to close achievement gaps by creating a focus on appropriate testing accommodations for each student, creating a focus for our teachers of gaps that do exist and making practice assessments and other tools available for students so they can access additional tools to match their specific needs.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

In addition to the efforts in the classroom, most members of the staff are committed to being involved in the Sidney High School school community through extra curricular activities. They coach, both athletics and fine and performing arts, teams and serve as class and club sponsors. The goal is to not only get to know students outside of the classroom, but to be in a position to encourage kids to try new things and make the most of their high school experience. These efforts are common at Sidney High and serve to elevate our school and enrich the lives of our students where over ninety percent of our students participate in some sort of activity, club or organization.

Staff is engaged by multiple staff development opportunities that focus on our instructional model, this year primarily focused on the work of John Hattie. Staff is also celebrated in monthly staff meetings where the first order of business is always kudos and gratitudes. Staff meetings are also used as professional development time where activities have included self-rating our school processes to provide feedback to the state, reviewing student scores and training on how to best utilize those scores and focus on other school level items such as technology use in the classroom. Food days are held once a month so staff can share a meal together as we have multiple lunch times except on Friday where the school has one lunch. Staff receives immediate feedback from administration on walkthrough evaluations and are able to conduct one to two peer observations a year so they can observe best practice from their highly qualified colleagues.

To support our students in their social emotional growth, all ninth graders and students new to Sidney High School participate in a program called Challenge Day. Twenty five adult volunteers also participate as group mentors. These adults volunteer from our community along with providing financial and in-kind gifts to support the program. This program also is supported by our Unified Raiders Club, which is a cooperative effort between the County Youth Services Office and Sidney High School. The group focuses on character building, role playing difficult situations and volunteerism. They have built floats for the local Christmas parade, bringing home best float the past two years, and has given voice to students who may not necessarily fit into the traditional high school activities, clubs or organizations.

Sidney High School also has a strong mentoring program, both as mentors and mentees. Our juniors and seniors volunteer to mentor at our elementary schools with grades three through six. Our students find these interactions fulfilling. Many of our students are also mentees in the TeamMates mentoring program where community adults mentor our students for one hour a week at the high school. This is facilitated by two staff members and supported by Sidney High School through use of facilities and financial support. Sidney High School also has a highly active National Honor Society that mainly focuses on volunteerism and service. We truly want our students to have a community focused thought process and a clear understanding of how they can best work and serve in our community and world at large. Through this service our students interact with all ages of community members and represent Sidney High School in a positive manner.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Working with parents and the greater Sidney community are integral to our culture of excellence at Sidney High School. We communicate with parents a variety of ways including several social media platforms, email, our student information system, PowerSchool, and Remind. We have ninety two percent of our parents who utilize the mobile app for PowerSchool, ninety three percent who use the web portal for PowerSchool and forty six percent who receive scheduled emails from PowerSchool on their student's progress. Nearly 400 of our families are registered for Remind, an app that we use to communicate key events and information about Sidney High School. This app is useful as it is a direct communication with administration, staff and families. Many of our extracurricular activities also use Remind as a communication tool.

Parents are active in our fine arts booster club, school improvement team, TeamMates mentoring and

yearly climate and culture surveys that allow us to compare and contrast perceptual data with our students and staff surveys. We also have a tremendous following at state events as our parents, community and former students and community members will support our teams in Lincoln or Omaha when we compete in those areas. This is a great boost to our students as Lincoln and Omaha are a five and six hour drive from Sidney. Many parents also interact and help communicate news and events involving Sidney High School through social media. We have several parents who are sideline photographers at events and work with our local newspaper and radio station to provide information, photos and videos to help tell our story.

Our community is also an important partner. In the past two years Sidney has seen approximately one thousand jobs leave Sidney due to the sale of Cabela's to Bass Pro. Through active partnerships with our Chamber of Commerce and the City of Sidney Economic Development, we have been very intentional in highlighting our great community, people and schools. We have been an active participant with our local community college, Western Nebraska Community College, to participate in roundtables with area businesses and manufacturers to best understand their needs and how we can best work with our students at Sidney High to prepare them to move into the workforce in today's world. Our work with these entities have allowed us to update and adjust our curriculum, course offerings and training to best educate our students in an ever changing community and world.

3. Professional Development:

An effective educator is at the heart of every successful learning environment. Our professional development plan focuses on supporting a reflective teaching approach where each teacher grows in their craft by taking a careful and reflective look at their teaching. In addition to district level and building level initiatives where we plan for and set up activities that supports specific goals, we also encourage and support our teachers in developing professional development opportunities that support their professional growth goals. Our teachers are given opportunities to learn about and practice using evidence based instructional strategies within the context of the Sidney Instructional model. In addition, we provide professional development time where our teachers used student learning objectives and student performance data to develop effective learning opportunities within their classrooms. In this era of education, it is important that we also focus a portion of our professional development in the area of blended learning as we do our best to prepare student for careers that don't yet exist. In doing so, our entire staff has been a part of becoming a Google for Education campus, collaborates to share technology applications with each other, have been given opportunities to participate in "ed camp" style of professional development, and our digital professional development opportunities are growing in number as well. All of our teachers are members of a PK-12 curriculum committee that meets a minimum of 4 times per year where they engage in standards alignment and review to be sure all teachers are using content area standards as a basis for their curriculum and programs. Through our continuous improvement process, our teachers indicated that time to collaborate was a top priority to support their personal professional development. Each curriculum group discusses their priorities and sets up opportunities to collaborate in order to advance in their area of expertise. Our school has chosen these models based on the research of Dr. Robert Marzano and John Hattie, both leaders in educational research and effective practices. To enhance these instructional models, professional development is done monthly and quarterly through staff meetings, early dismissals and district and region wide professional development days.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership structure at Sidney High School consists of a full time Principal, a full time Assistant Principal/Athletic Director and a half time Assistant Principal whose primary focus is discipline. A full time guidance counselor is also an active member of the school leadership team but does not have any evaluative authority. All administrators are responsible to be visible in the school and daily supervise breakfast and lunch. Rounds are regularly conducted by all administrators and documented classroom walkthroughs occur multiple times each semester, for each teacher. All staff are formally evaluated a minimum of one time per year with non-tenured staff being evaluated twice. These rounds, documented walkthroughs and formal evaluations all focus on components of our instructional model, our common language for staff and students at Sidney High School. The principal is advised by members of the administrative team, guidance counselor, high school staff, student council and National Honor Society.

Feedback and input is also gathered through parent involvement on the school improvement team , multiple climate and culture surveys given each year to all stakeholders and a yearly evidence based analysis of Sidney High School that is completed by staff and administration as required by the Nebraska Department of Education. This information is compiled and utilized to create goals for the school each year. Our school improvement team, which consists of department chairs from the high school, curricular and grade level leaders from our middle school and elementary schools, parents that represent all grade levels as well as our district curriculum director, creates district wide goals that can be used as guides for school level goals.

The principal is responsible for all financial, curriculum and staffing decisions. The principal is also the lead administrator for attendance and works daily with the attendance secretary and local agencies to make sure students are in attendance and remain in good standing according to laws and policies followed by Sidney Public Schools. The assistant principal and athletic director are responsible for the organization and supervision of all athletic and activity programs, while keeping academics and what is best for students in mind. He also assists as needed in discipline and attendance matters. Leadership communicates regularly, both formally and informally, to conduct the business of Sidney High School.

All decisions made by the leadership at Sidney High focuses on what is best for our students. We communicate through multiple means with our students and due to our visibility, supervision and time spent in classrooms. We have a collaborative working model where communication and decision making considers multiple perspectives and needs.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Our one practice, summed up in one word, is resilience. In the past two years we have seen a significant change in our community and school due to the sale of Cabela's to Bass Pro. We have been doubted and told by people from all over, that Sidney was dying or was dead. We were told that our school was going to go downhill and would no longer be a highly effective school. Our students and staff have refused to allow that to happen. From an instructional model for staff that creates a common language, to uncommon care and concern for our students and their families, we have maintained and exceeded all normed test averages, continued to provide a high level of instruction, remained competitive and excelled in all extracurriculars and made it clear to others we are not going to settle for excuses or spend time worrying about how we have changed or what we don't have. We instead choose to focus on what we do have and working every day to be the best we can be. Our one practice that defines OUR school is this is about US. We are in control of our success. We are in control of our effort in and out of the classroom. We are in control of our choices to be great or make excuses. In almost every circumstance, regardless of how our community and school have changed, due to factors outside of our control, we have chosen to be resilient.

Resilient people make sure that regardless of what happens we get things done. To this end we expanded our Career Pathways program and added a required computer programming and coding class for all sophomores. We regularly work with our Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Director to create opportunities for connection with local business and manufacturers. We are fighting for our community and our school because we are resilient, and we focus on making things happen.