

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 [X] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Lynn Gillette

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

Official School Name Challenge Center School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3101 South 4th Avenue

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

Sioux Falls SD 57105-5809
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Minnehaha

Telephone (605) 367-6170

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Web site/URL

<http://www.sf.k12.sd.us/schools/elementary-schools/challenge-center>

E-mail Lynn.Gillette@k12.sd.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Brian Maher

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

District Name Sioux Falls 49-5 School District Tel. (605) 367-7900

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. Kent Alberty

(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

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
 - 23 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

32 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

- Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
 - Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
- 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	8	13	21
3	24	28	52
4	22	21	43
5	29	21	50
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	83	83	166

*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
 - 11 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 80 % White
 - 3 % 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	16
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	154
(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: 0%
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 13%
 Total number students who qualify: 22

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
22 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>3</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>15</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</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: 1
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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	7
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., 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 24:1

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

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Our mission is to challenge the high-ability students we serve to become well-rounded, independent learners.

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

Students are tested using the CogAT (Ability test) and MAP/ITBS (Achievement test). They must have qualifying scores to enroll into the Challenge Center. Specifically, students who score in the 95 percentile for their composite score on the CogAT automatically qualify for the Challenge Center. Students can also qualify by earning a minimum of 63 points total on the three ability tests and/or earn a minimum of 82 points on four subtests with a minimum 93 percentile composite. If students meet requirements, they may choose to attend the Challenge Center if rosters are not at capacity.

PART III – SUMMARY

The Challenge Center serves children in families living in or near Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Sioux Falls is home to major medical facilities, two private colleges, a large meat-packing plant, large-scale financial institutions, and many small businesses. The community is highly-diverse in areas of ethnicity and socio-economic status. The early history of the Challenge Center was formed at Horace Mann Elementary in the central part of the city. In 1998, the school board voted to move the program to Mark Twain Elementary where it was housed for the next decade. In 2008, this unique program found a new home at Garfield Elementary School. Seven years later, the District constructed a new wing on existing Robert Frost Elementary School where the program remains.

The Challenge Center is specifically designed to offer an accelerated and enriched curriculum to high ability students in grades two through five with the goal of helping them become well-rounded, independent learners. Curriculum is built around concepts that encourage depth and breadth of content and provide application connections to the real world. Curriculum is based on state standards, best research-based practice, gifted education standards of the National Association of Gifted Children, and students' interests. Technology is readily available and an emphasis on research is incorporated at all grade levels.

While our students come from different backgrounds and socio-economic statuses, two things remains consistent in our school: our students' continuous demonstration of high-level achievement and our staff's unwavering commitment to our students' learning success. The 2017-2018 State Report Card shows that 98% of our students met or exceeded expectations on the state assessment in the area of Language Arts. In both math and science, 100% of our students met or exceeded expectations in each respective area. We believe this high-level of achievement remains consistent because we remain focused on meeting the unique needs of highly-gifted learners.

Our curriculum is rigorous and provides math instruction a year ahead of our students' same-age peers. Students also learn science concepts through hands-on learning and lab experiments, utilizing the Foss Science Curriculum. Reading and writing are taught as core subjects, and are heavily integrated into social studies content. We also integrate growth mindset into our students' daily learning as this is often the first time in their school career when students have been challenged academically. By teaching our students how to live and learn with a growth mindset, we are equipping them with a life-long tool that will allow them maximum access to learning opportunities now and in the future.

Students at the Challenge Center also have the privilege of unique learning experiences via our interims which occur twice per year, per grade level. During an interim, students are immersed in a field of study to fully grow in their understanding of a variety of areas. Recent interims have included learning about the brain. This involved a partnership between the Challenge Center and Sanford Research Laboratories. Students truly became researchers, with one of the days finding students dissecting sheep brains and deepening their understanding of how the brain functions. Another interim involved students becoming CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) investigators and working alongside true CSI staff. These experiences are unique to the Challenge Center and often the highlight of the students' year. Students also enjoy Spanish instruction once per week throughout the school year. This is an opportunity to learn a new language as well as grow in appreciation and understanding of Spanish culture.

To best support our students in developing to their full potential, our staff actively seeks ways to grow in their own professional learning. Teachers work closely together to implement Professional Learning Communities (PLCs); this allows students to get the best of all teachers, not just their specific classroom teachers. John Hattie's research shows that Collective Teacher Efficacy has an effective size of 1.54 on student achievement, and our teachers recognize this and apply it to their collaboration in their PLCs.

We also have strong parent involvement at the Challenge Center. This year a book study, *Parenting Gifted Kids* by Jim Delisle, was co-lead by a parent-leader and teachers, and attendance was very high. The goal of the book study was to promote connections and a community of parent learners. Our school seeks ways to engage our parents and welcomes their presence and involvement in our classrooms and school.

Our school also encourages and expects our students and staff to be active, contributing members to our Sioux Falls Community. Students, staff, and parents come together to support our city's residents by making fleece blankets for the homeless, conducting a Pass the Pasta food drive for our city's Food Bank, collecting Coins for Kids to support the United Way, and a cereal drive for Feeding South Dakota. Our staff also participates in fundraisers with our most recent opportunity being to support other schools who do not have a Parent Teacher Organization.

The Challenge Center is committed to fostering the development of our students, staff, and our school culture each and every day.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Throughout the year, second and third grade students work on improving reading comprehension skills and fluency. To ensure we meet the needs of all reading abilities and interests, we do not follow one curriculum and instead use a variety of resources. One curriculum is the gifted reading curriculum from The College of William and Mary. This curriculum focuses on the concept of change. Students read a variety of texts, and they compare and contrast texts throughout the unit. The unit focuses on deeper thinking questions for class discussions, generalizations about change, persuasive writing, analyzing poetry, vocabulary study, literature webs, research, and oral presentations. We also use monthly Storyworks magazines to engage students with plays, fiction, nonfiction, grammar skills, comprehension skills, and common core standards. In addition, we use the traditional Collaborative Classroom curriculum our school district utilizes, but we compact the curriculum and accelerate the students by one year. Thematic units are also introduced. Change, friendship, kindness, relationships, confidence, and honesty are a few examples of themes that we focus on throughout the year through the use of Junior Great Books. Poetry and reader's theater is also incorporated to build oral language skills. Third graders at the Challenge Center are also a part of a week-long theater interim to further build their love of language and develop oral presentation skills. Second and third grade students are also introduced to the concept of literature circles where various literary elements are explored and discussed. Additionally, students engage in independent reading every day.

Each day, students have multiple opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas in writing. One way is through a writing journal where they can share their rough drafts, poems, reflections, and feelings. The three writing genres we focus on are personal/fictional narratives, opinion, and informative. During the narrative unit, we focus on writing hooks to get the reader's attention, transition words, introductory sentences, concluding sentences, beginning, middle, and end, and other mini lessons to strengthen students' skill sets. During the opinion unit, students learn how to state their opinion in a creative way, adding flair to capture and maintain the reader's attention while utilizing supporting evidence to clearly communicate reasoning. In second and third grade, Collaborative Classroom Being a Writer curriculum is implemented, and students are accelerated one year in this curriculum. In addition, students complete the opinion writing in the Journeys and Destinations (William and Mary) curriculum.

Additionally, we work on the six traits of writing (ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, word choice, conventions) through the different genres. Writing is further enhanced through the use of personal Chromebooks, Google Classroom, and Seesaw. Students work with partners through peer editing to deepen their understanding of various writing skills. Students are also given the opportunity to share their writing with their peers and celebrate with an Author's Celebration at the end of the year. Writing is incorporated throughout our day in all subject areas. In second and third grade, an area of focus has been putting the question in the answer when we answer questions in all subject areas. We stress the importance of writing complete sentences that include capitalization, punctuation, and a complete thought to ensure students are clearly communicating their thoughts and information to the reader.

The fourth grade reading curriculum begins by diving into the literary elements and six fundamental comprehension strategies: making connections, questioning, visualizing, inferring, determining importance, and synthesizing. As in the second and third grades, we do not follow one curriculum to ensure we meet the needs of all reading abilities and interests. Thematic units are embedded using Junior Great Books including trust, resourcefulness, and communication. Novel studies are an essential piece to reading instruction in fourth grade. Through novel studies, the goal is for students to master the English Language Arts literature Common Core Standards. The novel studies also lend to in-depth discussions that foster critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. At times, the novels used during reading instruction also connect to social studies content standards. Furthermore, the English Language Arts informational content standards are taught cross-curricularly in science. To reinforce critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and the standards, students participate in literature circles with their peers.

Writing is an essential part to each day for fourth graders at the Challenge Center and students share their thoughts and ideas in a variety of content areas. Specifically, in writing workshop, the students learn about and write in different genres including narrative essays, opinion, informational, and research. Through mini-lessons, small groups, and individual conferencing, students learn tools and writing crafts to incorporate in their writing. There is an emphasis on the six traits of writing (ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, word choice, conventions).

Throughout the year, fifth grade focuses on the continued growth and development of reading comprehension skills and fluency with the use of a variety of resources. Thematic units are introduced using Junior Great Books including honesty, self-respect, and inclusion. Novel studies are utilized that coincide with social studies standards to create cross curricular units. Students also engage in literature circles, where they choose a book, read it with peers and engage in meaningful discussions weekly.

Fifth grade challenges students through the sixth-grade Collaborative Classroom curriculum. We begin by focusing on building the classroom community and then work on the following writing units: personal narrative, fiction, expository nonfiction, functional writing, argumentative writing, and poetry. Students engage in week long performance tasks throughout the year, integrating their writing skills with social studies and science through opinion essays, description of scientific concepts, research, and presentations to share with peers.

Information describing how our school uses assessment data to analyze and improve student and school performance, including examples of the types of assessments that are used and how assessment data are used, is explained in detail in the Professional Development section of this application. At the Challenge Center, analyzing and utilizing assessment data to drive student and school performance is woven tightly with teacher professional development through our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), hence, the information being provided in the respective section.

1b. Mathematics:

All of our students at the Challenge Center are all accelerated by at least one year in mathematics instruction. Double acceleration does occur for a small group of students who demonstrate a need for further advancement. Our goal is to challenge our students' abilities and avoid repeating already-mastered concepts. To provide enrichment, we utilize a pre-algebra program, called Hands-on-Equations, to make this abstract concept tangible with the use of manipulatives. Students at the Challenge Center in grades two through four also master Common Core math concepts using Investigations curriculum. This inquiry-based curriculum requires students to make sense of mathematics, to reason and use their background knowledge, and to communicate their thinking in both verbal and written language. The eight standards of mathematical practice are also deeply embedded in this program, as well. As students progress through second and fourth grades, they master concepts related to multiplication, division, fractions and decimals. Our fifth grade students utilize the Connected Mathematics 3 (CMP3) by Pearson which is inquiry-based. In fifth grade there is a focus on rates/ratios, decimals/fractions and the introduction to algebra.

1c. Science:

Our students develop science-related skills through FOSS, a research-based science curriculum developed at the Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California at Berkeley. Students are given the opportunity to collaborate and share their ideas in a real science lab where they conduct hands-on science experiments. In second through third grades, students study the structures of life, land and climate, and motion and matter. They are also provided the annual opportunity to learn at the Sanford Promise Lab. To enrich their understanding, third grade students bring science to life by hatching baby chicks within their classroom. Fourth grade students begin their year by investigating models and designs where the students use their engineering skills to design a model go-kart. Later in the year, students explore ecosystems and environments to determine how they affect living organisms. Near the latter part of the year, fourth grade students focus on examining energy and soils, rocks, and landforms. In fifth grade, students focus their learning on living systems, Earth science, and mixtures and solutions.

All students are exposed to science concepts that go beyond our designated curriculum. This past year, students studied the human brain and had the opportunity to dissect sheep brains and learn from surgeons and nurses in our community. We continuously seek ways to enrich our students' learning experiences!

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

Students in second and third grades study two separate ancient civilizations: ancient Egypt and ancient China. Through this gifted curriculum from William and Mary, students study other cultures and compare/contrast it to their own community to learn about how systems of geography, government, economics, and language interact. Students deepen their understanding through reenactments, videos, hands-on activities, and plays. Our students also utilize Kids Discover magazine as they learn the Common Core standards.

The fourth grade social studies standards focus on three major areas of emphasis: citizenship, South Dakota history, and the regions of the United States. Through multimedia, non-fiction texts, guest speakers, and class discussions, students grasp a strong understanding of the process required to become a citizen. We explore the rich history of South Dakota through texts such as *The Captain's Dog* by Roland Smith. Finally, we study the regions of the United States with an emphasis on the land, economy, and culture of each. Discussions, group work, literature, non-fiction texts, and hands-on projects play a significant role in our social studies units and the learning that takes place.

Students in fifth grade study early civilizations in the Americas up to pre-Civil War. We learn about Native American tribes, the exploration of the Americas by Europeans, colonization, the Revolutionary War, establishment of the United States of America (including the Constitution and branches of government), and the development of the North and South leading up to the Civil War. Students engage in research and hands on projects to help bring these historical concepts to life.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Challenge Center students participate in physical education twice per week for 35 minutes each session. In physical education class, students work on building their individual skill set as well as learn how to work together for a common goal in team sports. Our students learn that physical health is meant to be enjoyable and is essential to mental health and overall growth and development.

Music class is also part of every students' educational experience at the Challenge Center. Students attend music twice per week for 35-minutes each session. Students collaborate in the music-making process every class. Music education at the Challenge Center encompasses music appreciation, instrumental exposure and performance, vocal performance, and study of various music styles, composers and compositions. Each year, a second-grade vocal concert is held as well as a fifth grade musical; both are highly attended with two shows for each concert. Additionally, our fourth and fifth grade students can choose to participate in orchestra and band, and also enjoy showcasing their hard work in concert format.

Students enjoy art in 70-minute sessions each week. In art class, students are exposed to a variety of mediums and are provided the opportunity to creatively express themselves. Each spring, an art show is held in the evening when students show their displayed artwork to parents and family members.

Library class, which is held once per week for 35 minutes each session, focuses on the integration of

technology to deepen students' learning and raise their engagement. Our librarian utilizes Makerspaces for students and works diligently to secure grants for our schools in order to provide resources to create a literature-rich library for our school. Additionally, Challenge Center students participate once per week in Spanish classes where they have the opportunity to learn the language and deepen their appreciation and understanding of Spanish culture.

3. Special Populations:

Our entire school is specifically designed for a special population: students who are identified as highly-gifted. Students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are closely monitored and served to their specific accommodations. Most of the students with IEPs have been identified with needs for speech therapy. Classroom teachers work closely with the Special Education Team, Autism Team Leader, and Speech and Language Therapist to ensure students' needs are being met and that their disabilities do not result in any gap in learning.

We use strategic grouping to support students at their ability level and help them transition to the rigor and pace of instruction at the Challenge Center. Because of this collaboration between all staff, our students, regardless of identified challenge, experience very high learning achievement.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

We work to engage and motivate our students by providing them curriculum and learning experiences that are rigorous and enriching. We also integrate growth mindset into our students' daily learning as this is often the first time in their school career when students have been challenged academically. By teaching our students how to live and learn with a growth mindset, we are equipping them with a life-long tool that will allow them maximum access to opportunities now and in the future. In an effort to continue our work in creating an emotionally and physically safe environment, Our school also implements the Olweus Anti-Bullying Prevention Program where we equip students with the knowledge and skills to address bullying behaviors should they arise. Additionally, we have an agreement with Lutheran Social Services which provides our students the opportunity to work one-to-one with an agency counselor at school should students need emotional, social, and/or mental support beyond what is provided by our teachers, administrators, and school counselor. We believe deeply in educating the whole child to provide them the best opportunities to be academically, socially and emotionally successful.

The goal of the the Challenge Center administration team is to create a culture in which staff feel heard, respected, mentored and inspired to engage and take risks in their work. Strategies utilized by administration to create this school culture include implementing "Roadrunner Shout Outs" at staff meetings to provide staff the opportunity to acknowledge their gratitude for colleagues; advocating and providing resources for staff when they are requested and are tied to making impact on the quality of our work; seeking and utilizing staff input in decisions that affect them; writing formal evaluations AFTER conducting the post-observation meetings in order to build a collaborative coaching relationship; and implementing a systematic procedure where staff can easily access administration for meaningful, solution-seeking dialogue.

Our leadership strives to create an environment that is emotionally safe not only for students but also for staff. Teachers know they can turn to their building leadership to provide support in the area of instruction, student achievement, parent-school relationships, student-behavior concerns, and opportunities for their own professional growth. Our Gallup Scores this year increased significantly from last year, with the highest three scoring areas to include:

- 1) I know what is expected of me at work.
- 2) My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
- 3) My co-workers are committed to doing quality work.

We can say with confidence that our school climate and culture are thriving, and there is a commitment by all to continue this positive trajectory.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At the Challenge Center, we value the engagement of our families and community, and we create ways for engagement to happen at our school. We have sought partnerships with Sanford's medical facilities to bring real-life learning experiences to our students. We also have worked closely with the Sioux Falls Police Department when implementing interims related to Crimes Scenes Investigation, and also partnered with the Dakota Players to provide our students acting and theatre experiences. In each of these partnerships, not only do our students benefit from the resources and expertise of our community, but our community also benefits by being active participants inside the walls of our school. We know our schools are only as strong as our community, and our community is only as strong as our schools, which is all the more reason the Challenge Center continues to seek these valuable partnerships.

Parents and families are also encouraged to be an active part of our school. Parents often co-lead with teachers the creation, planning, and implementation of interims, as well as provide additional support in our classrooms and supervision on field trips. Additionally, many have a deep desire to learn more about their children's giftedness, and in response to this, a parent partnered with two of the Challenge Center teachers

to conduct a book study this school year. The book study utilized *Parenting Gifted Kids* by Jim Delisle, and was very well-received as was noted by parents' high attendance and participation at the meetings. Parents are kept informed of their children's academic achievements and challenges throughout the school year via report cards, teacher-initiated communication, and frequent emails and newsletters. Additionally, our teachers utilize See-Saw, technology that allows our students to share their learning with parents and families. Our staff fully recognize and appreciate the involvement of our students' parents.

3. Professional Development:

Professional Development at the Challenge Center is guided by the evidence of student learning revealed in analysis of common formative assessments and centers on strengthening the capacity of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Professional Development occurs in three contexts: weekly grade-level PLCs, monthly formal professional development sessions, and data digs conducted three times a year.

Grade-level teams utilize a PLC Cycle where team members, along with the instructional coach and principal at times, focus on one skill per cycle. Each PLC Cycle typically last one month in duration, where no more than four weeks pass without analyzing common evidence of learning, where the team uses a data analysis protocol to measure the results of learning based on instruction. The team uses evidence of student learning to narrow the PLC focus, determines what proficiency will look like based on success criteria and uses the data gathered from student work samples to determine a researched practice to implement during instruction. As an example, 2nd and 3rd grade's current PLC inquiry question is: What are the results when students receive targeted feedback on written introductions and have posted success criteria to self-rate constructed responses? The PLC cycle has allowed teams to collectively work together in a collegial format to give all students the best possible instruction because of a systematic approach to teaching and learning as well as evidence of student learning as the driving force to instructional decision making.

Monthly formal professional development sessions focus on the practices, behaviors, and mindsets that are at the foundation of effective PLCs. Professional development learning connects from monthly session to monthly session, rather than a 'one and done' approach. By designing effective, engaging, and interactive professional learning opportunities, all participants function together to build effectiveness to positively impact student achievement. The intentional design of monthly formal professional development interconnected with weekly PLCs fosters reflection and encourages collective action steps toward continuous improvement.

Data digs are used to monitor and evaluate long-term instruction and learning. During the data digs, staff analyze data, engage in dialog about what the data reveals about learning and instruction, and develop an action plan to strengthen instruction in the coming weeks. By engaging in data digs three times a year, staff are able to review interim data, identify what is working and what might need to change, and develop action steps while continuing to monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching.

The utilization of student data to determine the building's instructional focus and the systemic approach to professional learning in the three contexts of weekly grade-level PLCs, monthly formal professional development and data digs three times a year has resulted in an increase in instructional capacity and student outcomes.

4. School Leadership:

Our leadership philosophy at the Challenge Center is deeply rooted in the belief that student learning is deeper when teacher learning is facilitated and fostered. Because of this philosophy, our principal works diligently to operate a budget with teacher growth as a priority. Teachers have the opportunity to attend professional development conferences both within and out of our district. Our administration also advocates for our program and fosters positive working relationships with district-level leaders for unified leadership for our program. Additionally, we have the benefit of an instructional coach who works to support our teachers' needs and serves as a resource to our teaching staff. Our leadership structures the school schedule to provide built-in collaboration for our Professional Learning Communities/Teaching Teams which has a positive impact on our students' learning and our program, overall. Additionally, our

leadership collaborates with our PTO to create a positive culture in our school as well as to provide resources for our classrooms and students. The filter of all that we do: What impact do my actions--our actions--make on student achievement?

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The Challenge Center strives to meet the needs of gifted students by accelerating, adapting, modifying, and enriching curriculum. It provides the opportunity for students to interact, learn, and socialize with gifted peers. The single most impactful instructional practice is providing ENRICHING opportunities for all students to accelerate their learning. Highly engaging and interactive learning experiences are designed for all students. Specific examples of practice outlined below, by grade-level, exemplify instructional enrichment practices in the area of English Language Arts.

In second and third grades, the primary enrichment practice influencing student outcomes within language arts is exposing high ability students to literature which challenges students' critical thinking and interpretive skills. Themes frequently guide exploration within literature. An annual focused theme is concept of change. During the 2018-19 school year, a change matrix was created by utilizing books authored by Beverly Cleary. Change in relationships, characters, setting, and changes in self were a specific area of focus within the change matrix. Students worked in small groups to synthesize learning and groups created a wall display to showcase learning. The 2nd and 3rd grade team also promote the love of reading by blending second and third grade students into literature circles throughout the year with parent leaders. Allowing students to engage in thoughtful discussions while searching for meaning in literature. Within the classroom, teachers enjoy using the shared inquiry model presented within Junior Great Books. The instructional approach fosters student-led conversations allowing all learners to participate and build on other students' ideas. Teachers are facilitators that do not hold all the answers, yet are seen as partners in inquiry.

Throughout the year, students begin to show greater understanding of multiple perspectives, increase vocabulary development, and make more meaningful connections with others, and gain greater insight about themselves as readers.

Within English language arts instruction in fourth grade, rich literature is used to foster critical and creative reading and thinking, inductive reasoning (specific thoughts/ideas to real world/big picture conclusions), and promotes the open exchange of ideas through rich discussions. Through carefully chosen pieces of literature, students are provided many enrichment opportunities. These opportunities are provided through the language that is presented within the text, abstract concepts that are applicable to students' lives, relatable characters, and nurture student interests.

Abstract concepts are effortlessly woven into student-led classroom discussions that connect to the experiences characters face in literature. Because of the carefully selected literature used in the classroom, concepts charts guide discussion. When developing a concept chart (example of abstract concept: transformation), students brainstorm what the concept is, what it is not, construct generalizations, and finally pose essential questions that will guide further discussions and potentially be answered through conversations about literature.

Another resource that fosters deep and critical thinking within literature is Junior Great Books. The rich literature provided within Junior Great Books provides a shared inquiry approach fostering student-led conversations. Abstract concepts are the foundation of this enriching curriculum.

Because of the variety of literature students are exposed to throughout the year, they begin to develop a sense of others' thoughts, feelings, and emotions, in addition to the characters. They also have the ability to think beyond what the text says, and are able to make more meaningful and insightful, worldly connections. Through student-led discussions before, during, and after reading, students are able to communicate thoughts and acknowledge peers' ideas at a higher level. Ultimately, the rich literature used within the classroom equips students to be successful and thriving members of society.

The primary focus in English Language Arts in fifth grade is to expose students to challenging texts to which they can also connect. This is accomplished by using Junior Great Books, participating in literature circles, and engaging in novel studies. There is focus on providing students the opportunity to improve

social and emotional skills through the use of themes. Additionally, the texts provide relatable stories allowing for rich and thoughtful discussions.

When participating in literature circles or a novel study, higher-order thinking questions are utilized from Bloom's Taxonomy to challenge students' thinking. The students have opportunities to develop and create culminating activities in various ways such as: live newscasts, animations, books, presentations, and green screen videos.

In conclusion, the single most impactful instructional practice the Challenge Center utilizes to help our students be successful is enrichment. Through enrichment, our students have the opportunity to grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially, as we meet the needs of highly-gifted students.