

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name McAuliffe International School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2540 Holly Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Denver State CO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 80207-3228

County Denver

Telephone (720) 424-1540 Fax (720) 424-1565

Web site/URL http://mcauliffe.dpsk12.org E-mail kurt\_dennis@dpsk12.org

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Susana Cordova E-mail susana\_cordova@dpsk12.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Denver Public Schools Tel. (720) 423-3200

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 Dr. Carrie Olson  
(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**

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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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the 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	268	267	535
7	266	265	531
8	262	261	523
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	796	793	1589

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 11.5 % Black or African American
  - 13.5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 64 % White
  - 8.8 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 4%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	29
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	26
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	55
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	1421
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Spanish, Russian, Amharic, Arabic, German, Greek, French, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 8 %  
127 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 19 %

Total number students who qualify: 297

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %

103 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>5</u> Autism                  | <u>7</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>22</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>52</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>10</u> Emotional Disturbance  | <u>3</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>2</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: 8

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	54
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	35
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.	5

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 18:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	92%	93%	92%	93%	93%
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 2019.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

All members of the McAuliffe International School community will excel in academic achievement, personal conduct and service to the community.

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

Our prospective students participate in a district-wide school choice process where they rank their schools in their order of preference and are then placed in a school via lottery.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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McAuliffe International School is a public middle school in Denver, Colorado. The school serves students from a wide array of neighborhoods, including the nation's largest urban infill project, Stapleton, and the historic Park Hill neighborhoods of northeast Denver. Because the school's attendance boundary is so large and includes a variety of neighborhoods, McAuliffe serves a diverse student body comprised of many different races, religions and socioeconomic groups. Our community values education highly and is very supportive of our school. McAuliffe has excellent teachers and a dedicated support staff who work on a daily basis to provide students with the best possible education in a culture of high expectations and accountability. Our goal is to empower students so that they may successfully pursue whatever academic pathway they choose after middle school. In addition, we aspire for our students to be good citizens, to share their talents with their community and to make the world a better place through service.

At McAuliffe, we challenge students by prioritizing productive struggle. Our emphasis on independent practice means that students must tackle rigorous work daily in all subject areas and students must attempt work before receiving feedback. We do not accept learned helplessness. In order to produce learners who are not afraid to take risks and to tackle difficult problems, we tell students, "You DON'T need help. You DO need feedback." Through this emphasis, we produce learners who internalize strategies for attacking challenging problems, and we normalize error. In our classrooms, student work drives instruction, so error is viewed as a necessary part of the learning process. We care about what students do autonomously and we constantly check student work against exemplars to monitor student progress.

Our curriculum is content-rich, cohesive, and emphasizes mastery of critical literacy skills (argumentative writing, reading complex texts) as well as creative problem-solving in both collaborative and autonomous settings. Students grapple daily with rich and rigorous texts, regularly practicing how to analyze language for underlying bias and how to use illustrative evidence to support claims. McAuliffe students practice habits of discourse across subject areas that require them to listen and respond to their peers, to support their ideas with evidence, and to disagree with respect.

At McAuliffe, we maximize instructional time and prioritize great teaching. We have both a longer school day (8 hours) and a longer school year (180 days). This is an increase of over 30% in instructional time compared to similar schools in the state of Colorado. We believe strongly that students do not have to be home in order for teachers to learn; therefore, rather than having numerous professional development days each year, we instead embed most of our professional learning into the regular school day during teachers' collaborative planning time. This allows students to remain at school learning while our teachers are learning as well.

Another creative aspect of our program design that helps us achieve great results is that we prioritize making the teaching profession as manageable as possible for our teachers. It is our belief that with minimal preps and ample planning time, our teachers will be able to deliver the best possible outcomes for our students. Every core content teacher at McAuliffe has only one prep and nearly three hours of planning time each day. In addition, our teachers receive a tremendous amount of curricular and planning support which allows them to focus on how they are going to best deliver a lesson rather than spending their time trying to figure out what they are going to teach the next day.

In order to best support the social, emotional, and physical development of our students, we have several unique roles at our school that are dedicated to developing well-rounded, happy, healthy learners who love coming to school every day. McAuliffe's "Director of Fun" coordinates twenty-eight after school clubs and enrichments, three student leadership groups, four out-of-state field trips, two sixth grade team-building days, a multi-night talent show and a week of outdoor education for our students. Our Service Learning Coordinators lead groups of fourteen students daily to perform service projects at local not-for-profits and community organizations in our community. Every student has the opportunity to spend two half-days giving to those in need on a service trip. Our Wellness Coordinator teaches full-year mindfulness and mediation courses for students who struggle with anxiety or depression. She coordinates healthy eating and exercise opportunities for students and staff and coordinates an evening guest speaker to educate our parents

and community about issues like vaping, opioid addiction, screen time and drug abuse. Finally, our Critical Needs Coordinator operates a weekend food backpack program for McAuliffe families in need. She provides free school uniforms and school supplies for our students in need and she takes students to the eye doctor and dentist for free care.



## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

At McAuliffe, our core curriculum supports student mastery of the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) which are aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Science curriculum is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). All core content units reflect backward design, with summative tasks driving daily objectives which then dictate classroom learning experiences. Teachers deliver lesson plans prepared by a lead planner, a designated teacher leader for each core area who develops the daily lessons from existing, proven resources (Achievement First curriculum for language arts and social studies; Amplify for science; in-house curriculum for mathematics). This model ensures a consistent, high-quality experience for students regardless of teacher experience level.

We strongly believe that student work should be the center of the classroom and should drive instructional decisions. All core classes include some independent practice which allows teachers to monitor student progress toward the daily objective and provide immediate feedback that pushes the thinking of each individual student. In addition to this daily feedback, grade-level content teams meet weekly to analyze student work and develop re-teaches that help close gaps in achievement. Finally, a robust interim assessment system in language arts and mathematics gives structure to our scope and sequence and provides students regular opportunities (in October, December, and March) to demonstrate their level of autonomy on cold assessments. This data then provides guidance for the next learning cycle for the grade level as a whole and for individual students. This outcome-based approach allows us to make sure as many students as possible are achieving sufficiency proficiency and growth every school year.

In addition to a strong focus on monitoring independent work and providing focused feedback to students, teachers at McAuliffe work hard to make sure that students carry the intellectual lift during class. Teachers prepare to deliver lessons with the student in mind, angling instruction to increase the level of thinking and participation required of all students by intentionally providing opportunities for students to write and discuss in every core subject. We believe students should always be working harder than teachers.

#### **1b.** Reading/English language arts

In the language and literature classes at McAuliffe International School, we provide a rigorous and engaging curriculum that empowers students to interact with and comprehend challenging text and engage in meaningful discussions. In creating our language and literature curriculum, we start by using an established, vetted curriculum such as Achievement First and Reading Reconsidered as the foundation for our units. Our units encourage students to view the human experience through various cultural lenses and challenge them to consider many perspectives. The Senior Team Leads (teacher leaders) in the department work to curate the daily lessons and objectives to ensure that each lesson meets the needs of our unique learners. This model ensures that objectives, exit tickets, and texts are consistent across classrooms and provides support for high-quality questioning, instruction, collaborative learning and assessments.

All units and lessons are grounded in the CCSS with rubrics used to assess students on summative assessments. Foundational interactive reading skills are established through close reading, giving all students access points to grade-level text while requiring them to make meaning on their own and then to extend that understanding through collaboration with peers.

Our writing program aims to develop student autonomy in writing. The curriculum spirals in grades six through eight with each grade level providing instruction in analytical, research, and narrative writing. Students are explicitly taught planning strategies for writing so they have tools to effectively unpack writing assignments and develop an effective plan on their own. In addition, our writing program grounds students in the art of analysis writing by emphasizing to students that every sentence has a purpose and developing their abilities to write with clarity and intent. All instruction works to create thoughtful, autonomous writers.

In order to achieve consistent, high standards within our teams, each language arts grade level team meets weekly to go over the week's objectives and exit tickets and intellectually prepare the most significant and challenging lessons. It is during this time that we determine common misconceptions and prepare access points for all of our learners and analyze and ground ourselves in exemplar lesson expectations and assessments. As teams, we also plan for progress monitoring and feedback so that each teacher meets with as many students as possible during the heart of the lesson in order to ensure mastery of the day's and unit's objectives.

Our curriculum and instruction constantly evolves through weekly Data Team meetings in which we meet as grade level teams to evaluate the results of formative and summative assessments and monitor the progress of all students in relation to the Common Core State Standards. As a team, English Language Arts (ELA) teachers determine necessary instructional strategies to move all learners and what is necessary to reteach to ensure understanding. We also use this time to specifically track the progress of our students who have not yet achieved proficiency.

### **1c. Mathematics**

The McAuliffe mathematics curriculum is written in-house and integrates the five domains of middle school mathematics as articulated by the Common Core State Standards. This integration of standards maximizes mathematical connections between domains while emphasizing student development of the CCSS Mathematical Practices. Our integrated curriculum design is built on learning progressions. Learning progressions build number sense, perseverance in problem solving, abstraction and representation, and mathematical communication with both major and supporting content. Learning progressions span weeks, units, a given year, or multiple years of the program.

By intentionally crafting logical learning progressions throughout the three year program, we are able to utilize a task-based instructional approach that places the intellectual lift on students rather than teachers. Teachers pose real-world or mathematical tasks to students to meet new learning objectives. Students work tasks independently or collaboratively while the teacher monitors student work and thinking. When the task work time concludes, the teacher facilitates an actionable class conversation around the student work and thinking. This class conversation makes student thinking visible and stamps new understanding. Thus, each day's lesson is driven by student thinking and intuition.

Our tasks are rigorous and written to grade level standard. Each task has a "low floor" and a "high ceiling." Intentional task design and sequencing promotes equitable access to mathematical content and mathematical practice. Implementing this instructional model has allowed us to move from perceived ability tracking to heterogeneous classrooms. It provides all students the opportunity to access grade level mathematics, to develop conceptual understanding, to engage in mathematical thinking, to critique the thinking of others, and to extend their mathematical thinking.

Students learn and grow at different rates, and our weekly independent practice assignments reflect this fact. All practice assignments reinforce learning progressions and are cumulative by design. This ensures that we never leave a skill or concept behind; every student has multiple opportunities to grow to mastery in conceptual and procedural understanding throughout the school year. Applying concepts, skills and procedures in context and cumulatively develops strong mathematical habits of mind. Our students cannot rely on replicating procedures they do not understand. Instead, they are required to think critically to problem solve. Cumulative practice assignments necessitate the identification of important and irrelevant information, the selection of appropriate mathematical tools, and strategy development. This type of practice cultivates flexible thinking and mathematical independence in our students.

Intellectual preparation meetings are facilitated weekly by the curriculum writer to ensure teachers feel confident delivering daily lessons. These meetings focus teachers on the most important mathematics of the week and explain how the mathematical understanding developed within each learning objective fits into the overall learning progression. Because the end goal is to create students who are doers of mathematics, our teachers are also doers of mathematics in these meetings. Teachers work mathematical tasks in multiple ways, brainstorm potential student strategies and misconceptions that will arise, and collaboratively craft targeted questions based on the student work they anticipate.

Weekly formative data tasks, bi-weekly quizzes, and interim assessments are used to measure student mastery of learning objectives. Each assessment prioritizes mathematical modeling and mathematical explanation. Grade level teams meet on a weekly basis for Data Teams to analyze student work on assessments. The meetings are designed to simultaneously assess student progress, diagnose gaps in understanding, and build teacher capacity in analyzing student work and responding to student thinking. Data Teams meetings also provide the opportunity for mathematical content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge to be shared among team members.

#### **1d. Science**

The sciences program at McAuliffe is grounded in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The Next Generation Science Standards center on the belief that all students can develop the skills and content required to be a critical consumer of information. Our program empowers students to be able to make sense of the world around them and develop the critical thinking, problem solving, data analysis, and interpretation skills they will need outside of school. To accomplish this, teachers employ a variety of instructional strategies to promote an inquiry-led approach in which students do not just memorize a set of scientific facts, but rather engage in figuring out how and why science phenomena happen. At McAuliffe, our curriculum is Amplify Science for Lawrence Hall which is grounded in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). This robust curriculum has students play the roles of scientists and engineers to design solutions to real-world problems.

Our program is intentionally integrated meaning that students learn life, earth and physical science every year. In addition, content and skills each year build off of each other, with similar topics appearing vertically across grade levels but with a different area of focus. For instance in sixth grade students study traits and reproduction, in seventh they study natural selection, and in eighth the focus is evolution. This spiral builds both a foundation and depth of understanding for students' sciences education.

Our program is designed by a lead planner. This model supports teachers and students by providing a framework for excellence for the lessons. Teachers meet weekly with the lead planner to deep dive the weekly lessons. During this time, teachers unpack the objective and exemplar for the major check for understanding of the lesson and develop lines of questioning to support students at all ability levels to move towards mastery of the day's objective. This is also the time where we identify the science skills and concepts students need to practice in order to be successful on the summative assessment for the unit. Teachers then prepare the lessons even further by developing scaffolds for individual students in their class who will benefit from them.

The science program is designed with the end in mind. Our assessment program requires students to apply what they have learned through an original phenomenon in a new and different situation. Students are required to analyze evidence, construct a claim in order to develop an argument that is grounded in scientific principles. Teachers use the daily objectives as checks for understanding throughout their lessons to ensure that all students are making progress towards the end goal. We meet every other week for Data Teams to analyze student work and develop action steps to address misconceptions in the content.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

At McAuliffe, our social studies curriculum is designed to provide the historical context for the complex globalized world in which they live. In sixth and seventh grade, students focus on world history. In eighth grade, students focus on United States history. We ground students in conceptual understanding and essential content knowledge so that they can be critical thinkers as we analyze multiple perspectives within primary and secondary sources. With an emphasis on analyzing sources, McAuliffe social studies classes give students the tools they need to be critical consumers of materials. Through engaging in research tasks and authentic performance tasks, students are able to understand the real-world application of their historical skills and content. By the end of eighth grade, students come to understand the human experience through many different lenses.

Within each grade-level curriculum, we have a common set of practices that supports our students to meet these goals. Our lessons are curated from Achievement First curriculum. Each grade level focuses on

analyzing primary sources to transform them into historians. As students delve into a source's meaning, understand the context of the source, and determine the perspective of that source, they are better able to understand history. In addition to primary source analysis, we focus on historical writing skills. Just like we want students to understand the context of the history they are studying, we want them to be able to weave the context into their writing so that they can understand and explain the big picture.

Each grade-level at McAuliffe has a unique annual performance task. In sixth grade, students take part in Shark Tank, researching best economics practices to create their own product and develop the marketing and financing plan. In seventh grade, students deeply research a history topic of choice based on a given theme for National History Day. They write research papers and then create a presentation unique to their topic. In eighth grade, students participate in Congressional Hearings where students take their understanding of the Constitution and make sense of how it plays out in the law today. All three of these projects are presented in front of a panel of judges from the community.

In order to monitor our students' success, we have regular progress monitoring. In the classroom, our teachers actively monitor during independent work time during the second half of the lesson. This active monitoring gives teachers an opportunity to provide students academic feedback so that students can have another at-bat and improve their work. Every other week (or, every 5 lessons), we have grade-level Data Teams to determine next steps in building our students reading, writing and historical content. After each Data Team, we have an action plan that each teacher executes in his or her classroom. For every unit that includes an essay task (about 3 a year per grade), we calibrate our scoring through a protocol. We do this to make sure that we are all aligned in what proficient sixth, seventh, or eighth grade writing looks like. In addition to the formal progress monitoring structures, each teacher receives regular classroom coaching to ensure that daily progress monitoring is happening.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

At McAuliffe International School, every student completes an Individual Career and Academic Plan each school year. The ICAP is a plan which students complete to map their path toward college and career readiness. This plan is started in 6th grade and continues through 12th grade. Under the guidance of our school counselors, students complete interest inventories, set short-term and long-term goals, and learn about future career and educational opportunities. Students also track their progress against college and career readiness benchmarks for attendance, grades and executive functioning skills. If students are found to be off track, they are placed in a cohort of students that receive additional attention and support from our teaching and counseling staff.

#### **1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

In order to support development of the whole child, McAuliffe offers a wide range of elective offerings. Students in grades six through eight participate in physical/health education, which focuses on fitness, team sports, nutrition, and health education. Students learn important skills in cooperation and teamwork as well as vital information to help inform intelligent choices to support health and wellness.

In technology, students explore engineering in sixth grade, green architecture in seventh grade, and construction arts in eighth grade. These STEM courses require students to employ the design cycle to address a wide-range of real-world challenges, from creating a robot to developing a plan for an energy efficient home to designing and building species-specific birdhouses.

Our arts programming allows students in each grade level to choose drama, visual arts, journalism, or music (band, orchestra, or choir). Our drama and music programs support full performances in each grade level. In journalism, students produce a school newspaper, and in visual arts, students produce and display work for multiple art shows each year.

All students at McAuliffe study a world language, choosing from Spanish, French, or Mandarin. Our native speaker class in Spanish allows fluent speakers to further develop their language skills in reading and writing.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

Our goal is to "nudge every learner every day" so that every student leaves class a little better off than when they arrived.

We are continuously working to close the achievement gap between our white students and our students of color. Tier 2 supports for these learners include math and ELA tutoring after school or during the school day, social/emotional support from mentors and deans, and targeted academic supports from teachers including carefully scaffolded materials and feedback provided during independent practice. We remain committed to holding the bar high for all students but providing access points for students who may come to us below grade level.

Progress is monitored very closely for students who are below grade level. After every round of interim testing, teachers examine the performance of students who have not yet achieved proficient status and commit to specific, measureable supports for those students.

On a daily basis, teachers monitor during independent work time with specific attention to our emerging learners. Teachers do not respond to hands during independent practice; instead, they monitor all students along a pathway that requires our below grade level students to attempt an answer before receiving help so they can develop the autonomy and internalize the strategies necessary to succeed on grade level work. Teachers anticipate error in advance so they can provide specific, actionable feedback for students who are below grade level.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

While classes at McAuliffe are heterogeneous, our rigorous Tier 1 instruction provides challenges for all learners and teachers are trained to anticipate and provide stretches for students who grasp concepts quickly. In addition, students who are identified as gifted and talented are supported by Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs) and set annual goals that direct enrichment and extension.

Several opportunities provide gifted and talented students the chance to explore passions and participate in extensions. NaNoWriMo, a writing club, offers the opportunity to develop creative writing skills. We sponsor a book club for advanced readers and participate in local and state geography and semantics bees.

#### **3c. Special education**

McAuliffe services its students in special education through a highly inclusive model. Our population within special education ranges from students with mild/moderate disabilities to more severe disabilities including serious emotional disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and autism.

By having one special education teacher per grade level, we are able to work collaboratively with grade-level teachers and administrators as we foster deep relationships with students and families throughout the students' three years of middle school. Over eighty percent of our students with mild/moderate disabilities are in all general education classes. Instead of servicing students in separate core classes, students have equitable access to the rigor and high-standards of the general education setting, which is made possible with push-in/co-teaching, common planning times, and accommodation implementation systems. Specialized instruction in small groups during elective and advisory time supplements this core instruction in order to make this model possible and create equitable opportunities for growth. All mild/moderate special education teachers are trained or are currently being trained in structured literacy, the leading scientific and evidence-based practice to meet the needs of struggling readers, and have strong math backgrounds. Having a team with strengths in academic instruction ensures that all students, regardless of the severity of their disability, are pushed to succeed.

At McAuliffe, our students with severe emotional needs are part of an Affective Needs (AN) program, which is also highly inclusive, and allows students to develop the self-regulatory skills needed to be successful students and community members. Our Multiple Intensive (MI) center program services our most vulnerable population -- students with severe and multiple disabilities -- where students develop

foundational academic and life skills in addition to engaging in general education electives and science classes. With the support of mental health and paraprofessional team members, these populations are given the opportunity to make great gains during incredibly important years of development.

**3d.** ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

Students who are identified as language learners per district policy are provided an additional intervention language class. The class meets for 80 minutes on alternating days with students. The curriculum is designed to both provide explicit language instruction in as language functions and forms as well as high leverage instructional practices adopted by the school. Students practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening structures that build their English language competency as well as support structures in their core classes (language arts, math, social studies, and science).

Student growth is progress monitored through the yearly WIDA ACCESS test as well as through quarterly Scholastic Reading Intervention (SRI) Reading Test, as well as classroom summative and formative assessments. Guiding principles of the curriculum include highly engaging topics, such as cell phones in schools and teen activists, explicit language structure instruction, vocabulary development, guided listening practice, structured student talk, and highly portable writing and speaking structures for students to practice and apply across classes.

**3e.** Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

The cultivation of student engagement begins in the classroom. At McAuliffe, teachers encourage and value the voices, opinions and perspectives of all students. The school's belief extends further as students in the Affective Needs (AN) program as well as the Multiple Intensive (MI) program are pushed into general education classes throughout the day while being provided with the academic and social support they need in order to have their voice heard.

Students at McAullife are also provided ample opportunities to engage in their interests and passions through our after school enrichments and athletics programs. All students are encouraged to build community around shared interests by participating in activities after the academic day has ended. Over 25 clubs are run throughout the school year. Some clubs of note are the Math Club, Geography Bee Club, Black and Brown Student Union, Rainbow Alliance and Shoe Design club. Each club provides the students at McAuliffe the opportunity to explore new ways of thinking while also providing students with a safe place to explore their emerging independence as young adults. In all, roughly 300 students are participating in after school clubs at any given time throughout the school year, and the school's foundation ensures that any student who needs a scholarship is provided one.

Students at McAuliffe learn the value of teamwork and competition through our robust sports program. McAulliffe students compete against area schools in district supported athletic leagues, and our commitment to student engagement is extended beyond through our club sports program. Over the course of the year the club sports program offers over 25 opportunities for all students to participate in athletics. Ranging from traditional sports such as basketball, floor hockey and soccer to outdoor activities such as mountain biking, ultimate frisbee and rock climbing, over 600 students find ways to stretch their physical limits and build lasting friendships through athletics at McAuliffe.

Each year the student body raises money to donate to Denver area non-profits through our Spark Change Program. The culmination of this program is Service Day. On this day, students travel throughout the city of Denver to make a difference through service. Students work at homeless shelters, prepare city gardens for planting, make toys for sheltered animals, and sew blankets for hospitalized children. Through this day students are able to make powerful and lasting connections with one another and with the city in which they live.

With an eye towards equity and service the staff and community of McAuliffe International school seeks to provide students with a wealth of opportunities to be engaged not only in their school community, but in the greater Denver community as well.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

McAuliffe International School is a thriving school community with exceptional parent/guardian/family engagement. We believe strongly in the connection between student achievement and family partnership with the school.

At the beginning of the school year, hundreds of families donate school uniforms and school supplies in order to support over 200 students whose families are unable to purchase these materials on their own. Fifteen parent/guardians helped with the distribution of these items so that students can be prepared to learn on the first day of school. Throughout the school year, we have a food bank at McAuliffe that supports 40 students each week and three parent/guardians who volunteer each week to pack these bags. These services help McAuliffe students focus on learning as much as possible.

During the school year, parents support academics in many ways. Over 200 parents, guardians and community members help with judging our social studies student presentations (Shark Tank, National History Day, and Congressional Hearings). In our library, ten parent/guardians volunteer each week,

allowing our students to make use of the library in order to check out books, have a quiet space to catch up on school work, or a space to work on group projects.

Parent/guardian volunteers enrich our students' experiences outside of the classroom as well. One of our most popular courses at McAuliffe is drama. While the teachers are tasked with teaching the courses, over 150 parents/guardians help design and build the sets, sell tickets at the performances, and help with sound and light. In addition, every member of our student body participates in a service learning trip during the school year. During spring trimester, over 40 parents/guardians chaperone our Service Learning day. Parents also chaperone excursions to YMCA camps for sixth and seventh grade and Washington DC in eighth grade.

Additionally, we have a very giving community. During the holidays, families donate both physical items as well as monetary gifts so we can ensure every member of our school community has a happy holiday. This school year over 90 families were supported during the holiday season.

Our community values learning together. This school year we hosted two community events for our parents/guardians, students and community members: a showing and follow up discussion of the film *Screenagers* as well as a social emotional learning evening. This spring, we will host an online safety and awareness event with a specific focus on cyberbullying.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

McAuliffe provides rich and responsive professional development to elevate professional learning and student achievement. At the beginning of every school year, McAuliffe leadership welcomes new staff with training and team building to support both instructional and cultural development. This includes sharing meals, participating in experiential learning activities, and internalizing mission and vision.

Instructional training provides foundational support covering high leverage topics including: Sound Lesson Design, Intellectual Lesson Preparation, Use of Effective Routines, Being the Classroom Leader, Issuing Effective Consequences, Maintaining High Expectations and Increasing Ratio, Active Monitoring and Facilitating Powerful Discourse. For a community of 1,600 students and 150 staff members, it is incredibly important to develop a common cultural and instructional vision as we begin our school year with students.

Each year, we develop an instructional area of growth as part of our action plan for the school year. In the 2019-2020 school year our focus has been on scaffolding instruction for educational equity. In collaboration with McAuliffe's Instructional Leadership Team, school leadership determines priorities and sets a professional learning plan for the year. This typically includes professional development days in the fall, winter and spring which break down the instructional priorities into actionable instructional practices. Professional development sessions are designed with different content areas and contexts in order to differentiate for teacher's needs and staff often self select into at least some of the sessions to allow for a more personalized learning plan.

In daily practice, our teachers are served by a robust instructional coaching program and the lead planner model. Coaches meet with teachers weekly or bi-weekly depending on teacher need. Coaches support teachers with their intellectual preparation of lessons and development of instructional techniques. These often look like short conversations checking in with teachers, reflecting on practice, supporting new learning and doing live practice with teachers. Lead planners support teachers with development of curriculum and daily plans as well looking at student data. Lead planners support teachers in facilitation of intellectual preparation of lessons at the department and teacher level. This allows teachers to feel supported, confident and prepared to dive into the daily lessons and ready to respond to common errors and questions students might have along the way.

### **4. School Leadership:**

McAuliffe's distributed leadership model enables us to facilitate progress toward our instructional priorities through clearly defined roles, a commitment to best practice, and a system of observation and feedback that supports individuals and ensure accountability to our vision.



Key leadership stakeholders include:

The principal curates an ecosystem that prevents the failure and empowers the excellence of each staff member. He puts the right people in the right roles and empowers them with the time, training and resources to their best work on behalf of our students.

The grade level assistant principals and deans design and implement systems that create a strong student culture at McAuliffe. They establish and maintain relationships and communication with families and community. They work with the same group of students for all three years of middle school in order to provide consistency in relationships and to make students feel safe, successful and known.

The Director of Achievement oversees academic systems and programming at McAuliffe. She designs and implements professional development that provides a foundation for McAuliffe's instructional priorities. She also oversees the instructional coaching program for our teaching staff and facilitates our instructional leadership team meetings.

Senior Team Leads (STLs) are content area teachers who teach part-time and serve in a leadership capacity part-time. The Senior Team Leads curate curriculum for their content area teams. They lead teachers through the process of intellectually preparing to deliver shared lesson plans. They facilitate data team meetings and provide coaching and feedback to teachers around McAuliffe's instructional priorities.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The most important strategy for academic success at McAuliffe International School is our lead planner model. At McAuliffe, core content (social studies, science, math and English Language Arts) teachers do not plan their own lessons. Instead, a lead planner for the course curates the curriculum and develops the units and lessons for the team. Once the lessons are ready for the upcoming week, the lead planner meets with the teacher team to help teachers internalize the most important part of each lesson. We call this process "intellectual preparation".

During intellectual preparation, teachers receive slide decks for presenting the lessons to their students. They also receive the texts and materials, the lesson objectives and the exit tickets. Because all of this is completed in advance by the lead planner for our core teachers, the teachers are able to focus on HOW they are going to deliver the lesson versus trying to figure out WHAT they are going to teach the next day. We find that this process empowers teachers to anticipate student error, to formulate back pocket questions and to plan how they are going to monitor student work and provide feedback to students. This shift significantly increases the quality of instruction in our classrooms and it is most beneficial to new teachers as they do not have to create curriculum and lessons themselves. They are given high quality lessons and can focus on lesson delivery and classroom management which are usually the two biggest challenges for a new teacher. Our most effective and experienced teachers in this model are not stifled. We allow them great autonomy to go above and beyond the baseline lesson that is provided and to have the art of their craft shine through in their lessons.

In addition to ensuring that teachers are well prepared to deliver lessons at McAuliffe, the lead planner model is of great benefit to our students. Every student, regardless of who they have as a teacher, is given the same learning opportunities. They are presented with the same rigorous texts, objectives, tasks, assessments, and exit tickets. The quality of a student's educational experience at McAuliffe is not dependent upon winning the "scheduling lottery" and getting the best teacher. The high quality of their educational experience is assured because every teacher is aligned on what is going to be taught, when it's going to be taught and how it will be taught. There may be variance in how the lesson is delivered by each teacher, but every student gets the opportunity to learn at the highest levels.