

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

Official School Name Maquoketa Valley Middle School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 112 3rd Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Delhi State IA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 52223-0000

County Delaware County

Telephone (563) 922-9411 Fax (563) 922-3026

Web site/URL http://www.maquoketa-v.k12.ia.us/ E-mail troyosterhaus@maquoketa-v.k12.ia.us

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Doug Tuetken E-mail dougtuetken@maquoketa-v.k12.ia.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Maquoketa Valley Comm School District Tel. (563) 922-2091

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 Mrs. Donna Kunde  
(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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	26	31	57
7	23	28	51
8	24	27	51
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	73	86	159

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 3 % Black or African American
  - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 96 % White
  - 0 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 7%

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	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	11
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	159
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 35 %

Total number students who qualify: 56

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %

14 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>0</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>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: 3

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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	11
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
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.	7

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 19:1

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	94%	95%	95%	96%	95%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	98%	100%	96%

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.

Our mission is to ensure high levels of learning to empower all students for lifelong success.

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

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Maquoketa Valley Middle School is located near beautiful Lake Delhi, situated in a community of gently rolling hills in rural Delaware County. It is part of the Maquoketa Valley CSD in Northeast Iowa. Three elementary schools feed into the Middle School (Grades 6 - 8), which consists of Earlville Elementary (PK - K), Johnston Elementary (Grades 1-2), and Delhi Elementary (Grades 3 - 5). Also located in Delhi is the High School (Grades 9-12). District enrollment is currently 627 with enrollment trends declining over the last several years. English is the primary language spoken in nearly all of our students' homes. The ethnicity of Maquoketa Valley students is nearly 100% white. The poverty level of the Middle School is 35%.

Because many of our students' parents travel outside their communities for employment, we especially appreciate their excellent support for and involvement in their children's education. Attendance at parent-teacher conferences is consistently in the 90-100% range. The community supports the Middle School students through their attendance at a variety of Middle School extracurricular activities including the athletic programs and fine arts events. Our strong community also supports our students through volunteering at school events, the middle school career fair, and collaborating on community service projects. Patrons of the district passed the one-cent sales tax, the Instructional Support Levy, and donations to the Dollars for Scholars program. Our Dollars for Scholars program was developed and maintained by a committee of dedicated community members. The mission of the Dollars for Scholars program is to provide each graduating senior a scholarship (worth approximately \$2500) to use towards any type of post-secondary education. This program now allows all graduating students enrolled in post-secondary education to apply for up to four years of this scholarship.

Every day the goal at Maquoketa Valley Middle School is help students reach their fullest potential, learning to conduct themselves with integrity and developing the ability to adapt successfully to societal changes. The outstanding and caring staff at Maquoketa Valley Middle School are dedicated to the success of each student and often go above and beyond expectations. In a 2019 parent survey, parents indicated they strongly agreed with the following statements: The instruction offered to my child is of high quality (96%); my child is encouraged to think critically and be a problem solver (97%); I am confident my child will be well prepared for trade school, four year college, and/or the workplace upon graduation (97%); I would recommend Maquoketa Valley Schools to other people (97%).

District teachers work together under the expert direction of our Director of School Improvement to implement effective strategies that challenge and develop all students academically, emotionally, and socially. Content area teams work collaboratively to develop curricular units aligned to state standards and to implement high quality instructional practices. This work has resulted in state assessment scores in literacy and math that are typically 20% above Iowa's state average. Strong support programs are in place to provide proactive interventions. Students participate in a daily "WIN time" that provides early intervention, academic support, weekly class meetings, and lessons in social-emotional skills and digital citizenship.

Maquoketa Valley is committed to providing all students with a high quality education. Social emotional support is provided for all students. All staff have received professional development on trauma informed practices and de-escalating strategies for students. A school counselor, in house therapist, and outside agencies partner with the school to provide additional support as needed. A dedicated at-risk team meets weekly to identify and monitor students receiving additional supports. An innovative technology curriculum engages students in problem solving, designing, creating, and programming. A Fine Arts program provides students with opportunities to perform in band & choir, to perform in a musical, a Middle School spectrum that showcases students fine arts abilities, and an art exploratory for students to learn creative ways to express themselves. A Talented and Gifted program provides advanced students with engaging, rigorous, and relevant learning activities. All students learn a core curriculum that is aligned with State Standards and taught using research based instructional strategies. For reasons such as these, we believe there's never been a better time to be a Maquoketa Valley Wildcat!

## **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

Maquoketa Valley Middle School addresses the Iowa State Standards through a variety of instructional approaches, which are detailed in the following sections.

Common across all subject areas are the components of Authentic Intellectual Work, Assessment for Learning, Multi-Tiered System of Support, and Trauma Informed approach to Social Emotional Learning. Staff meet weekly to collaborate in analyzing student performance, assignments, and their instruction in order to provide rigorous and relevant instruction to all students. Their conversations revolve around high order thinking skills, questioning, building conceptual understanding, and fostering substantive conversations. Teachers have identified and communicated to students clear learning targets, and criteria for success. Formative assessments are consistently used to provide descriptive feedback, drive instruction, and guide student self-assessment and goal setting. Using the data from formative and summative assessments, student needs are identified and interventions are planned and implemented to ensure student success. A daily block of time is protected to provide students the support they need to be successful in the classroom. This time is used for reading, math, and behavior interventions, social emotional learning, and lessons on digital citizenship. All staff have been trained in deescalation strategies, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and responsive techniques to challenging behavior.

Maquoketa Valley Middle School uses classroom data as well as Statewide Assessment data to measure school performance and to guide continuous improvement efforts. The Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) assesses Iowa's academics standards that place high expectations on students in order to make sure they have the critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed for the workplace or college. Maquoketa Valley Middle School scored well above the State average in the ISASP: 95% of 6th grade students were proficient in English Language Arts, compared to the 67% state average; 87% of 7th grade students were proficient in English Language Arts, compared to the 69% state average; 93% of 8th grade students were proficient in English Language Arts, compared to the 69% state average; 75% of 6th grade students were proficient in Math, compared to the 69% state average; 85% of 7th grade students were proficient in Math, compared to the 70% state average; 91% of 8th grade students were proficient in Math, compared to the 72% state average; and 79% of 8th grade students were proficient in Science, compared to the 58% state average. These scores were among the highest in the State of Iowa, a reflections of the quality of curriculum instruction and assessment practices at Maquoketa Valley Middle School.

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

Maquoketa Valley's English/Language Arts curriculum is developed around a reading workshop, writing workshop and language workshop that work together to support each other. Our classes are offered in a block format in which we have 90 minutes to develop these areas. Our units have been developed as genre studies and focus on an essential question that incorporates text sets of both fiction and nonfiction to lead students from understanding the texts to creating their own text within the genre. When available, texts are leveled using data from state standardized tests as well as Fountas and Pinnell testing that follows students from early elementary school. This ensures that students are working at a level where they can be challenged and also successful. The reading and writing workshops are supplemented with the language workshop where students study Greek /Latin roots as well as work on grammar skills, author's craft, and other word studies. Each unit was designed with backwards lesson planning to ensure the Core Curriculum standards were taught and assessed using both formative and summative assessments. The units for each year are blended with fiction and nonfiction.

The 6th grade ELA curriculum is supported by the grade-level Basal reader that includes fiction and nonfiction texts. At the end of each unit, students use specific example from the varied stories to support the essential question in essay format. The units are wrapped up with a novel that continue to practice reading

comprehension skills and short essay writing. In 7th and 8th grade, the fiction units include historical fiction, science fiction, adventure, suspense, Iowa Teen Award winning novels, and choice novels. Throughout these fiction units, students choose a novel that is at their reading level. Students complete a range of tasks that show mastery of the reading literature standards such as plot development and theme. Another task that is completed during fiction units are conversations based on discussion questions developed by the students. This happens in a small group setting to allow students to show mastery of speaking and listening standards while also working on critical thinking skills. The nonfiction units include journalism, technical writing, biography, poetry, drama, argument/opinion, and expository. In each genre-based unit, students analyze the author's purpose and how the author crafts his/her writing to meet that purpose as a model for the students' writing. Numerous technology projects are embedded into the nonfiction units. An example is students bring a self-written poem to life in iMovie by evaluating the mood and tone and matching that to the music and tone of voice as they read the poem aloud. Several fiction and nonfiction units have large end-of-the-unit written assignments that serve as the summative assessments. These cover the writing standards of narrative, informational and argumentative writing. Students utilize the writing process of planning, drafting, editing and revising their writing. Through this curriculum, middle school students at Maquoketa Valley get a balance of reading, writing, and language work to prepare them to be successful in high school and beyond.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Maquoketa Valley's Math curriculum in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades is developed around the Iowa Core learning standards and the standards for Mathematical Practices. We have identified essential learning targets and learning progressions for each unit, established pacing guides, and have designed formative and summative assessments aligned to eight units, designed around the major focus areas of each grade level. Each day's objective(s) are clearly identified for students and tasks are selected that engage students in problem solving, focus on connections among mathematical concepts, and incorporate multiple representations. The tasks provide students an opportunity to engage in productive struggle collaboratively and independently. Students are frequently expected to work in groups of two to four students in order to build a shared understanding or analyze and compare their different approaches. The tasks often have multiple entry points, which allows all students access to the new learning standard. Our units are designed to progress from concrete, to visual, to a more abstract mathematical representation. Students' fluency with procedures is built on their conceptual understanding and are practiced over time as they apply the procedures to real life and mathematical problems. Through our curriculum and instructional strategies, all students are able to access grade level standards at a high level.

### **1d. Science**

Maquoketa Valley's science curriculum is grounded in the Next Generation Science Standards. Throughout middle school, each essential standard is addressed across three domains of science: Physical, Life, and Earth and Space. Interwoven within the teaching of each domain is explicit connections of crosscutting concepts, engineering design, and real world scientific practices. Following the framework of NGSS, each grade of our middle school covers three different disciplinary core ideas within the three domains, allowing the learning to build and connect over the years.

To prepare our students for college and career readiness, our instructional practices are inquiry and project-based. Each new concept is introduced by a focus question, which directs learning to solve a problem. Real scientific instruments are used to model how research is conducted, collected and analyzed, encouraging collaboration and exploration. This curriculum also allows for the experience of all eight scientific practices of the NGSS Framework.

Students are encouraged to engage in labs and practice with the purpose of learning from them, often from making mistakes. Formative assessments lower the risk of mistakes in order to actively encourage learning and questioning, as is found in the real scientific field. Summative assessments focus on concept learning and the ability to analyze and evaluate information, as a professional would prove or disprove a hypothesis. Students receive effective introduction to concepts, then the ability to prove their hypothesis, both in elaborated communication and demonstration.

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

Maquoketa Valley's social studies curriculum focuses on the core standards of world regions and cultures (6th), contemporary global studies (7th), and United States History & Civic Ideals (8th). The goal for our students is to be active and informed citizens. The standards are taught through the lens of ancient civilizations to events happening in present time, with a focus on behavioral sciences, civics and government, economics, financial literacy, geography and history. While the instructional techniques vary depending on the purpose of the lesson, cooperative learning, project-based learning, and inquiry-based research are infused throughout the courses. Students utilize text sets to discuss their ideas, respond in writing with textual evidence for support, make real-life connections, analyze current events and political cartoons while inferring their relation to the standards and historical timelines, and use speaking and listening skills when presenting and responding to peers. When students need scaffolded support academically, behaviorally, or emotionally in the classroom, they are given explicit feedback, differentiated levels of text, opportunities to have the text read aloud to them, and visual representations of events. Students are also provided small group or one-on-one instruction with additional prompting and clarification.

Formative and summative assessments include students presenting projects to show learning, oral presentations with technology embedded within, and developed essays to determine the depth of their thinking. The curriculum is unique in that it incorporates primary and secondary sources, guest speakers for the students to have first-hand experiences that are not experienced by most of the students, and multiple opportunities daily to apply speaking, listening, and employability skills. Students are preparing for college and career readiness by exercising the skills of civil discourse when discussing events, people, and ideas, while reflecting on how historical events have shaped their own culture and life, and ultimately their place in the world.

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

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

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

In 7th grade Health the students are exposed to many different concepts. They learn the different areas of health: Physical, Mental/Emotional and Social. We focus on refusal skills, decision making, communication skills along with human growth and tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Each student also has the opportunity to hear from guest speakers on social media expectations and making good choices. Nutrition is focused more in FCS that all 7th graders take as well. Physical Education allows for the students to make the real world connection to many of the topics that they learn about in their health classes. In PE, we talk with the students about the physical aspect almost daily to teach them about numerous different skills depending on what activity is being done. The students do get to display their emotional and social skills during PE when they are participating in team style games and activities while using teamwork and displaying sportsmanship.

Social-emotional learning is a naturally occurring key component in every visual or performance based classroom at Maquoketa Valley. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making are dealt with on a daily basis.

In visual and performing arts, every student is expected to bring their personal best to their creative endeavors. In order to do this each student embarks on a journey of self-discovery while participating in the creative process. Lessons and individual instruction allows teachers to meet each student at the skill level they are and together explore ways to strengthen that student's skill set so that the student will have the most positive experience possible.

Our media program support the middle school curriculum in the core subjects. We subscribe to the Junior Library Guild to help bulk up the biography and nonfiction selection for our middle schools to choose from in order to have choice to complete Book Talks. Our teacher librarian also supports the researching process by supporting classroom teachers.

The sixth and eighth graders in the middle school take a Technology/STEM course that meets every other day all year long. Throughout this class, students engage in the engineering process and work on the 4 Cs: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. The units the 6th graders complete are editing withiMovie/Green Screen, designing in Tinkercad to 3D print, and coding with Spheros where students build a chariot out of raw materials. Eighth graders complete units including ones where they learn Excel, use Makey Makey where they incorporate research for an interactive poster, create and run a small business, create solar cars and a Rube Goldberg machine. Also throughout the year, we have Makerspace Mondays where students create projects that interest them.

Eighth graders at Maquoketa Valley take a Careers exploratory class. In this exploratory, students learn and discuss life-skills, such as study habits, interview skills, the value of responsibility/respect/teamwork in school or in a career, designing presentations and presenting them, career and college research skills, and college selection. Students also complete online modules that help them realize what they value most in a work setting. Additionally, all students complete a 4-year plan for high school courses. They try to plan their course load to reflect the career they aspire to do. This 4-year plan is completed, utilizing career knowledge, college requirements, the Maquoketa Valley Course Catalog, the My Academic Plan website, as well as their families and teachers' help. Students take part in regular discussions involving all of these concepts. During the second semester, the 6th-8th graders participate in our Middle School Career Fair. Students are surveyed to determine what careers they are interested in. From this information, professionals are invited to speak. Examples of professionals include nurses, veterinarians, architects, public safety workers, engineers, and business owners. Areas addressed include interests related to the career, education needed, and employability skills needed to be successful in that particular career.

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

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

At our middle school level, we have created and maintained an intervention system to address academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions to support students who are below grade level expectations. Interventions have been completed in a whole class setting when there is a skill deficit, in small groups when similar skills are needed to be reinforced, or one-on-one instruction to support the student's current level of performance while working to close the achievement gap. We use our WIN (Whatever I Need) Time at the end of the day to provide systematic interventions to teach and practice academic skills in the areas of reading, writing, and math, which are focused on pre-requisite and grade level standards. Students are pre-assessed on specific content skills. Teachers analyze the student data to determine what students need the instructional reinforcement, and then student groups are developed so skills can be retaught with the teacher during WIN Time. Students are progress-monitored throughout the intervention, and those students who continue to need additional practice are supported in a more intensive practice. One time per week, all students in grades 6th-8th build organization, time management, and advocacy skills through our class meetings, implementing lessons from the Positive Action curriculum. This has also been added to our instruction as a research-based social-emotional curriculum to support all students. The goal is that students will generalize skills in interventions and class meetings to the students' other classes and their lives beyond the school.

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

As part of the Gifted and Talented Program at the Maquoketa Valley School District, students take part in a multitude of academic enrichment opportunities. Elementary and middle school students participate in a weekly pullout program, as well as receiving differentiated instruction and having the opportunity to experience various field trips throughout the school year. During the half-hour, small group pull out sessions, students are exposed to ideas and activities that are related to their current classroom curriculum as well as experiences that they may not have the time in their regular classrooms to get to. Time is also spent during those session on, talking with the students(s) about things going on in and outside of school. Social-emotional needs are necessary to the overall success of students, so we make sure the students know we care, and are not just robots working with them. There is a sense of family that is incorporated into those

sessions as the school year progresses. Teachers take pride in getting to know their students at Maquoketa Valley and using that knowledge to better suit their educational experiences. Students feel as if they are a part of something special and that they matter through these interactions and methods.

**3c.** Special education

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

**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:**

Our school has created a family environment in which staff truly know their students and use that to create an optimal educational experience. Staff realize that building relationships is a foundational piece to building students' success in the classroom. Using the sentiment expressed by John Maxwell, "Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care," we engage students first and foremost through positive, caring relationships. Staff prepare students to begin learning through a myriad of small gestures, such as greeting them as they enter the building and their classrooms, and beginning their classes with a mindful minute. These and similar efforts create a safe school environment where students' voices are heard and all feel safe to engage in the vulnerable process of learning, questioning, and growing.

Staff uses a variety of instructional strategies to motivate and engage students in their classrooms as well. Teachers use an inquiry and project-based approach when developing lessons. As a result, students develop the ability to rise up to the challenge of future careers, to solve problems that we don't yet know exist and use technologies that have not been invented yet. Because we are part of a rural community, it is imperative for our students' understanding to bring diverse learning opportunities to our classrooms so they realize how vast the world is and to have a global perspective. We strive to design lessons that are both rigorous and relevant, making connections to the real world that gives students the opportunity to apply their learning outside of the school walls. Teachers also use Assessment for Learning practices on a daily basis. This provides clear learning targets for students and timely feedback that enables students to see the impact of their actions and engage them in the learning process.

Our dynamic classrooms do not hand out the answers but demand a level of higher order thinking that stretches students' knowledge. We offer opportunities for students to solve problems in innovative ways and ask questions, to continuously push them forward in their learning and thinking while supporting them to embrace these challenges. We encourage students to think outside the box and to realize that failure is okay as long as we fail forward and use the results to make changes and to try again. This approach instills the perseverance the students need in their classes and their lives to be successful.

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

Engaging families and community members in the school system is a critical component for student success and school improvement. Students and parents are invited to a Back to School Night at which they are provided the opportunity to meet their teachers, run through a mock schedule, open their lockers, and have all questions answered by administrators prior to the start of the school year. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled with all families twice a year to ensure communication occurs, resulting in over 90% of parents participating. Our student information system is another way to engage families. It allows them to follow their child's progress at all times and to communicate with teachers if they have any questions. At the end of their middle school experience, students and parents are invited to an evening meeting to communicate graduation requirements, the process of designing a 4-year plan, and begin exploring career pathways organized in our course catalog.

Throughout the year, students participate in a variety of field trips that provide opportunities for the community to engage with the school system. Students connect with a variety of businesses, county and state organizations, and community colleges as they make connections between their current learning and potential careers. All students are given another opportunity to connect with businesses and investigate careers at a career fair in which community members and organizations are invited into the school. Representatives from various community stakeholder groups are invited to participate as members of our School Improvement Advisory Committee. This group meets annually to review district academic and Conditions of Learning data and to establish short and long range goals. They also participate in providing valued input on topics such as Portrait of a Graduate, in which they help establish the goals of our school and our aspirations for our students. Our district regularly utilizes social media to engage the community at large by sharing items to celebrate, events to attend, and information to consider. At Maquoketa Valley, we

value open lines of communication to continually engage parents and the community in providing feedback on our current progress and ways we can improve.

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

Our school has created a family environment in which staff truly know and support one another, which allows the district to create an optimal learning and work experience for all involved. This begins on the first day of the school year, in which all district employees are invited to a breakfast that welcomes back current employees and embraces new employees as valued members of our work family. Building culture continues throughout the school year through a variety of efforts, such as social gatherings, fun school events and assemblies. Maintaining open lines of communication and encouraging input from staff lets them know that their perspective and experiences are valued. As a work family, all staff know that when their circumstances require flexibility, understanding, and support, it will be provided without question.

Ongoing support is also built into our educational system to promote a positive culture. Maintaining manageable class sizes has been a priority to facilitate the teacher's ability to know his or her students and individualize instruction to meet student needs. All of our paraprofessionals are trained to provide direct student support, which helps teachers meet the varying demands of the classroom. The middle school has a strong intervention system to target the social, emotional and academic needs of students. We have also increased our counselor support and work with various community agencies and therapists. By better meeting the needs of students, we better support teachers in working with all students, and a positive professional culture is maintained.

Professional development is also fundamental to building a positive professional culture in which staff feel empowered and supported to lead and collaborate with their colleagues, meet the needs of students, and meet the requirements of the state. A trauma-informed approach has been implemented district-wide which has included all district employees so that everyone is included in building a common approach to best meet students' social emotional needs. Staff have also been given information about and are encouraged to develop self care plans.

Our administrative team, School Board, and Area Education Agency are also sources of support that assist in building a positive professional culture. At Maquoketa Valley, we value open lines of communication to continually engage staff in providing feedback on our current progress and ways we can improve, communicating our dedication to a building and maintaining a positive professional culture.

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

At Maquoketa Valley, we believe that true leadership is one of servant leadership and staff empowerment. Through this leadership style, we have developed a structure in which roles and responsibilities have been defined to focus on student achievement. This structure includes teachers, administrators, and stakeholders.

Teachers provide leadership within their classrooms with students and at staff meetings with their colleagues. Our teacher leadership system has created roles that focus on meeting the varying needs of both students and staff, which ultimately result in improved student achievement. Our interventionist leads the process of creating student-specific plans to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of students. Our Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) coaches facilitate weekly scoring sessions to support teachers as they work to create rigorous and relevant learning opportunities for students. Our technology lead provides leadership in advancing technology integration, and content area team leads facilitate their colleagues in their work to implement Assessment for Learning, AIW, and engagement practices in their classrooms. Mentors also play a critical and valued role in providing guidance to teachers new to the profession.

Our administrative team includes our superintendent, School Improvement Coordinator, and building principals. Our superintendent ensures that our bi-weekly administrative team meetings maintain an unwavering focus on student achievement and meeting the needs of students and staff in order to achieve at high levels. Our school improvement coordinator ensures that our goals are clear, an action plan is in place to meet these goals, and support and resources are provided so teachers can meet the needs of students in

their classroom. Our middle school principal ensures that action plans are implemented, teachers are supported, and that building and maintaining positive relationships remain a priority.

Stakeholders are also an integral part of our leadership structure. Various groups are represented on our School Improvement Advisory Committee, which look at a variety of data regarding our school and make recommendations on goals and improvement efforts. Our School Board provides strong leadership to oversee that policies and distribution of resources focus on meeting student needs that will result in strong student achievement. Through these various roles within our leadership structure, we have maintained a constant focus on the elements needed for all students to achieve at high levels.

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

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While there have been many strategies that have contributed to the success of Maquoketa Valley Middle School, there is one area that has been most instrumental to our school's success, which is our dedication to meeting the social emotional needs of our students.

Our school has created a family environment in which staff truly know their students and use that knowledge to meet their students' needs. Staff realize that building relationships is fundamental. They believe that, "Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care," (John Maxwell), and they work tirelessly to build positive, caring relationships. This shared focus on the importance of relationships has been fostered through professional development opportunities that have been embraced by our staff. A trauma-informed approach has been implemented district-wide which has included all district employees so that everyone is included in building a common approach to best meet students' social emotional needs. Staff have also been given information about and are encouraged to develop self care plans so that they have the emotional energy to continue to support their students. Students also have plans specific to their needs, designed by our intervention team, to meet their social, emotional and academic needs of students. These plans often include support from our school counselors, therapists that our district has partnered with, and community agencies.

Social-emotional learning occurs naturally in all classrooms at Maquoketa Valley. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making are part of our daily way of doing business. Building the self-efficacy of students is yet another way to meet their social emotional needs, and our district has focused on instructional strategies to do so. Teachers provide clear learning targets and utilize an effective formative assessment process that includes timely feedback and self-assessment practices.

All of these efforts to meet the social emotional needs of students provide the foundation that allows students to fully access learning opportunities and succeed in the classroom and in life.