

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 200 South Lincoln Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Park Ridge State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60068-3812

County Cook County

Telephone (847) 318-4215 Fax (847) 318-4210

Web site/URL https://www.d64.org/lms E-mail dszwed@d64.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. Eric Olson E-mail eolson@d64.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Park Ridge-Niles School District #64 Tel. (847) 318-4300

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. Denise Pearl
(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, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

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, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

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	124	109	233
7	130	105	235
8	124	135	259
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	378	349	727

*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
 - 4.3 % Asian
 - 0.3 % Black or African American
 - 7.8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 85.4 % White
 - 2.1 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 2%

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

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	5
(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, 2019	721
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

Albanian/Gheg (Kosovo/Macedon), Arabic, Bengali, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cantonese (Chinese), Croatian, Czech, Farsi (Persian), Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Mandarin (Chinese), Pilipino (Tagalong), Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Telugu (Telegu), Ukrainian, Urdu

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
22 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3 %

Total number students who qualify: 19

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %
99 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>13</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>20</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>36</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>3</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	32
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	31
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

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 23:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	96%	96%
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 2020.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Our school mission is aligned with our District 64 Mission. At Lincoln Middle School we inspire every child to discover, learn, achieve, and care.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Lincoln Middle School has operated under several different instructional models during the 2020-21 school year. From the start of school in August until early fall, all Lincoln students were accessing full-remote learning per pandemic concerns. In mid-October, a hybrid model as implemented as the public-health circumstances allowed the school some controlled direct access to the student population. Students were assigned to one of two learning groups that limited the number of students in the building in order to accommodate health and safety guidelines and recommendations. Students were also assigned to specific homeroom cohorts that limited movement within the building. Teachers rotated through these cohorts for core academic and elective classes. Sixth-grade students had the opportunity to attend two full days of in-person learning per week. Seventh and eighth-grade students also had the opportunity to attend in-person classes, however, only for half days and for their core academic classes.

This model operated until mid-November when Lincoln and all district schools again returned to full-remote learning per the pandemic mitigation. After a two-week “adaptive pause” to start the new calendar year, Lincoln Middle School again returned to a hybrid learning model. With this return, all in-person students were able to attend two or three full days per week on a rotating basis.

With our return from spring break, Lincoln welcomed back all in-person students for five full days of in-person instruction. Like the previous model, this hybrid approach will have both in-person

and fully-remote students accessing live/streamed instruction concurrently. For the full school year, students have had access to both their core and elective classes through these mediums.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

Lincoln Middle School is a neighborhood school in Park Ridge, Illinois, a northwest suburb of Chicago. With an enrollment of just under 730 students across three grade levels, Lincoln is one of two middle schools in Park Ridge-Niles School District 64. About 3% of the students at Lincoln are English learners, with Spanish and Polish being the languages most spoken. About 3% of our students receive free or reduced lunch. Fourteen percent of our student population has an IEP.

Located near O'Hare airport, major expressways, and the Metra railways, Park Ridge is an upper-middle class community that is popular with urban professionals who enjoy the convenience of city access and a close-knit small town feel. A collaborative parent community partners with staff to provide support for students' academic and social emotional development. More than anything, it is the school system that draws people to Park Ridge and keeps them rooted here well afterwards. Lincoln's parents and students prioritize education and opportunity, and Lincoln is proud to have been able to provide both since its doors opened in 1928. The school has a mobility rate of just 2%.^{[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9][10][11][12][13][14][15][16][17][18][19][20][21][22][23][24][25][26][27][28][29][30][31][32][33][34][35][36][37][38][39][40][41][42][43][44][45][46][47][48][49][50][51][52][53][54][55][56][57][58][59][60][61][62][63][64][65][66][67][68][69][70][71][72][73][74][75][76][77][78][79][80][81][82][83][84][85][86][87][88][89][90][91][92][93][94][95][96][97][98][99][100]}

We are a school community with a strong sense of pride and tradition, and one with many of our students' parents being alumni of the school. We are committed to the development of each individual student and take pride in the opportunities we provide for our students. With our commitment to academic achievement and curricular exploration through a robust elective program, students are able to explore and develop their unique interests as learners and as individuals. Our commitment is to relationships and opportunities, and our students gain a sense of self and a connection to the larger community in which they live.

In addition to our core academic program, Lincoln provides a well-rounded elective program and extra-curricular offerings covering a breadth of student interests. Extra-curricular offerings are provided throughout the school year and have a large number of students who participate in them. These clubs and activities are largely student-driven and interest-based with support from adult sponsors. In spite of the pandemic, we have been able to connect many of our kids to virtual clubs and have maintained these programs this year. We understand that involvement in these clubs, activities, and extra-curricular offerings increase student motivation and foster positive relationships and social-emotional skills. This year we are proud to offer participation in the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). This student-run club welcomes anyone who supports LGBTQ+ causes, including non-LGBTQ+ allies, and provides a safe place for students to meet, support each other and talk about issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Other opportunities include Girls Who Code, Literary Lions Book Club, Lincoln Holiday Movie, Chorus, Lincoln Musical (Little Mermaid, Jr.), Peer Buddies, Rubik's Cube Club, Marvel Club, Musical Tech, and the Mandalorian Club.

Lincoln also recognizes the importance of service learning towards building an awareness of supporting others within and outside of the Lincoln community. To assist to this end, student leadership opportunities are also widely available and strongly encouraged. Our Student Government Association (SGA) involves student leaders from each grade-level homeroom to plan, organize, and promote school-wide events, charitable efforts and awareness campaigns in which the entire school community can participate. Additionally, WEB ("Where Everybody Belongs") is a student leadership program that assists with the orientation and transition of sixth-grade students to Lincoln. Built on the belief that students can help students succeed, the program trains mentors from our eighth-grade class to be WEB Leaders. As positive role models, WEB Leaders are mentors who guide younger students to discover what it takes to be successful during the transition to middle school and help facilitate their success.

Lincoln partners with community resources as part of its larger approach to family assistance, including a partnership with MaineStay Youth & Family Services. MaineStay serves the mental health needs for the Park Ridge community and provides access to treatment for those who lack financial resources for counseling and psychiatric services. Through this partnership, our Future Leaders Mentoring targets students who may need additional support and connection to peers, adults, and the larger school community. In addition, this year, with the support of District 64's Educational Foundation and in partnership with Rush Medical Center, Lincoln launched a "Mindfulness and Coping" class to support students' social-emotional

development. The course targets mindfulness for at-risk students experiencing anxiety and seeks to decrease non-productive behaviors and perceptions impacting student attendance. Bringing these community resources directly to the school has yielded dividends for student development and broadened the support structures at our school.

We enjoy the support of and partnership with our parent community, and the Lincoln Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) fosters a meaningful middle school experience for all. The Lincoln PTO provides opportunities for each of our grade levels that look to promote a sense of belonging and inclusion amongst students. The Sixth Grade Fall Festival, Seventh Grade Mid-of-Mid Celebration, and the 8th Grade Promotion Dance are events that are well-attended by parents and families and demonstrate our commitment to students and enhance the home-school partnership at the foundation of our learning community. [L] [SEP]

Communication is a priority at Lincoln Middle School and is used to enhance our partnership with parents and families and to open lines of communication with them. Whether informally through our Open House, Elective Night, or Fall/Spring Conference events, or more formally through our weekly “Lincoln at a Glance” newsletters, video/webinar updates, school website, parent portal, and team communications, we welcome parents to be involved with and informed of the students’ progress, educational opportunities, and academic programming.

[L] [SEP] The true culture and environment of Lincoln is one that is better experienced and felt than simply enumerated and described in prose. There is an energy that exists, one that is palpable, that moment you enter the building. It is seen through students’ interactions with staff and with each other. It is found in the support and opportunity offered for students and parents.

Lincoln Middle School has not previously received the National Blue Ribbon Award.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

When considering modifications for health protocols, Lincoln was committed to maintaining instructional rigor and student engagement. Prior to school closures, Lincoln had implemented a 1:1 Chromebook model. Instruction in spring 2020 consisted of learning boards with limited teacher/student interactions. At the launch of the 2020 school year, Schoology was implemented to support e-learning, video conferencing became the norm, and students participated in all classes virtually. When Lincoln later transitioned from full remote to a hybrid model, teachers and students learned how to implement instruction with half of the class at home and half at school. Digital conferencing includes opportunities for one-to-one interaction with teachers, small group work, and whole class discussions. With access to digital tools like Schoology, Kami, Pear Deck, and digital resources like NewsELA and online texts, we have been able to successfully modify daily instruction in all core areas.

ELA classes are based on a reading and writing workshop model to provide a highly differentiated curriculum and opportunities for self-selected text. Teachers use common grade-level assessments and formative classroom assessments (e.g., exit slips, annotations, writing pieces) to identify the needs of small groups. Students participate in a vocabulary curriculum based on classical roots to support word study. Teachers also address explicit grammar concepts through units in narrative, non-fiction, and argumentative writing. “Channels of Challenge ELA” is offered to students who are excelling in the area of reading. A co-taught ELA class is offered at each grade level where an ELA teacher partners with a Special Education Resource teacher to co-plan and implement differentiated activities. In all ELA classes, teachers use Lexile levels and student conferences to match students to texts and create an individualized level of challenge.

The math curriculum is highly differentiated; students have the opportunity to participate in resource math (two or more grade-levels below), grade-level math, accelerated math (one grade-level beyond) or “Channels of Challenge Math” (two grade levels beyond). Common summative assessments are used across the grade level curriculum and individual teachers implement formative assessments to make instructional decisions. Eighth grade Accelerated Math and 7/8 Channels of Challenge Math are aligned to the high school program and include an inquiry-based curriculum where students begin each unit endeavoring to solve a performance task with peers. In addition to targeting important career and college readiness skills like teamwork, creative thinking, and problem-solving, this curriculum is an Integrated Math curriculum, which explores topics in algebra, geometry, and statistics. Integrated Math courses are the same courses taught in the high school district and Lincoln uses the same summative assessments as our high school colleagues. Eighth graders in Advanced Math complete Integrated Math I and eighth graders in Channels of Challenge Math complete Integrated Math II. Similar to ELA, a co-taught math class is offered at each grade level to support struggling students.

Science classes reflect the Next Generation Science Standards. At each grade level, students participate in sustained inquiry to explore the four domains: Physical Science, Life Science, Earth and Space Science, and Engineering. The curriculum includes extensive hands-on activities to support modeling and investigation. For example, one highlight of students’ middle school experience is a 7th grade inquiry focused on ecosystems. In this unit, student teams establish a pond ecosystem and then collect and analyze data to explain the impact of resource availability on organisms that evolve and are introduced into the system. College and career readiness are emphasized including data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, modeling, and teamwork. Because of this hands-on, experiential emphasis, science has been the most difficult area to address. Due to safety protocols, students currently have limited access to shared supplies and science labs. Our teachers have worked diligently to pack science kits for students to use at home and in alternate classroom settings so students are still able to conduct modified experiments that align with the curriculum.

Social studies classes reflect the C3 Framework. Sixth graders study ancient civilizations and make connections between these past structures and modern government. Seventh and eighth graders study American history and civic responsibility. Units target important life skills like gathering/evaluating sources and using evidence to develop claims and counterclaims. These important college/career readiness skills are

bolstered by assessments from the DBQ Project. In these assessments, students look at diffuse evidence from primary and secondary sources and pose a response to compelling questions.

In addition to the formative and common summative assessments analyzed by teaching teams, Lincoln has a Lincoln's Quality Improvement Team that is responsible for analyzing school-wide data on benchmark assessments (e.g., NWEA MAP and IAR). This information is shared with grade level teachers who plan for differentiated instruction during common team times. Classroom teachers, student services teachers, and English learner teachers are part of this co-planning to provide support and expertise for meeting student needs.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

Core classes integrate student real-world experiences that connect students to events outside of school. Classroom activities involve multidimensional approaches that include observation, inquiry, and "hands-on" experience. Focusing on project-based learning requires students to plan, execute, and reflect through their study. Lincoln's elective classes align to experiences in the areas of the arts, science and engineering, and civics and economics. For example, Show Me the Money class teaches financial responsibility and budget planning, and Broadcasting class allows students to utilize video production resources to conceptualize, film, edit, and broadcast weekly student announcements, event promotions, and full-length films. While students do not earn high school credit for advanced classes, students in our Math and Foreign Language programs are able to enter high school on an advanced track.

Lincoln provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate leadership by encouraging participation in after-school clubs and student organizations. After-school clubs are student-driven and offer connections across a wide range of fields like the Girls Who Code, Service Club, and Musical Tech. Students can take on leadership roles as a part of our Student Government Association (SGA), WEB Program (Where Everybody Belongs), and Future Leaders Club.

Lincoln Middle School also works with community resources to support college and career exploration. Most recently, students had the opportunity to partner with our local community college and the Futures Unlimited program. This provides girls and gender expansive students with opportunities to explore careers in STEM and includes sessions with female role models and hands-on workshops led by faculty, graduate students, and professionals. Lincoln's Guidance Team supports teachers with the implementation of a Career Education unit. In conjunction with Junior Achievement, this unit assesses students' career interests and invites them to explore careers that align to these interests. Students also attend sessions hosted by local professionals who are working in a career of interest.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at Lincoln enjoy access to a rich exploratory/elective curriculum. Classes are aligned to experiences in college/career readiness in the areas of visual and performing arts, science and engineering, mathematics, civics, and English language arts. All students participate in daily Physical Education classes which target fitness skills in addition to team sports. All students also participate in an SEL curriculum twice per month. This curriculum targets prosocial skills for middle school students, including anti-harassment and anti-bullying, positive self-esteem, and conflict resolution.

Sixth graders participate in exploratory classes, including Art (one trimester), Music (one trimester), Family & Consumer Sciences (.5 trimester), Industrial Technology (.5 trimester), Foreign Language (one semester of Spanish or French), Health (one quarter), and Technology (one quarter).

Seventh graders have four class periods dedicated to electives. During these four class periods, seventh graders are enrolled in Physical Education (all year), Art (one trimester), Music (one trimester - Vocal

Power, Electronic Keyboard, or Guitar), Health (one trimester), ELA elective (one trimester - Broadcasting, So the Story Goes, or Speak Up). Eighth graders are enrolled in Physical Education (all year), Health (one trimester), and one ELA elective. For the remainder of their trimester classes, 7th and 8th graders can select from between 17-25 additional electives. Options include coursework in: French or Spanish (year-long class), strategy games, financial literacy, civics and debate, life science, printmaking, music lab, music theater, foods, sewing, industrial technology, multimedia, painting/drawing, photography, ceramics, vocal power, plastics, and woods.

Mobility and cohort mixing have been significantly limited at Lincoln due to health protocols. Because of this, 7th and 8th graders were unable to self-select electives this year. However, electives were assigned to homeroom pods so that students could continue to access these experiences. All students continued to participate in PE, Health, and one ELA elective. Other elective assignments were based on students' previous experiences and the availability of staff.

During remote and hybrid learning, we organized frequent "supply pick-up" events so students learning from home would have all necessary materials (e.g., clay, paint brushes, science equipment, sheet music, guitars, etc.). Activities were modified to reflect the materials we were able to provide for students at home. For example, woods and plastic classes focused more on drafting. Students in music classes pre-recorded songs to adapt to the time lag in video conferencing. Art students had individual sketchbooks to track their progress. Science experiments were adjusted so students did not use chemicals or a heat source. Physical education was adapted to target individual fitness levels. Foreign language was better aligned to previous student experiences but all information was moved to digital presentations so all students could "see the board." Foods classes were simplified so recipes could be recreated at home.

Because students were assigned to electives by their classroom pods, some students repeated elective courses that they had previously taken. In these cases, teachers reworked the curriculum to accommodate a "deeper dive" into content or to create new activities for students related to the elective content.

3. Academic Supports:

Lincoln's Quality Improvement Team reviews benchmark data from the NWEA MAP assessment to determine intervention eligibility and establish annual goals. Lincoln's Behavior Team reviews data from attendance, behavior reports, and the climate/safety survey to identify goals related to students' social emotional development.

A key focus in District 64 professional development has been using formative assessment to drive differentiated instruction. Students below grade level have access to differentiated Core strategies like small group pre-teaching/reteaching, modifications to assignments, and adaptive strategies (e.g., manipulatives, recorded texts, 1:1 support before or after school, etc.).

Students who require additional support outside of Core differentiation may participate in intervention classes for reading, math, or executive functioning support. Intervention classes replace an elective choice and are provided for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 students. Intervention classes implement a research-based curriculum and provide for frequent progress-monitoring to make adjustments to instruction as needed. Students move into other elective choices when grade-level performance gaps are closed.

Lincoln has a unique approach for supporting students with executive functioning needs. ASC (Academic Support Class) is an elective course based on a curriculum from the Rush Neurobehavioral Center. The curriculum includes support for materials/time management, study strategies, and personal growth. Students learn about goal setting and their own personal strengths.

Students who receive support from our Student Services Team have access to Core instruction as well as an additional resource class and/or a class that is co-taught by a general education and

special education teacher. Resource classes meet daily and may either reteach the Core curriculum or utilize a replacement curriculum that builds foundational strategies.

Lincoln's English Language Learners receive support through differentiated Core instruction. The English Learner teacher supports classroom teachers with integrating appropriate strategies. The English Learner teacher may also co-teach with subject area teachers. At times, English Learners may meet as a group during an elective class period. In this small group instruction, teachers typically build off of topics and vocabulary in the Core curriculum to scaffold students' learning. In the content areas, teachers use Lexile levels to match students to appropriately challenging texts.

Students performing above grade level also benefit from differentiated curricular experiences in their Core classes. We utilize a workshop model in reading and writing so that teachers can match students to texts at their instructional level and design open-ended activities that stretch students in their learning. In math, science, and social studies, accelerated learners benefit from inquiry-based experiences where they are proposing solutions to compelling challenges. Activities may also be adjusted. For example, in science, advanced students may be challenged to calculate complex data sets while struggling students may be provided a data set. Students who are exceeding grade level standards may be eligible for Lincoln's Channels of Challenge Program in reading and math. The Channels of Challenge Program provides students with academic experiences one-two levels above their current grade level.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At Lincoln Middle School, we believe that a positive climate and culture supports academic, social and emotional growth in our students. In our response to the pandemic, our focus was centered on maintaining a connection to students and to providing opportunities that engage and excite them.

Over the course of the past school year, teachers and staff have worked diligently to increase their familiarity with and implementation of instructional strategies and technology resources to make learning more accessible and engaging. The 2020-2021 school year has proven that with proper instructional tools and training, e-learning and hybrid instruction can continue to connect students to their teachers and content in personal and effective ways.

As a building and as a staff, we are continually committed to Lion Pride and Pawsitivity - our way of recognizing those people, both staff and students, who represent the qualities that make Lincoln a positive learning environment of which we are proud. Each week, staff look to recognize each other through Shout-Outs and Recognitions at building meetings or weekly newsletters. Staff recognize students, each month, for their efforts and share their pride with the students, their parents, and the whole school staff and student body through video conferences and school-wide broadcasts.

In addition to our core academic program, Lincoln provides an expansive well-rounded elective program and extra-curricular offerings covering a breadth of student interests. Extra-curricular offerings are provided throughout the school year and have a large number of students who participate in them. These clubs and activities are largely student-driven and interest-based. In spite of the pandemic, we have been able to connect many of our students to virtual clubs and have, as best possible, maintained these programs as part of our middle school. We understand that involvement in these clubs, activities, and extra-curricular offerings increase student motivation and foster positive relationships and social-emotional skills.

Teachers and staff implement an explicit Social Emotional Learning curriculum to enhance and reinforce the social development of students. These lessons focus on relevant and important topics for students and allow open discussion of current events and student realities. Additionally, social-emotional support is provided through and enhanced by the team concept across the grade levels. Teams of teachers, with shared students, regularly meet with students, support staff, and/or parents to recognize accomplishments and achievements and to address academic and social challenges in constructive and personalized conversations.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Lincoln Middle School has a long-standing culture of engaging families and community. We understand the importance of partnerships in order to enhance student learning and middle school experience.

The Lincoln school community is a village with reach beyond the footprint of land the school sits on and involves many stakeholders. To engage with parents around school-specific topics and to offer further understanding of current topics in education, we offer various learning opportunities for parents in collaboration with the District and local organizations. Most recently, Lincoln partnered with Maine Stay Youth and Family Services and Rush Medical Center to provide parents an opportunity to engage with staff and education/social work professionals on the challenges of this pandemic year. Lincoln recently hosted a three-part parent series (“Nothing’s Normal: Understanding and supporting well-being and school success in these abnormal times” - lead by Dr. Brenda Huber from Rush Neurobehavioral Center) addressing the challenges parents and students face during this challenging time.

At the school level, we have a strong commitment to involving students and staff in service learning and ensuring that we provide opportunities for students to extend themselves beyond the walls of Lincoln to the broader world. Last year students were involved in charitable and philanthropic activities such as Feed My Starving Children, Food Drives for the Maine Township Food Pantry, Toys for Tots, and Sock’n It to

Cancer Sock Drive.

Communication is a priority at Lincoln Middle School. We understand the need for consistent and clear communication that allows all to be informed of and familiar with the happenings at the school and district levels. Over the past year, Lincoln has provided more opportunities for live webinars and video recordings on specific Covid and learning procedures to assist in the communication of specific school-related information, particularly as we return students to school.

Our Lincoln PTO is an integral partnership in the engagement of and involvement with Lincoln families and the local community. Through regular fundraising efforts, they have afforded our school funding opportunities for teacher and school improvement projects. Our Lincoln PTO provides many opportunities for parents to become involved in our school events, and has generously funded many learning projects such as our Broadcasting Studio, Maker Space-Learning Medium, Seed Library, Go Green initiative, and supported positive behavior rewards. Parents, in supporting these endeavors are an integral part of our school community and are welcomed in our students' academic and social experiences.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Lincoln supports teacher growth through a continuum of professional development models that includes peer coaching, district-hosted workshops, and teacher-lead workshops. These activities take place during the school day, at Department meetings, on Early Release Wednesdays, and on District Professional Learning Days.

Lincoln currently employs a full-time Instructional Technology Coach (ITC) as well as a Curriculum Specialist/Liaison for each subject area. The ITC uses feedback from observations and dialogue with teachers to provide essential job-embedded coaching. The ITC role has been critical this year as staff made the tremendous transition to remote learning and then from remote learning to hybrid learning. The ITC has provided extensive sessions about student engagement strategies and technology tools (e.g., Schoology, PearDeck, Kami, Hapara). In addition, the ITC has been available "on-demand" to support students and teachers with technology glitches. The ITC has also provided extensive parent education to support families during remote learning.

Curriculum Specialists/Liaisons have provided support with designing lesson presentations so students can access content via remote learning platforms. This provided teachers with a cohesive scope and sequence and also created consistency among grade-level teams. Curriculum Specialists/Liaisons have also hosted department discussions to prioritize learning standards. They have supported teams with reviewing student data and are starting to plan for remediation next year.

Lincoln's early release Wednesday schedule offers an opportunity for staff to participate in both district-hosted and teacher-led activities. Teacher leaders are encouraged to host workshops to share their areas of expertise. This has been especially important this year as staff have shared ideas for transforming lessons into activities that are engaging and accessible via remote learning platforms.

Lincoln-specific professional development is led in part by our Quality Improvement Team (QIT), a teacher-driven school improvement committee. QIT meets regularly to discuss students' academic and social-emotional needs, as well as the professional learning needs of teachers.

Staff are surveyed throughout the year to assist with professional development planning. For example, recent staff survey data supported professional learning around sharing timely feedback with students and the "flipped learning" model.

This year, QIT's professional development theme has centered on student engagement, incorporating Marzano's research on a highly engaged classroom and the specific strategy of effective questioning. During early-release Wednesdays, Lincoln teachers have participated in an adapted teacher-driven "Edcamp" model planned with teachers choosing a session that best meets their class/instructional needs.

4. School Leadership:

Lincoln Middle School is committed to a shared leadership model that seeks input and involvement of all representative groups. This year, our “Potential in Together” theme was evidenced through our collaborative efforts in response to the pandemic. This approach has contributed to our cohesiveness as a staff, and allowed seamless implementation of adjustments to our scheduling, structures, and instruction.

Beginning in spring 2020 and continuing into this school year, teachers from the various departments, guidance staff, and administration worked as part of a district Remote Learning Committee to discuss the necessary adjustments in response to the pandemic. The committee reviewed staff and parent feedback to assist in guiding action steps and shifts in practices as we moved from fully-remote learning to a hybrid model. With the feedback provided, this committee collaborated to address the challenges, to work through them as a building, and to provide students access to teachers and instruction.

Administration works closely with school-based teams throughout the year and in support of building goals and the District’s Strategic Plan. As a staff, we understood that it was critical to keep these team structures in place to better respond to the social-emotional and academic needs of our students. Representatives from each grade-level team meet twice monthly with administration as Team Leaders to discuss and decide the logistics, structures, and global building needs and interests. Team Leaders also coordinate with their grade-level teams, Student Services staff, and administration to address the academic needs of the students they share. Further, these groups initiate the MTSS process for individuals or groups of students where programming may require adjustments. In addition, the Quality Improvement Team (QIT) shares in the leadership at Lincoln to analyze data and plan/implement our school improvement goals. Co-led by a teacher and the building principal, this leadership team of representatives from all content areas and grade levels planned and led staff development activities relating to our school and district goals. As a result of the pandemic’s impact on instruction, the QIT made a commitment to increase understanding and implementation of technological/digital instructional resources and applications to increase student engagement. QIT also supports the goals of student connection and authentic recognition.

While the health crisis impacted many of our structures and practices, shared leadership allowed us to provide meaningful instruction to our students and to create an environment that kept our students and staff safe and our building culture intact.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Lincoln Middle School embraces students, staff and societal differences. The school has a diversity education approach. Mandatory Health class is taught at the 6-8th grade levels. Topics include: racial differences, gender norms, gender fluidity, and religious diversity. The Second Step Curriculum addresses topics for students living in a diverse culture. These include: race and self-identity, addressing family and loss, ethics and injustice, making new students feel welcome and personal bias. Moreover, concepts taught address respect for individual body image/stereotyping, immigration, perception and discrimination, gender/female empowerment and peaceful problem solving.

The school embraces a diverse student body. Lincoln is proud of the Gay-Straight Alliance Club (GSA) that embraces differences related to sexual preference and gender fluidity. Acceptance of all students and their differences is central. The school’s Future Leaders program is for students who have leadership potential. Autism Awareness Month is a time where students with diverse needs are highlighted. Often students with special needs are part of the weekly Lincoln Middle School broadcast. Further, the “Lunch Buddies” program is where typically developing students will partner with students with more significant needs to foster socialization.

7th graders participate in a field trip called, “Walk for Water” and learn to carry water, in buckets for a long distance. This experience mirrors the novella - A Long Walk to Water. This text “blends

the true story of Salva Dut whose story is based in 1985, a part of the Dinka tribe and a Sudanese Lost Boy, and the fictional story of Nya whose story is based in 2008, a young village girl that was a part of the Nuer tribe. Park used this book as a platform to support Dut's organization, Water for South Sudan.” The aims are to empathize with others outside the immediate community.

Lincoln focuses on students’ becoming productive world citizens. The curriculum addresses equity, civics, politics, social justice and cultural awareness. Staff members plan lessons where these topics are discussed. In this pandemic year, the privileges of some and challenges for others, and various viewpoints, have come to the forefront. Teachers have facilitated dialogue to provide a voice to students for multiple perspectives.

Within the larger community the school’s “footprint” supports a diverse set of socio-economic and family cultures. The school’s approach promotes collaboration with local agencies and to support families that are part of the Lincoln Community.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Like many, Lincoln Middle School faces the challenges presented by the Covid-19 crisis and the closure of schools. While the shut-down created a distance between teachers and students and between schools and families, one practice we feel is beneficial in navigating our response is the continuation of the student and teacher teams and the implementation of homeroom cohorts. Having subscribed to the middle school philosophy of teams in previous years, we were highly intentional in maintaining this structure in our responsive practices and scheduling knowing the existing academic and social-emotional distances could be bridged by smaller learning communities. Our goal, to provide consistency for stakeholders while also being mindful of the adaptations required under health and safety best practices.

Learning from last spring's launch into an unfamiliar e-learning environment, we understood that challenges presented would not only continue to exist, but possibly compound the longer we continued in a remote or partially-remote platform. We observed a decrease in student engagement and connection to learning opportunities. We understood that implementing structures to increase students' connection to peers, to staff, and to instruction was the best approach. Additionally, given there was a high likelihood of needing to transition from full-remote, to hybrid, to in-person, and/or back to remote - we felt the consistency of our team structure would help weather any required change.

To limit movement and the mixing of student groups within the building, initial teams and assignments were broken down into smaller homeroom cohorts - a "team-within-a-team". Students would remain in these smaller cohorts throughout the course of the school day while teacher teams rotated to the classrooms for instruction. Students were assigned to homerooms with consideration of the students' academic needs and taking into account the limitations of physical space and allocation of staff. This required the rescheduling of all students and re-assignment of some staff. Movement for this model has limited some student choice in elective offerings. However, students' core academic programming was maintained while still offering daily exploratory opportunities. Additionally, we extended core academic times to a modified block schedule. This structure, once implemented, was able to remain in place for the remainder of the school year with little adjustment.

The benefits of teaming are undoubtedly important during a non-pandemic school year. However, this year has shown the benefit of this structure to be one that is critical to the academic success, physical safety, and social-emotional well-being of students.