

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 [X] Magnet[X] Choice

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

Official School Name Swanson Traditional School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 17677 Parker Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City South Bend State IN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 46635-1254

County St Joseph

Telephone (574) 393-2700 Fax (574) 393-2798

Web site/URL http://swanson.sb.school/ E-mail atroyer@sbcsc.k12.in.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. C. Todd Cummings E-mail ctoddcummings@sbcsc.k12.in.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name South Bend Community School Corporation Tel. (574) 393-6000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. John Anella
(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):
- 18 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 6 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 5 High schools
 - 2 K-12 schools
- 31 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	23	22	45
1	30	22	52
2	30	34	64
3	27	33	60
4	33	36	69
5	39	29	68
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	182	176	358

*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
 - 1 % Asian
 - 23.7 % Black or African American
 - 6.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 58.9 % White
 - 9.9 % 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: 21%

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

The most common reason for our mobility rate is that families move to a different home or relocate for a better job in another city or state. One family with four children moved to a new school due to foster care placement.

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	36
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	47
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	83
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	392
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.21
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	21

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

Arabic, Spanish, Kikuyo

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

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

Total number students who qualify: 125

8. Students receiving special education services: 22 %

80 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>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>3</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>56</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>9</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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. 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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	0
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 20:1

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	95%	95%	94%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

At Swanson Traditional School, we believe that a happy child is a successful student. We work together to provide a positive, safe, engaging environment where students enjoy learning, strive to reach their potential, and thrive today, tomorrow, and beyond.

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.

In response to the pandemic, Swanson Traditional School closed its doors in March 2020 and offered e-learning to our scholars for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. Staff members spent the summer in professional learning, preparing, and reviewing our safety entry plan, and hoping to open the school in August. Even though we desperately missed our students and our school family, the 2020-2021 school year began with 100% virtual learning until mid-October.

In October, the school board approved a hybrid learning model that allowed two-days, on-site, face-to-face, and virtual learning options. This exciting announcement came with new challenges for teachers. We were thrilled to have students back for two days a week. However, Group A’s face-to-face instruction at the beginning of the week and face-to-face instruction for Group B at the end of the week while simultaneously instructing virtual learning students was highly challenging. Teachers planned instruction, continued with LIVE meets and met with small, flexible groups. Even though this was an arduous charge to do with all three groups of students, teachers accomplished it with determination, discovery, and utilization of their skill sets.

In March 2021, the district asked Swanson Traditional School to pilot a four-day-a-week return to school program. Swanson’s safety protocols made the transition from two days a week to four days of in-person learning a success. As of March 2021, 84% of students participate in the four-day-a-week live teacher instruction while teachers continue to provide virtual education to our remote

scholars.

We keep pushing ourselves and our scholars. We keep supporting each other. We are proud of what we have accomplished. No matter what tomorrow brings, knowing we are a part of an amazing team where our students continue to make progress is what truly matters. When we have each other, we can get through anything—even a pandemic.

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

The South Bend Community School Corporation is proud to offer families a traditional elementary school magnet option for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Before acceptance into Swanson Traditional School, an application must be submitted. Based on grade level availability and compliance guidelines, families receive an official letter of acceptance. Then, the enrollment process begins. The opportunity for quality education for all students—regardless of demographic, race, or socioeconomic status—provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness, which is paramount in our magnet program.

PART III - SUMMARY

Swanson Traditional School is designed to allow students to achieve academic, social, and emotional growth in a highly structured and engaging setting. Located in the northeast part of South Bend, Indiana, Swanson is a beacon for the South Bend Community School Corporation. It serves as one of the three traditional magnet programs in the corporation based on a back-to-basics environment with modern-day best practices to emphasize community building, student responsibility, and parent involvement. There is an expectation for growth and high academic achievement and a foundation to create kind, responsible, and contributing citizens of our community through the many programs Swanson offers.

Swanson offers various programs to ensure all students succeed, no matter their socioeconomic status and academic background. The special education and speech programs work in conjunction with classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to provide well-rounded support for qualified students. Swanson staff members voluntarily organize basketball, futsal (soccer), and robotics programs, despite those not typically offered at the district's elementary level. Several Girls on the Run teams are created yearly. Swanson hosts business professionals with the Junior Achievement program. Another unique program is Reading with Rufus. This program enables students to read to dogs in the classroom weekly. An ornithology club can use the observatory overlooking the parent-teacher organization (PTO) funded Shadow Gardens. Students have the opportunity to participate in science fairs and Starbase, a military-funded program that enriches students in STEM activities. In addition to physical activities and clubs, there are character-focused activities such as daily social-emotional learning (SEL) activities and mentor programs facilitated by staff.

The staff has a mentality of 'I succeed when we all succeed.' Staff collaborates across grade levels to provide a seamless transition of quality learning and instruction. Swanson's goal is to limit class sizes to under 25 students, giving each student opportunities to grow and succeed. The staff has developed several ways to connect with and encourage students to do their best. The daily announcements include the P.A.W.S. (P-promise to be a peacekeeper, A-always be kind, W-work together, S-safety first) Pledge Swanson Song the teachers wrote. The teachers are actively involved in professional development. Staff members are trained in Whole Brain Teaching methods and use them to engage students and encourage appropriate behaviors. Teachers are also trained in Responsive Classroom to model effective communication methods and maintain consistent practices throughout the building. These attributes also bring a family dynamic to the building because each staff member takes pride in all students' success.

The culture of Swanson Traditional is formed by the mantra "it takes a community to raise a child." Families apply to Swanson because of its reputation for cheerful family and community involvement, as well as academic excellence. Parents and students sign a contract promoting exceptional behavior, intellectual responsibility, and active participation. Families must volunteer their time for 3 hours a year; however, many families consistently exceed that requirement. They routinely volunteer their time and energy to support the staff and students by reading with students, planning activities for classrooms, and working with small groups of struggling students. The parent-teacher conference participation rate is consistently above 95%.

Beyond attending to the needs of their children, the PTO also supports the staff in multiple ways. The PTO helps teachers with fundraising that provides the latest technology and educational tools and provides meals throughout the year. During Teacher Appreciation Week, the PTO organizes daily breakfast treats, buffet lunches, and prizes for the staff like gift cards, small presents, and staff t-shirts. They also organize family book fair nights, a bi-yearly carnival, auctions, holiday festivities and maintain an active website to inform parents of events. The relationship between parents and teachers is one of the essential aspects of Swanson's success.

The collective reason for the training, participation, programs, and collaboration are the Scottie Scholars. Swanson is very student-centered and does everything it can to ensure a successful educational experience for each student. Students participate in programs and are actively involved in making Swanson great. Growth scores, grades, and attendance are consistently among the highest of the 18 elementary schools in the district. Students help organize and participate in canned food drives, town hall meetings, and dress-

down days for local charities. Students collect and raise money each year to provide meals for families in need for Thanksgiving and Christmas, a hat and glove drive, and a Socks for the Homeless campaign to support local shelters.

Swanson is a family that takes care of not only its members but the surrounding community. Transitioning to COVID learning has made the school-to-family connection even stronger. The school continues to work to create online events, incorporate programs, and teach through the pandemic. Swanson Traditional fosters academic excellence, social-emotional stability, and family-oriented culture, making a thriving school with a “Swanson Strong” foundation.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Swanson Traditional School students are known as our Scottie Scholars. There are learning scholars, teaching scholars, thriving scholars, and successful scholars. Swanson Traditional School's principal supports teachers and students by promoting social and emotional competencies in a learning environment that is culturally aware of individual strengths and needs. Our responsive approach intentionally creates systems that cultivate joyful, engaging, and safe classrooms. With this positive environment developed, teachers and students can focus on academic competencies.

To support the core content subjects, the principal provided professional learning to ensure that teachers develop a deep understanding of the learning purpose that helps students master and apply transferable knowledge and skills. Goals are clearly articulated, linked to standards, embedded in instruction, and understood by students. Based on teaching points sensitive to academic backgrounds, life experiences, cultures, and language, we significantly help all Swanson Scholars achieve success.

This critical work began pre-COVID-19. Vertical teacher team meetings reviewed Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum. The ongoing, collaborative sessions allowed teachers to unpack these standards and develop learning targets that ultimately increased student achievement. School closures and remote or blended learning made it even more important than ever to understand student knowledge and the learning process. Data digs are done bi-weekly in professional learning committees (PLC). We look at NWEA benchmarks, RAZ Kids running records, writing samples, and other summative and formative assessments to assess the needs of our students. Scotties need to recover lost skills and continue to learn, and our teachers need to know how to plan effectively. Swanson Traditional School uses intervention programs such as WIN Time (What I Need) and differentiated tier II groups to help our students improve at things that are struggling with.

In addition to the daily classroom instruction, another successful intervention is the double dose of Foundations instruction. Small groups of students that are struggling with foundational reading skills meet daily with a teacher to have a second lesson on phonics skills.

Excellent core instruction, daily interventions, paired with a continued commitment to expanding our joyful student-centered classrooms, continues to help our Scotties thrive.

Our Traditional School curricular focus is that reading is the foundation of all learning and knowledge. This classic theory is embedded in our daily instruction. We offer a rigorous 120-minute literacy block designed to help students learn to read and read to learn. Teachers weave reading across the curriculum, allowing for a more comprehensive education. Literacy skills are used during math by reading books that focus on everyday math concepts. Literature is also a perfect starting point for getting students excited about the projects that define scientific inquiry. Furthermore, teachers utilize mentor texts during writing, reading, science, and social studies instruction. Using literacy and class discussions, we support children's social-emotional learning and incorporate Restorative Practices in education to develop and include student voice in building our school community. Our students are engaged and successful utilizing modern-day, student-centered best practices—cooperative learning, presentations, brainstorming, media creating, class discussions, small flexible groups, jigsaw learning, learning stations, hands-on and collaborative problem-solving experiments. Our Traditional School offers high-ability classes, small and flexible group learning, and excellent tier I, tier II, and tier III instruction to ensure academic success in all subject areas.

In mid-March 2020, when our district closed school buildings, we believed we would return to school in two weeks, but two weeks turned into two long months. The principal quickly responded to the changes and established a clear vision every step during the pandemic. The focus fast became making plans for distance learning. With clear communication, additional creativity, and online resources, we would continue our Scottie Scholars' education.

First, we established the instructional plan for our school by setting clear-cut expectations. Our plan was

written out and easy to follow. We were organized and consistent because families and students wanted to know what to expect with distance learning. Our students have always looked forward to schoolwork and a structured daily routine, so in each Google Classroom, we displayed the daily schedule with LIVE meet times and a checklist of daily tasks that needed to be completed. We began each day with a LIVE Morning Meeting and offered daily LIVE instruction in reading, math, and small flexible groups with assignments aligned to instruction in google slides. We communicated with parents the expectations and how to keep the learning moving forward.

This was a unique opportunity to use multiple means to communicate information to parents. For instance, we used our Swanson Facebook page, our website, emailing, and online communications tools like Class Dojo and Remind. The online communication applications are helpful, but phone calls provide a more personal and compassionate approach. The principal, social worker, and school nurse made phone calls to check in our families and students. This sent a caring message that they were not alone during this challenging time.

Finding ways to promote our positive school culture and climate in distance learning was a priority. We found fun and creative ways to keep the unique Swanson panache alive. We had daily announcements on Facebook, bedtime stories each evening, Facebook family trivia events, lunch bunch groups, parades, school spirit weeks, online awards programs, and virtual celebrations. Parents posted pictures of scholars' at-home workstations and shared videos about teaching and learning together at home. Scrolling through the old Facebook feed to see all the photos submitted are not only touching but will serve as historical records for this 2020-2021 Covid-19 school year.

Students have been doing things they never dreamed they would be doing during the school day. Our hard work and dedication to making sure our efforts remained equitable for our students were vital. A Chromebook for at-home learning was provided to each student. We identified homes without Wi-Fi and delivered hotspots to ensure that every student had access to online education. We printed hard copies of instructional material for students to pick up curbside. The result of these efforts resulted in community buy-in and 94% early participation in distance learning.

The pandemic continues, but we stay laser-focused, ensuring learning is consistently happening for students and staff. Building capacity in teachers with professional learning in technology and teaching virtually while having fun, being creative, and highly engaging with Whole Brain Teaching sessions have been ongoing.

We all have worked tirelessly to provide the best school experience possible during COVID-19, which has united us. This struggle has strengthened us and reminded us of the power of teamwork, resiliency, and grace.

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

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Swanson Traditional School, standards connect across the curriculum. Teachers have common plan time to collaborate on projects, learning targets and drive engagement in other classes. Our Related Arts teachers meet with our classroom teachers to align skills and goals for cross-curricular opportunities. This collaborative work helps our scholars make connections between subjects. It also communicates that topics matter across the board. Our physical education teacher works with factors and multiples when counting for warm-ups—a kindergarten class practices drawing 3D shapes in art class. Our music department and physical education staff combine classes and work on dance units. The teachers are working together to help

students master learning goals, and it is amazing what we accomplish when we work together.

Students also participate in library, social emotional learning (SEL) lessons, computer science instruction, and robotics. In a typical year, we plan events like talent shows, musicals, Art Museum Fair, Science Fair, robotic competitions, and Girls on the Run so each student can showcase their skills.

In response to the trauma of COVID-19, SEL lessons have become a vital component of daily instruction. This year, the administrator provided teachers a library of SEL mentor texts and Everyday SEL recommended by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies for social-emotional learning. Using SEL lessons builds social awareness, self-awareness, self-management skills, relationship building, and responsible decision-making skills. Everyday SEL helps promote healthy conversations about the competencies and why it is vital to develop a healthy mind, body, and heart. The related arts teachers were given SEL resources for their classrooms too. The music teacher uses songbooks that help connect students to SEL through songs. The art teacher uses daily lessons and drawing books to prepare the brain's creative or artistic side. The gym teacher uses yoga poses that help students regulate emotions and manage anxiety. Our Social Worker delivers trauma-informed evidence-based SEL lessons that focus on our diverse learners' daily united and welcoming place digital announcements. With these daily lessons, she empowers our scholars by helping them understand and manage emotions.

Through these evidence-based approaches, our students feel empowered to understand and manage their emotions, demonstrate empathy for others, and establish and sustain positive relationships with their peers and teachers. Our social worker works closely with at-risk students and supports Swanson by providing information on community resources.

The media center is a bedrock for reading and learning at Swanson Traditional School. Promoting a love for reading and fostering reading habits, our media specialist encourages Scottie Scholars to be lifelong learners. She collaborates with teachers to reinforce learning targets during library class and uses the read-aloud time to promote inquiry, collaboration, and growth mindset.

One benefit of the pandemic is the opportunity to rethink how digital technologies can support teaching and learning at Swanson. COVID-19 shaped our use of tech, and the creative benefits of how we used technology have helped to save our school during this pandemic. Swanson's digital integration specialist (DIS) has been a crucial resource for virtual learning with teachers, scholars, and parents, including introducing BitMoji classrooms. We watched our Google Slides turn into colorful classroom backdrops with cartoon teacher avatars. These Google classrooms represented an extraordinary online rendition of the familiar classroom space for our Scottie Scholars and their families to join each day. In this digital version of their classroom, students find out what they will be learning, access resources, and temporarily feel they were back at school in their classroom.

3. Academic Supports:

Swanson strives to support all of their students, especially during the pandemic. As a staff, we saw the importance of addressing social, emotional needs to focus on academic requirements. From the very beginning, our priority was constant communication with our families. If students weren't attending classes, we had a team of people that reached out to families to see what we could do to assist. The team included our principal, social worker, teachers, paraprofessionals, and instructional assistants. Our social worker immediately began meeting with students who need more emotional support with the constant changes in their lives. She also provided social and emotional lessons for the entire school during our digital morning announcements, which our full-time e-learners can access. She is always willing to offer additional resources for teachers to use in their classrooms. In addition to focusing on struggling students, our principal has developed a way to highlight students doing extraordinary things. Teachers call attention to students who have done outstanding accomplishments big and small, and the principal makes a Sunshine Call to the parents, praising their child's efforts.

Beyond social, emotional support, Swanson staff members have worked collaboratively to provide a quality academic experience. Teachers develop standard-based digital learning with both live and recorded lessons. With various digital resources like RAZ-Kids, Freckle, Lalilio, Khan Academy, IXL, Epic, Kahoot, Flipgrid, Blooket, Gimkit, students enrich their learning. Teachers organize the students' daily lessons in Google Suite or Seesaw. During complete e-learning and hybrid times, help desks have been made available to students for extra assistance with their assignments. The teachers and support staff have provided these help desks. As the year proceeded, we saw the effects of the pandemic on students' academic progress. We began providing additional support systems with pull-out and push-in intervention and after-school tutoring because of the deficiencies we saw. On Wednesdays, an e-learning day, our paraprofessionals continue to meet with students to assist with missing assignments and any other academic support. To keep students engaged, our staff read bedtime stories each night on Facebook Live during quarantine. Once the students returned, we wanted to keep that excitement about reading going, so we began a RAZ-Kids reading competition amongst grade levels. Overall, even during this challenging time, our focus has never turned from our students.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Swanson Traditional School promotes an environment that is positive and uplifting for all our students and staff. We often say, “we are better together” and “we are family” because we work to build Swanson as a united and welcoming place for all students. We engage and support students academically, socially, and emotionally in multiple ways and by utilizing specific programs.

We emphasize differentiated instruction. All staff members provide one-on-one support to students. During the pandemic, we would meet with students virtually via Google Meet for one-on-one help. Each staff member made time to be available to support students with classwork. Staff often had open office hours where students could simply press a link and be connected with an educator.

Swanson teachers strived to make learning engaging, even through remote learning, by introducing whole brain teaching strategies, which bring excitement into the room and keep students on task and motivated by using repetition, hand motions, games, and silly voices. Teachers also use goal setting to help encourage students. Not only are students well aware of the grade-level expectations, but they also create their own smart goals to have ownership. Goals that are achieved are celebrated, and more focus is placed on goals that are not met yet. The corporation also allowed us to pilot a reading program called Raz-Kids. Students read books at their level and take comprehension quizzes to earn stars to build their avatar, motivating them to become better readers. Teachers record messages and send them to students, which is highly encouraging and exciting for our scholars. Swanson started a Raz-Kids rally with incentives this year to promote reading. Our Scottie Scholars are given the strategies to succeed and have become intrinsically motivated to learn.

Besides academic support, we provide a positive and supportive social, emotional environment. We begin our school day by building community through morning meetings to check in with each student and bring unity into the classroom. We have school-wide virtual announcements each morning. Within this, our principal greets us with a positive and informative message each day. There are student-led pledges and mini lessons to promote social and emotional skills such as building friendships, practicing self-awareness, and managing emotions. We would read bedtime stories using Facebook Live to connect with our students at home during the pandemic. We even had a socially distanced car parade around our school to promote positivity and cheer on our Scotties during that difficult time.

Additionally, we had a virtual school-wide talent show, family trivia night, and field day to connect our students and make them feel like they never left our building. We continue to build school community and enthusiasm through weekly spirit wear days and dress-up days for holidays and special events. Our principal makes “Sunshine Calls” to families, highlighting academic successes and social and emotional celebrations.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

During COVID Swanson continued to encourage student and parent engagement. Our school kept families regularly informed through announcements on the Swanson Parent-teacher Organization (PTO) Facebook page and through bi-monthly newsletters from our principal. Our school also utilized various virtual platforms to host Facebook talks as live Q&A parent events, family trivia nights, parent-teacher conferences, individualized education plan (IEP) conferences, and evening bedtime stories read to students by staff as a unique way to remain connected with our families. Furthermore, teachers were in constant communication with parents through ClassDojo, Remind, emails, phone calls, newsletters, Google Meets, and socially distanced home visits. E-learning feedback surveys were sent out to parents to help us revamp our virtual instructional practice. Citywide Classroom South Bend also assisted in free internet services or hot spots for families in need. Additionally, Swanson held a parade in front of our school at the end of last school year as a farewell for students who struggled with social distancing and wanted to hug their teachers but instead could wave and send air high-fives. We celebrated student successes with a virtual end-of-the-year awards ceremony and then mailed certificates and awards to all of our scholars.

Historically, Swanson families and staff have built and promoted strong community partnerships with organizations that give back to the community. Over the past couple of years, our school has donated to Pet Refuge, supported Center for the Homeless and Clay Church Pantry through food and toiletry drives, and brought health organizations to campus for a Health Fair to promote awareness of healthy living. Moreover, Swanson is fortunate to continue with programs like Girls on the Run, which fosters confidence and self-esteem, and Read with Rufus which gives students a chance to read to a dog. Thanks to our positive community partnerships, organizations like Clay Church, Knights of Columbus, and Christ the King Lutheran Church have kindly provided assistance to our families in need through food and gift donations. Our community partners have also supported the staff by contributing to our morale-boosting efforts through sweet treats and small surprises. Additionally, Swanson welcomes community business members who come in one day a year for Junior Achievement (JA) Day to promote understanding of community, civics, and economics. Swanson also has partnerships with Oaklawn and 100 Black Men of South Bend—which offers mentorship opportunities for students. When our school and community organizations work together to support learning, everyone benefits; our programs are strengthened, supported, and transformed, which results in improvement and helps our scholars achieve their maximum potential.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

At Swanson, we believe that leadership and a core set of values sets the tone for fostering a climate that brings unity, positivity, camaraderie, and excitement for teaching. Walking through our building, you will find evidence that manifests our staff as valued and loved, whether that's a positive bulletin board, positive sticky notes from the principal, or even staff treats on special days.

Our principal asked each grade level to write down one or two words that described Swanson and who we are as a school. Once everyone wrote down their thoughts, the words and phrases were compiled into a school song that we now sing every day. Our principal valued our ideas and showed us that we have a voice. This song was meant to bring unity to our students and families, but the song also brings unity to our staff. We sing the song every morning, setting the tone for our workday as educators.

When the school was forced to close the doors due to COVID-19, teachers had to adapt to teaching students virtually quickly. Our principal set the tone for positivity and grace through such a traumatic time. During this time, the principal insisted on bringing our staff together as much as possible through staff meetings and grade-level meetings. She was available at any time to meet our needs and was consistently checking in with staff members to ensure that we were mentally and emotionally supported. She frequently offered suggestions on how to serve our students better and sent out staff surveys to get feedback. We shared resources and attended district professional development and a unique professional learning opportunity in the topic of Whole Brain Teaching. This was an exceptional experience that brought excitement for learning to the classroom, but it also brought our staff together in a fun way.

Through a worldwide pandemic, the Swanson staff has realized that we are stronger together. We lift each other through positive words. We cheer for one another and our successes. We truly are a family.

4. School Leadership:

The Principal at Swanson Traditional School credits the school's success to solid relationships, dedicated staff, community pride, parents' commitment, and community involvement. The mantra "it takes a community to raise a child" is evidenced in the number of volunteers, parents, and neighborhood businesses that support our school. This has been the solid premise at Swanson for years.

Swanson's principal is truly an instructional leader in the building and the person who sets the tone for learning. She is constantly assessing what is happening in the school. She creates a culture for learning and is immersed in the life of the school by following two golden rules: lead by example, and you can't lead from the main office. She is the first person students see in the morning, she visits classrooms throughout the day, and she is the last person students see when they are leaving for the day. She understands the importance of being highly visible among students, staff, and parents. By being "out and about," she creates a culture for learning and engages with the students to let them know they matter. To be frequently visible

throughout the building conveys the message that no responsibility or job is inconsequential.

Spending time in classrooms lets the teachers know that what they are doing is unquestionably the vital work of the school. The principal provides coaching feedback to teachers, and her presence is seen as a supportive, positive event. Her focus is improving instruction, and her priority is student progress.

During the pandemic, the principal leadership role changed immensely. The school community depended on their fearless leader to calm nerves and navigate ahead, even if it was into uncharted waters. Talking, transitioning, and transforming became the framework for thinking through this crisis and provided structure for responding. Communicating during the pandemic was absolutely critical to ensure that everyone had the most up-to-date information, understood re-entry plans, and knew safety protocols.

Helping teachers transition the way instruction is provided during COVID-19 has been an ongoing transforming work. Managing a crisis is not easy, but our principal thinks quickly and effectively to adapt and bring the school community through this incredibly challenging time. Despite the overwhelming pressures, our principal has demonstrated selflessly and solidly that Swanson Traditional School can depend on her.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At Swanson, we value and respect students, families, and staff of all backgrounds. We strive to have an inclusive school climate and culture where everyone feels respected and represented. Cultural awareness is incorporated in the class through literature, discussions, and project-based learning. At school, we begin our day with morning announcements that emphasize one of our core values, kindness, and social-emotional learning. Students and teachers experience and discuss different cultures by greeting each other in different languages to start the day. Classrooms participate in discussions and read aloud with subject matters that deal with current events, such as the election. Characters of different heritage and different cultural celebrations are also featured during read-aloud. From these read alouds, students were able to discuss current events and different beliefs respectfully. Teachers incorporate and celebrate various cultural holidays and diverse monthly celebrations, such as Black History Month, Women's History Month, Ramadan, Chinese New Year, and Hispanic Heritage Month. By learning about different people and cultures, students can celebrate their heritage, learn about each other, and discover what we have in common. We also teach to treat others with respect and create a safe and responsible school community through school-wide PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) assemblies. As a staff, we participated in a comprehensive corporation professional development on an implicit bias at the beginning of the school year. We learned and discussed equity, diversity, and inclusion. At Swanson, we understand the importance of respecting all people and strive to be inclusive in our instruction, and we acknowledge the importance of representation of all students.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

There are hundreds of impressive explanations as to why Swanson Traditional School is so remarkable. However, when you ask stakeholders why our Scottie Scholars thrive, the number one response is due to the relationship that staff cultivates with students. Having a teacher that cares is one of the strongest predictors of student success. Caring creates a connection of shared interest, kindness, respect, and trust. These qualities build a solid foundation for strengthening and nurturing relationships with each student. Learning is maximized when students feel safe, respected, and have a connection with their teachers.

COVID-19 caused us to close our doors and move to distance learning. This brought extraordinary changes in the way the staff interacted with our scholars. E-learning transformed how the teachers and students interacted and made fostering relationships challenging. We all were used to high-fives, handshakes, praise for a job well done, listening to each other, and being together. If we wanted our Scottie Scholars to master the standards, continue to love learning and be ready for the next grade level, it would require staying connected, providing continued support, and being together even when we were apart. We were so committed to staying connected that we planned car parades, virtual award ceremonies, celebrations, virtual family trivia nights, nightly bedtime stories, LIVE talks with the principal, socially distanced home visits, and drive-bys, so we could see our Scotties wave from windows. We committed to virtual daily check-ins with LIVE morning meetings, LIVE Instruction, LIVE small flexible group meets, and lunch bunch to cultivate relationships that, in return, maximizes learning. It was a priority during this difficult time for teachers to maintain relationships with students. During COVID-19, our staff focused on sustaining relationships, daily school routines, high expectations, and an abundance of resilience so that our Scotties Scholars continue to thrive today, tomorrow, and beyond.