

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 [X] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

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

Official School Name St. Croix Preparatory Academy Middle School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4620 Stagecoach Trail N
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Stillwater State MN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 55082-1197

County Washington

Telephone (651) 395-5919 Fax n/a

Web site/URL https://www.stcroixprep.org E-mail amykleinboehl@stcroixprep.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* Mr. Jon Gutierrez E-mail jgutierrez@stcroixprep.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name St. Croix Preparatory Academy Tel. (651) 395-5900

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. Bob Hajlo
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	48	45	93
6	45	49	94
7	45	51	96
8	45	49	94
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	183	194	377

*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
 - 10 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 81 % White
 - 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: ≤1%

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	2
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	375
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
4 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 6 %

Total number students who qualify: 24

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %

55 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>5</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>20</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay | <u>16</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</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: 12

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.	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 27:1

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%	97%	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.

St. Croix Preparatory Academy will develop each student's academic potential, personal character, and leadership qualities through an academically rigorous and content-rich educational program grounded in a classic tradition.

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.

St. Croix Preparatory Academy Middle School began the 2020-21 school in a hybrid learning model. Students were divided into two cohort groups mostly by alpha last names A-L and M-Z. The Blue Cohort attended school on Monday and Tuesday and the Gold Cohort attended school on Wednesday and Thursday. Fridays were designated as Distance Learning days for all students. One-hundred and-six middle school students chose to learn online only from home in the fall. In November 2020, COVID case rates rose, and we transitioned to online-only for all students. On February 22, 2021, the middle school students returned to the four-day hybrid model in the Blue and Gold Cohorts. Students, who were in Distance Learning online-only models in the fall, were allowed to return to school in a cohort group if they desired. Thirty-four students transitioned back at this time. Fridays remained as Distance Learning days for all students. On March 15, 2021; the middle school returned to a five-day in-Person learning model. Sixty-eight middle school students continued in the Distance Learning online-only model.

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

Admission to St. Croix Preparatory Academy is open to all students without regard to ability, race, religion, or any other factors, other than the capacity of the program, class, grade level, or building.

Each school year, the Board establishes the open enrollment period applicable to the following school year's admission and publishes this information to the school community (enrolled families and staff) and the local community.

Prior to the open enrollment period, the School asks families of currently enrolled students to complete an "Intent to Return" form, regarding their plans of returning to the School for the following year's enrollment. This form is not binding, as all existing students have the right to return to the School regardless of whether or not or how the "Intent to Return" form is completed. The School uses the responses to provide assistance with the School's planning and management.

The School allows for on-line or paper enrollment applications for potential students. All applications are date and time-stamped. The applications are made available on the first day of the enrollment period.

All applications received during the open enrollment period are automatically accepted for enrollment, unless more applications are received than the maximum grade enrollment established by the Board. In this situation, all submitted applications for that grade will move to the lottery process, except for siblings of enrolled students, foster children of parents of currently admitted students, and children of staff employed by the School. Siblings, foster children of parents of currently admitted students, and children of licensed teachers will move to their own separate lottery process. Siblings and foster siblings of already enrolled students, who have submitted an application before the expiration of the open enrollment period, will be automatically enrolled unless the combined number of siblings and foster siblings exceeds the available seats within the grade. If the combined number of siblings and foster siblings exceeds the available enrollment in any grade, a sibling and foster sibling lottery will be conducted for each grade. Sibling and foster siblings are admitted to the School in the order in which they are drawn in the lottery. If grade enrollment is filled by siblings and/or foster siblings, the sibling and foster sibling waitlist continue. The Sibling and Foster Sibling waitlist has preference over the general waiting list.

Children of employees of the School, who have submitted an application before the expiration of the open enrollment period, will be automatically enrolled unless the number of children of employees exceeds the available seats within the grade. If the number of children of employees exceeds the number of available seats in the grade, the employee-children lottery will be conducted. Children of employees are admitted to the school in the order in which they are drawn in the lottery. If all available enrollment in a grade is filled by children of employees, the employee-children lottery continues to establish an employee-children waitlist for each such grade.

If the number of applications received during the open enrollment period exceeds the number of available seats in any grade (and after siblings and foster siblings of enrolled students are already admitted or establish a sibling and foster sibling waitlist and after children of employees at the School are already admitted or establish an employee-children waitlist; the School will conduct a general lottery. All applications for any such grade (excluding applications from children of employees of the School and siblings and foster siblings of already enrolled students who were previously admitted/subject to employee-children and/or sibling and foster sibling lottery) received during the enrollment period will be included in the lottery. Students are admitted to the School in the order in which they are drawn in the lottery, as long as there is available space in applicable grade(s). If the available space in a grade is filled, the lottery continues to establish a general waitlist for each such grade. If a student is selected through the general lottery and the student has siblings in other grades, also subject to the lottery, those siblings are automatically enrolled as long as seats are available in that grade.

Applications received after the open enrollment period expires are automatically accepted for enrollment if there are available seats in that grade. IF there are no available seats in the grade, applications received after the enrollment period expires are added to the waiting lists for that grade, in the order received.

The School conducts all lotteries through a method of random selection.

The School provides informational meetings during the open enrollment period and throughout the year. This allows all interested families and community members to learn about the history, mission, philosophy, NBRS 2021

and educational objectives of the School.

Order of Admission: Siblings and foster siblings of admitted students, children of employees, then General Admissions.

Waiting lists do not carry forward from year to year. Each open enrollment period is considered a different year. Lotteries and waiting lists are reestablished for employees-children, siblings and foster siblings, and general admissions.

Multiple births, such as twins and triplet's require each student to complete a separate application. In a lottery situation, each student receives an individual number/lot in the lottery.

PART III - SUMMARY

St. Croix Preparatory Academy (SCPA) is a graded K-12 charter school that opened in the Stillwater area of Minnesota that opened in the fall of 2004. It is the first public school in the eastern suburbs, specifically dedicated to offering a demanding classical, liberal arts curriculum with the additional emphasis on the development of each student's personal character and leadership qualities. St. Croix Preparatory Academy provides a learning opportunity previously only available at select private schools.

The school was founded by parents, educators, and business people who wanted a more challenging education for their students. They wanted a school that demanded an education that challenges students to achieve to their highest potential as well as put forth their best in behavior, attitude, and effort. The school is creating a college prep educational program based on true inquiry, intellect, and character. By focusing on student's character and leadership qualities, in addition to developing their academic potential, St. Croix Preparatory Academy is committed to developing young adults who are prepared to lead abundant and responsible lives as contributing members of our society.

St. Croix Preparatory Academy moved into our current location at the start of the 2009-10 school year and operates as three individual school divisions within a K-12 building hosting nearly 1,200 students in the 2020/21 school year. St. Croix Preparatory Academy Middle School serves 377 students in grades five through eight. This configuration began with the move to the K-12 building after previously operating as a grades K-6 and 7-12 schools. The success of the middle school is directly related to the mission and vision of the K-12 district.

Having one physical K-12 building, managed by one joint administrative team, allows for a tightly integrated curriculum scripted with intentional scope and sequence beginning in kindergarten through twelfth grade. With a small enrollment, all students receive personalized attention, permitting a low/student-teacher ratio and membership in a mutually supportive community of learners.

A classical model focuses on providing students with the lifelong educational tools to learn and think for themselves. The classical tradition is grounded in the time-tested methodology of learning called the "Trivium," which recognizes that critical learning skills must precede critical thinking skills.

The Trivium methodology is organized into the three stages of learning: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Each stage of the Trivium corresponds to the general stages of a student's cognitive development. The first phase of the Trivium is Grammar (grade levels K-4). Grammar emphasizes the facts and rules of each subject that later learning is built upon. This stage focuses on the accumulation of knowledge and the rules related to each particular subject. This mirrors the stage of development where children love to mimic, recite, chant, and memorize. The objective of this phase is to provide each child with a strong foundation of subject matter knowledge.

The second phase is Logic (grade levels 5-8). Logic focuses on the student's ability to analyze and interact with the knowledge acquired in the Grammar stage. The Logic stage is the phase where understanding is grasped. This corresponds with the child's curiosity and desire to ask questions. The objective of the Logic phase is understanding.

The final phase is Rhetoric (grade levels 9-12). Rhetoric teaches a student how to express and discuss the subject. Rhetoric is the communication stage where students defend and refute opinions based on their understanding and knowledge of the subject matter. This fits nicely with the students' affinity for contradiction and argument. The objective of the Rhetoric phase is communicating.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

St. Croix Preparatory Academy's classical model emphasizes building on a foundation of subject matter knowledge and focuses on developing excellent critical thinking and literacy skills across content areas. Critical thinking and comprehension skills are used in all Minnesota Core Academic standards across the grades K-12 curriculum. The middle school targets improvement of teaching and learning in the areas of cause and effect, compare and contrast, making inferences, and predicting outcomes. Together, these strategies increase a student's ability to think critically.

The classical education model is steeped in the written word. Students in middle school are expected to acquire knowledge through guided reading of increasingly complex fiction and nonfiction texts, analyze those texts, and finally apply that knowledge to their own learning. A solid understanding of reading concepts and skills is crucial for success as a lifelong learner.

The Reading and Language Arts curriculum in middle school builds on the grammar knowledge base students receive in grades K-4. Students learn to analyze texts, become stronger readers, and gain a deeper understanding of literary elements. Students are also introduced to a constructed response format that teaches them how to respond to what they have read and support their ideas with evidence from the text. Student writing is strengthened through constructed response practice, essay writing, reinforcement of grammar concepts, and explicit vocabulary instruction.

Mathematics instruction focuses on fundamentals, such as computation, and builds into a deeper understanding of concepts. All math teachers teach students multiple ways to solve problems and engage students in discussions about how numbers are working. In each class, teachers recognize that the grammar stage is present when introducing new information while allowing students to explain and analyze the problem falls into the logic phase. Course sequence has been adjusted to better prepare students for high school math and science by incorporating algebra in seventh grade and geometry in the eighth-grade curriculum.

Science utilizes a mixture of direct instruction to provide students with a wealth of background knowledge on a concept with hands-on experience to allow students to explore and apply what they have learned. Teachers have and continue to analyze Next Generation Science Standards to adapt the current curriculum to align with new science standards.

Social studies curriculum is focused on building analytical skills, including how to create and read timelines, analyze primary documents, making connections in chronological order of events, the relationship of cause and effect, writing that analyzes primary sources, establishing comprehension and summarization strategies used in reading non-fiction texts, and how to think using a historical perspective.

Our classical literacy-based emphasis involves interacting with a physical text and class discussion. This created one of the largest challenges presented with remote learning during the pandemic. Teachers created Google Classrooms for each of their classes, and students' school G-Mail accounts were used to create student access to their courses. Teachers and students needed to quickly learn the technology programs and skills needed to navigate in this new and unfamiliar environment. Numerous communications were emailed along with video tutorials to help students and parents transition into the online learning model.

Teachers recorded videos and posted assignments in a mostly asynchronous format. Emphasis was placed on continuing to keep our rigor high during distance learning by focusing on reading, writing, listening, and speaking in all content areas. Teachers used online resources to conduct virtual science labs, field trips, simulations, and additional units of study to enhance student learning at home.

During the 20/21 school year, we adopted a four-period block schedule using synchronous teaching. Students attended their live classes each day regardless of their learning model. Teachers have improved in their ability to engage students online simultaneously with those in the classroom. Staff development efforts

have helped train teachers in using split screens, break out groups to allow for small group work and online assessments. Teachers have worked collaboratively by grade level and content areas to improve our teaching, assessment processes, and analysis of student learning throughout this school year.

The online component combined with the eighty-minute block schedule has provided some additional flexibility to allow for enrichment activities, tutoring, and study sessions. Office hours allow teachers to provide individual or small group help to students.

As part of our Q-Com Teaching and Learning Improvement program and our classical curriculum, students normally participate in a minimum of two Paideia seminars in each of their classes in a year. The goal of seminars is to have students critically think about and discuss open-ended questions using evidence from a text. Distance learning has required some creative applications in seminar protocols and processes.

While unexpected, the pandemic has made the use of technology necessary in our teaching and learning. This provided an opportunity for exploration and evaluation of how technology can be used effectively even in a classical model. We will continue conversations and evaluation of what has worked and should be used in the future at St. Croix Preparatory Academy as we strive to provide our students with the best education possible.

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:

Following the classic model, all students at St. Croix Preparatory Academy Middle School take classes in art, music, physical education (PE), logic, and Latin. Students in fifth and sixth grade have two of their specialists every day alternating them in an A/B schedule. Students in seventh and eighth grade have music and logic or Latin daily and physical education and art alternate every other day.

In physical education, students in fifth through eighth grade are introduced to games and activities that build physical skills, teach thinking strategies, allow opportunities for teamwork, and help students shape an appreciation of lifelong physical activity.

Students in middle school explore art through a variety of experiences, mediums, and time periods. The creative process is inherent in all artistic endeavors and has a positive influence on the student's development and stimulation of their imagination. As students gain confidence in their abilities and skills to organize their thoughts and ideas into effective works of art, they delve into a deeper understanding of the elements and principles of art and art theory.

Students choose a music track of the band, orchestra, or choir beginning in fifth grade. Making music cultivates creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and cooperation. These skills are important for success in school, at home, in the community, and in the world. Each ensemble performs several times a year and covers a wide variety of repertoire from different time periods and styles.

Language and Logic class is a unique two-year course designed to complement language and classical studies. Students begin the year by studying and practicing executive functioning skills, growth mindset, and foundations of logic which can be transferred to other subject areas in order to increase student success. The study of Latin allows them to understand the classical influence in the evolution and dissemination of language. The parallel study of history and English Language arts gives them the critical foundations for appreciating and recognizing the influence of the classical world. Students also have the opportunity to study Spanish, a language derived from Latin. Through the study of both Spanish and Latin, students learn

to use roots and cognates to determine the meaning of unknown words in English, which broadens their reading and comprehension abilities.

In Logic class, seventh-grade students learn about and practice the essentials of argumentation: how to utilize vocabulary and grammar for clarity and precision; how to identify and gather strong, sound evidence; how to draw reasonable conclusions from quality evidence; how to spot, correct and counter Logical Fallacies; and how to successfully engage with various arguments in the debate. Through these studies, students develop two foundational abilities: the ability to effectively examine, analyze, and understand the ideas of others and the ability to formulate, support, and articulate ideas of their own.

The study of Latin fosters decoding skills that provide students with a solid foundation for reading and writing. Latin enhances students' vocabulary, increases their understanding of English grammar, improves reading and spelling, encourages precise communication, and becomes the cornerstone for the study of other languages.

Latin curriculum is divided into three sections: Latin Language, Roman Civilization, and Latin today.

Challenges presented during distance learning in spring 2020 included the implementation of technology, adjusting teaching methods, and providing support for students. Music provided virtual lessons with students. Art had to adapt to curriculum and assignments to reflect materials students had at home. PE posted a 1,000 point challenge and focused their online learning to build student's background knowledge on how the body works. When students transitioned into hybrid learning, several of these components stayed.

3. Academic Supports:

St. Croix Preparatory Academy Middle School uses a team teaching model to address the needs of our students performing below grade level, special education students, and our English Language Learners. General education teachers are paired with a special education teacher to collaboratively work together to plan content, teaching and delivery strategies, modifications, and accommodations to support the needs of students in that class.

The curriculum, text, and instructional materials, used in team-taught classes, mirror what is used in the non-team classes. While having two teachers in the classroom allows for more individualized attention, teaching strategies incorporate best practice accommodations. Assignments may be modified as appropriate, but it is important that all students have the same access and opportunity to the content and knowledge as their peers.

Students who would benefit from the additional support in the team-taught class are identified through one or more of the following: teacher recommendation of students as struggling performers in reading/language arts and math; have Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement test scores of Partially or Does Not Meet Proficiency in reading, mat, or science,; have 504 plans,; or Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or English Language Learner (ELL) plans that identifies academic, emotional, or organizational needs most appropriately met by team-taught support.

When the cognitive skill level of a student is significant and the team-taught class setting is not appropriate to meet their IEP goals, a Foundations class is created. The curriculum in Foundations classes aligns as closely as possible with grade-level curriculum topics although materials and assignments may be different as required to meet student needs.

English Language Learners receive additional support from the ELL teacher to help build language acquisition skills on a pull-out basis. The ELL teacher collaborates with content teachers and special education staff to address the specific needs of the student.

Many middle school special education students have challenges with executive functioning skills, including organization, focus, and study skills. To address this need, we have a Study Skills class. Special education staff including the occupational therapist have collaborated to create a curriculum that provides direct instruction in identifying individual learning styles, skill strengths, organization of binders and lockers, study skills, and mindset. Students receive a binder system and locker shelves that help students learn a consistent organization system. This allows for easier checks with students to help maintain the organization of their binder, planner, locker, and backpack. Homework Help sessions staffed by special education teachers and paraprofessionals are held after school four days a week to provide students with tutoring and homework support to students.

The team-taught classes, Foundations classes, and Study Skills Resource classes and supports by staff have continued to be in place during both online remote learning and hybrid settings since last spring. Special education and ELL staff set up schedules to have an individual check-in at least weekly; and, virtual homework sessions are available to students. In spring 2020, special education staff provided supports, such as read-aloud of the text and accommodations for testing.

During the 20/21 school year special education, ELL staff, and the principal identified students who would benefit from being in school every day during remote and hybrid learning.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

In the spring of 2020, due to COVID-19, all students were learning online. The instruction was mostly asynchronous. At the end of the year, we surveyed students to gain feedback on what worked and what was missing. In response to this feedback, the major missing component identified was face-to-face interaction with teachers and peers.

To address this need, we created a block schedule with live synchronous teaching in which students would attend class through Zoom when they were learning at home. This teaching model allowed students to feel more connected with their teachers and peers when they were not here in person.

When we again returned to all Distance Learning in November, we created Lion Time sessions on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. These sessions varied from homework help, study sessions, book clubs, additional office hours with teachers, remedial support, and social connections through fun classes that included crafts, cooking, grade level themed hangouts, and a rock-paper-scissors virtual tournament.

Advisory and teacher office hours were added on Fridays. This allowed additional support for students with their homework and social check-ins with peers. As a middle school team, we attempted to be creative about adapting activities to involve as many of the fun social components as possible that are an important aspect of the normal school year in middle school.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

As we moved into this new way of teaching and learning, we found there were several ways we could support our families with the transition to learning online. The first step was to make sure students had access to the internet and digital learning. St. Croix Preparatory Academy checked out 600 laptops for grades K-12 students who needed them. We also provided internet to ten families who did not have service in their homes. Support for children of essential workers was provided at school five days per week. We partnered with our in-house YMCA program to create additional care/support for these students. This continued into the 2020-21 school year. Another resource incorporated into our school structure during the pandemic was a partnership with Youth Service Bureau to provide counseling support for students. The youth counselor meets with students virtually or at school once a week.

Communication with students and parents has increased and changed in delivery method from a district and middle school perspective. Stakeholder Surveys, Constant Contact messages, Virtual Newsletters, and email messaging, text and telephone messaging systems, YouTube videos, SCPA social media posts, PDF documents posted on the St. Croix Preparatory website, and virtual meetings using Zoom and Webinars have all been employed to communicate with parents and students since the beginning of COVID-19. We consistently evaluate what is happening from a communication standpoint and how we can improve these efforts.

Special Education IEP/504 and ELL meetings are being conducted using Zoom. COVID-19 has required us to rework all other communications we have to a virtual format. We created Google Classrooms for new students and created a virtual assessment to do our New Student Placement testing in reading, writing, and math in the spring of 2020. We also held virtual meetings with new students and families instead of the in-person meetings traditionally held. Fifth Grade Orientation was also held in a virtual format in the fall instead of in-person with incoming students and parents. Parent-Teacher Conferences were scheduled and held virtually with teachers, students, and parents for only a selected group of students identified as struggling by grade level teachers in comparison to the arena-style conferences typically held in November.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

St. Croix Preparatory Academy involves teacher leaders in the planning and delivery of our professional development. Our Teaching and Learning Coordinators for each division/school meet on a regular basis with principals to determine the direction for the year's professional development in alignment with our Q-Comp Teacher Performance program, Continuing Education requirements for licensure, and goals of the school to improve teacher effectiveness and increase student learning. Professional Learning Community leaders in each school are asked to teach sessions for professional development. Teachers are also welcomed to present their ideas to the committee for consideration.

When we moved into distance learning in spring 2020, teacher leaders and administration met to plan for the implementation of remote learning. We decided to use Google Classroom as a common platform for providing instructional materials to students. Since many of our students had not previously used Google Classroom, we created tutorial materials using videos and electronic documents to help students and parents understand how to set up and use Google Classroom effectively for each of their classes.

Teachers used mostly asynchronous teaching in the spring. We met often as a middle school, and by content classes and grade level teams, using Google Meet or Zoom to discuss what was working, what challenges were occurring, and to continue refining what we were doing with teaching and assessment. Feedback from students and teachers was gathered in the spring using Google Forms and this feedback was used for planning the 2020-21 school year.

St. Croix Preparatory Academy's leadership team spent the summer planning for the hybrid and remote learning slated to be used in the fall. The decision was made to invest in technology to allow for synchronous teaching from the classroom, so time was dedicated to training teachers to use this technology effectively.

During the summer prior and throughout the 2020-21 school year, all professional development efforts have been targeted on supporting teachers being successful in teaching in hybrid and distance learning models. Many teachers participated in the virtual training offered. Teachers needing to complete requirements for licensure renewals were able to do online training through Teaching Tolerance webinars to meet Cultural Competency and teaching English Language Learners. Training to help teachers support students' social-emotional needs was provided by a Washington County Suicide Prevention Webinar.

4. School Leadership:

St. Croix Preparatory Academy Middle School is currently in a transitional phase in leadership. The middle school principal was hired as a veteran licensed principal in 2009-10 with the charge of creating a middle school model in the new K-12 building. While still continuing to evolve and improve each year, the middle school model has become very successful at St. Croix Preparatory Academy, and all wish that trend to continue. The district believes strongly in strong succession planning as well as growing internal leaders who are most familiar with our college preparatory mission using a classical education model. After twelve years as the middle school leader, this principal will be retiring at the end of the 2020-21 school year and is working as principal on special assignment this year coaching and mentoring the new middle school principal. Working closely together for the past two years has allowed on-the-job training not typical for a first-year principal and has made the transition of leadership successful even during a pandemic.

St. Croix Preparatory Academy as a district holds weekly planning meetings of the Administrative Team which consists of the Executive Director, division principals, Chief Finance Officer, Human Resources Director, Building and Facilities Manager, Technology Director, Food Service Director, Activities Director and Development and Marketing Director. This group shifted during COVID-19 to also include the school nurse and members of the COVID Response team in the membership. Meetings were conducted virtually using Zoom and are used to plan for the additional safety protocols, changes in educational models, school lunch program delivery and addition of essential worker care for students, changes in activities programs, and increases in the need for technical support for the community.

District meetings are held monthly with the division principals, Teaching and Learning Coordinators, and Professional Learning Community leaders to manage our Q-Comp Performance Improvement, World's Best NBRS 2021

Workforce, and other internal mentoring, professional development, training, and evaluation programs driven on improving student achievement. COVID-19 has changed what we are doing in training and performance measures to support teachers' success using Google Classroom, Zoom, and Google Meet to teach effectively during remote and hybrid learning.

St. Croix Preparatory Academy Middle School holds bi-monthly division meetings with teachers during the school year. Meetings have been held more frequently beginning with last spring to help with planning for remote and hybrid learning models and to support teachers as we have needed to continue to shift and evolve throughout the 2020-21 school year.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

St. Croix Preparatory Academy's mission states that it will develop "each student's academic potential, personal character..." Addressing the diverse needs of our student body is foundational because we believe in the uniqueness of each student, family, culture, background, and experience within our learning environment. In order to maximize our learning environment and the student educational experience, acknowledgment and representation are essential.

Our classical educational model focuses on aspects shared by all humanity as well as subject matter that is unique, but still representative of our diverse community and nation. The historical and literary curriculum approach allows us to establish a knowledge foundation that allows us to appropriately address issues related to race, immigration, reparations, justice, and identity.

The curriculum topics include, but are not limited to, historical events related to the indigenous people of Minnesota, the Trail of Tears, immigration events including discussion of Ellis and Angel Island, the Civil Rights era with the discussion of Emmett Till, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and others to provide various perspectives. Our required Canon of Literature reading for all middle school students includes: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Birchbark House*, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, and *The Book Thief*. Each of these covers unique topics important in teaching that is culturally responsive.

Throughout the year, each class conducts multiple Paideia seminars. Each seminar is a formal discussion, based on a text, in which the teacher facilitator asks open-ended questions to generate student interaction with the text. Within the context of the discussion, students listen closely to the comments of others, think critically for themselves, and articulate their own thoughts and responses to the thoughts of others. They learn to listen, work cooperatively, question intelligently, and interact civilly.

Time prevents us from addressing all of the issues that are confronting our students today. As current events arise, we will take time to address, discuss and help students frame their individual understanding of meaning, as it pertains to their own diverse background. Our emphasis on character means that students will show respect and appreciation for each student's perspective. For those events that may be traumatic, we offer counseling services to support our students, families, and faculty.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

As middle school students thrive on routine and consistency, St. Croix Preparatory Academy Middle School made the decision to continue to use Google Classroom as our delivery platform in the spring and during the 2020-21 school year worked to improve our effectiveness in its use by teachers and students. As a college preparatory school with high expectations for academic rigor and curriculum content, we wanted to continue this emphasis even though the delivery method was changing.

In the spring, teachers taught in the seven-period day using Google Classroom to deliver asynchronous lessons. Teachers worked hard to deliver the most important parts of the curriculum while giving students and themselves grace to learn and teach in this new and challenging way.

Knowing we would begin the fall in a hybrid learning model, much thought, investigation of best practice and planning went into preparing for the start of the 2020-21 school year. Changes were made in a number of areas, including switching to a four-period block schedule rather than a seven-period day to lower the number of transitions between classes. Challenges with this change meant determining how to adapt specialist classes meeting times from the previous A/B alternating day schedule to a weekly rotation.

Another major change at the start of the 2020-21 school year was the decision and commitment of the district to purchase the technology necessary for each teacher to teach live from their classrooms. We continued to use the live stream teaching model after moving to distance learning in November. Choosing to do synchronous teaching has permitted teachers to continue to deliver curriculum content in a rigorous and effective manner even though it looks very different than our previous traditional classroom experience.

Challenges while teaching in hybrid have been learning how to effectively engage students at home in a Zoom session while simultaneously teaching students in the classroom. This continues to be an area we are working on improving as fifteen percent of students have chosen to remain in a distance-only learning model during hybrid and return to in-person learning this spring.