

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 4401 N.E. Lakewood Way
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Lee's Summit State MO Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 64064-1984

County Jackson County

Telephone (816) 874-3580 Fax (816) 795-5839

Web site/URL https://dwms.bssd.net/ E-mail BJOHNSON2@BSSD.NET

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. Bob Jerome E-mail bjerome@bssd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Blue Springs School District R-IV Tel. (816) 874-3200

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Rhonda Gilstrap
(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):
- 13 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 3 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 20 TOTAL

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

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

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	128	126	254
7	137	132	269
8	137	138	275
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	402	396	798

*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):
- 0.4 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4.3 % Asian
 - 12.7 % Black or African American
 - 7.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.7 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 70 % White
 - 4.5 % 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: 5%

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	31
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	43
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	813
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Spanish, Amharic

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

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

Total number students who qualify: 155

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
69 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>9</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>21</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>22</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>13</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>1</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. 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	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	44
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	7

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1

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	93%	93%	95%	93%	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.

To provide students with the skills, resources and environment to acquire knowledge, explore a variety of life opportunities, and become productive, responsible citizens.

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.

Delta Woods Middle School (DWMS) has provided students the opportunity to select either in-person or a virtual learning model during the 2020-2021 school year. Students selecting in-person learning have experienced five-day learning weeks since the beginning of the school year. Additionally, DWMS families were provided the opportunity to modify their learning options at the end of the first semester and on two more occasions during the second semester.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

“The Middle Grades are where we need to begin to plant the idea that school is connected to each student’s future.” --Gene Bottoms, SREB Senior Vice President

Delta Woods Middle School (DWMS) is one of four middle schools in the Blue Springs School District (BSSD), a suburban academic home to students in 6th-8th grades. DWMS aims to prepare students to continue their educational journey in high school and beyond. BSSD serves families located in Blue Springs, Lee’s Summit, Grain Valley, and Independence, all located in the Kansas City metropolitan area. The primary goal of middle school is to provide opportunities to enhance these experiences. Aware of this central purpose, DWMS faculty, parents, and community members cooperatively share the important task of helping students prepare for their individual futures as well as for their lives in their local, societal, and global communities.

Always inherently challenging, this goal of facilitating goal setting, independent decision-making, and the development of habits that support academic and personal success for middle school students became even more daunting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We began by working to meet the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines to safely open our doors. The BSSD staff worked with community task forces to address academics and the socio-emotional development of our DWMS students by ensuring that as many students as possible could safely attend school in-person. Due largely to this careful task force planning throughout the summer of 2020, 85% of the students at DWMS selected in-person learning. To ensure that students who chose virtual learning had the opportunity to be successful, DWMS has provided a device to each student. The school district adopted the Schoology learning management system (LMS), and Microsoft TEAMS to deliver virtual and in-person instruction.

All students become a part of the DWMS culture: “The Gator Way: Each Student, Each Day—Growing, Achieving, Succeeding.” When students begin the year, they unite in the shared Gator community, where everyone is valued, respected, and challenged academically.

This shared goal of personal growth and life success fuels the supportive learning environment through academic programs, enrichment opportunities, and individualized supports. Besides providing rigorous core courses focused on developing essential literacies, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, DWMS offers various exploratory classes and differentiated core content classes based on students’ needs and interests.

Beyond a shared vision, specific steps were taken to affect positive change in student achievement. Staff identified essential skills embedded in state standards, made certain instruction was appropriately aligned and paced, and determined the data points necessary to demonstrate mastery of English Language Arts and math content. The math program was broken down so teachers could see how concepts were deliberately spiraled.

Middle school has the mission to ensure that students leave 8th grade with the knowledge, skills, and habits needed to succeed in college-preparatory high school courses, post-secondary education, and pathways to careers. Project Lead the Way (PLTW) students collaborate to design and build robots and develop technology programs necessary for automation. Family and Consumer Science (FACS) students work on their assigned project by creating aesthetic marketing and advertising designs. Broadcasting students contribute by creating scripts and videotaping, revising, and editing stories to highlight PLTW’s accomplishments and other newsworthy events. Through these and many other exploratory course options and programs, DWMS provides academically rigorous, hands-on experiences that enable students to discover and prepare for their individual futures as adults succeeding in a complex environment.

DWMS staff seek out and implement the most current best practices in their content area to help students prepare for a future in which they will have to adapt to a continually changing society. Staff professional learning is guided by nationally recognized experts in the core content subjects and supported by content instructional coaches who model, co-teach with the classroom teachers, and facilitate continual curriculum

revision in their content areas.

Recognizing the importance of social/emotional growth and purposeful connection with others, DWMS also provides a daily advisory instructional period to all students. This opening advisory course, which we call “Gator Time,” is where topics such as interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are covered. In addition, this class allows teachers time to deliver weekly lessons focused on mental health, respect, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Through direct instruction and class discussions, teachers guide students to appreciate and consider how to succeed personally and professionally in the complex, diverse society in which we live.

One area of innovation added to DWMS contributes to its unique character is Gator Vision. Students enrolled in this course plan, interview, and highlight featured topics relevant to the school and local communities. Scripts are written and delivered by students in daily morning broadcasts.

The Gator school community has a shared mission of enabling each student to grow, achieve and succeed educationally, personally, and professionally. “It’s a great day to be a Gator!”

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

The DWMS English Language Arts (ELA) faculty recognize that engagement and practice are essential to literacy development, so each student is enrolled in at least two classes dedicated to developing these skills; an ELA class and a class focused on reading. Students have access to in-class and digital libraries of high-quality texts representing a wide range of perspectives and cultural traditions. During small group discussions, both asynchronous and live, students develop essential comprehension skills while also practicing social communication and academic conversation techniques. Students and teachers make writing a habit through daily quick writes, reader's and writer's notebook entries, and structured practice in drafting, revising, and editing their writing. Teachers confer one-on-one with students on their writings in progress.

Teachers develop research-based curriculum frameworks through consultation with national trainers as well as through continual data feedback from in-class and common assessments aligned to the Missouri Learning Standards. As one of its adaptations to the current learning environment, the ELA department worked virtually this year with recognized experts Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher, to create engaging online-friendly, standards-aligned lessons and assessments based on classroom-tested approaches to blended-format literacy instruction.

Because of the flexibility this curriculum provides, we can continue offering students numerous authentic, compelling opportunities for literacy development through online and in-person instruction.

Mathematics instruction allows students to collaborate, explore, develop strategies, and think critically to gain a deep understanding of mathematical concepts while in-person or virtual. In our one-to-one environment, students discover concepts through manipulatives, real-world learning tasks, investigations, and solving problems in both independent work and collaborative learning groups utilizing Microsoft Teams and Schoology online tools. Instruction is meaningful, rigorous, and appropriately aligned to further prepare students for high school and beyond. High school Algebra I, in addition to five other course offerings, allows students to become mathematical thinkers and affords opportunities to apply math knowledge to their lives, the world around them, and future careers. Lesson delivery occurs in three forms: directly to in-person students, recorded lessons for distance learners, and live-streamed lessons for both distance and quarantined students.

Through data analysis of district common assessments, teachers chart and monitor student growth and make adaptations as needed. Teachers receive support and guidance from an instructional coach and a technology coach. Professional development (PD) focuses on interventions, strategies, and includes developing aligned curriculum for in-person or virtual learning. Pacing guides are set by vertical teams organized by the district and led by recognized mathematics experts.

Student experiences in science promote meaningful critical thinking through inquiry-based activities rooted in real-life science. DWMS strives to engage all students by supporting content with a wide range of hands-on labs and learning experiences. Student interest serves as the compass for planning and has sparked opportunities such as, astronomy nights, meetings with National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), marine scientists, Kansas City Zoomobile activities, Girls Nights Out at Science City, and Battle of the Brains Contests.

Dedication to promoting student engagement with science experiences remains the foundation for success in science, despite the changes COVID-19 has brought to education. DWMS has effectively utilized technology resources to provide science experiences for students learning in the classroom and from home. Gizmo labs, Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality simulations with Z-Space machines and Amplify engineering internships further provide opportunities for immersion in science phenomena and problem-solving. These resources allow students to have choice in their exploration of science and apply their understanding to solving world-wide issues, regardless of limitations imposed by COVID-19 restrictions. To promote a familiar and personal learning experience, science teachers regularly provide live class meetings, lessons, labs, and tutoring opportunities for both in-person and online students, which allows students to

progress and experience content with the guidance and support of teachers.

The social studies curriculum focuses on project-based learning and inquiry. Students are introduced to research methodology, data analysis, and claims-based arguments about societal issues.

To accommodate the current need for online resources and research options, the department chose digital texts for all courses with input from the Library Media Specialist, and multiple online options for researching current social issues.

Content strands in the 6th grade curriculum, which includes government, economics, geography, ethnic cultures, historical and current events, and general research skills, are woven into the 7th and 8th grade curricula. The 7th grade curriculum provides an overview of the major epochs in ancient history, and the 8th grade curriculum explores the dynamic forces that shaped U.S. history.

The social studies team was trained through the Buck Institute for Education to help guide students to address local social, political, economic, and environmental problems. Through this model, students develop innovative solutions to current issues. This approach to problem-solving allows students to deepen understanding of content and to investigate, think more critically, and create authentic solutions to real-world problems.

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

While pursuing academic and personal growth in preparing for high school, college, and real-world learning, DWMS students, under the guidance of the school counselors, use Missouri Connections, a comprehensive, online, career development and planning program. School counselors guide students as they prepare for high school and beyond with an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP). Each student's planning process begins with taking and analyzing the results of an interest inventory, followed by short and long-term goal setting. Based on their ICAP, students consider career options aligned to their interests and research options that will enable them to pursue their career goals. In an Academic Skills course that all students take in 7th and 8th grades, students learn real-world life skills in the areas of personal finance, interpersonal communications, and interviewing.

Students are further prepared for college and career choices through opportunities to develop real-world skills in PLTW classes and other technology offerings. PLTW students engage in problem-solving and process thinking, develop technical knowledge and skills, and hone their communication skills. The PLTW instructional design focuses on hands-on, real-world activities, and projects, and challenges workers encounter every day. This instructional approach empowers students to become independent and collaborative learners who can solve open-ended design problems. Students work together to identify problems, apply their knowledge and skills, persevere through challenges, and find viable solutions.

Students have worked alongside professionals from MC Power, a local energy solutions company, and Burns and McDonnell, a local engineering company. These collaborations and more allow students to identify and analyze problems, brainstorm, and implement solutions through a career lens.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Exploratory courses at DWMS offer varied opportunities for students to pursue their personal interests and to select subjects and skills they have not studied but find intriguing. In 6th grade, students are introduced to exploratory classes in which they choose four from options such as visual arts, music, performing arts, nutrition, fashion design, cooking, technology and digital media, and modern world languages. The series of nine-week rotations in 6th grade allows students to experience possibilities; while in 7th and 8th grades, students focus their attention on what most engages their interests and relates to their future career plans.

Students in music, visual arts, and performing arts courses are provided multiple opportunities to develop and demonstrate their skills in various area venues. For example, students create visual holiday artwork that is displayed on the façade of the downtown Kansas City Marriott. Musical ensembles perform at community festivals and contests, as well as online for virtual audiences. Students in computer courses create websites and podcasts shared with the local community. Students in performing arts courses learn essential teamwork skills as they perform in groups on Gator Radio, work together to create the daily Gator Vision broadcast, and produce the school's annual musical theater performance from behind the scenes and on-stage.

In PLTW courses, students trace the history, development, and influence of automation and robotics as they learn about mechanical systems, energy transfer, machine automation, and computer control systems. The VEX Robotics platform is used to design, build and program real-world objects such as traffic lights, toll booths, and robotic arms. Students in this program also develop essential life skills, including problem-solving, systems analysis, and teamwork to achieve shared goals.

The modern world languages course options are especially important for students who anticipate careers that might take them to other parts of America as well as abroad and for students interested in careers as translators and interpreters. Taking Spanish I in 8th grade provides students the opportunity to take five years of Spanish, including Advanced Placement Spanish in high school. The Schoology instructional management system allows virtual students to learn Spanish one-to-one.

Physical Education (PE), a required course for all students, provides a basis for lifetime physical fitness. To accommodate virtual learners in PE, teachers use Flip Grid in which students videotape their exercise and workout sessions for feedback and evaluation. Other essential life skills students learn in PE include self-control, leadership, responsibility, and teamwork. Health education at the 8th grade level focuses on human systems. Through project-based activities, students learn the skeletal, muscular, and circulatory systems and the positive effects of healthy behaviors on the body.

From fashion design to nutrition and cooking to the performing and visual arts, the exploratory courses offer students multiple opportunities to research their interests and develop valuable personal and practical skills they can apply in their personal lives, their future academic coursework, and their careers.

3. Academic Supports:

Education is personalized for students performing below and above grade level. The following achievement gaps have been identified in ELA subgroups: Black (42.4%), Hispanic (61%), Free and Reduced Meals (54%). In math the following gaps were determined with subgroups of Native American (50%), Black (35.5%), Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (50%), Hispanic (59.3%), Multi-Race (46.3%), and Free and Reduced Meals (46.6%). All subgroups in both math and ELA are above state average except for the Black subgroups. Deficits are addressed through Edcite, a digital assessment program, and Waggle, an adaptive online program, which is also used as an indicator for dyslexic tendencies.

DWMS utilizes a multi-tiered approach to differentiate instruction. The Care Team creates plans to support students with academic, social, or emotional needs. Technology is used to support interventions as well as teacher-guided practice through Reading Plus. The Trauma Informed Strategies initiative also supports students.

Students who self-select honors courses, which are offered in core areas and are available to all, accept the challenge for a more rigorous, fast-paced curriculum. Students who meet state and district requirements are placed in the gifted program which offers a unique academic environment to enhance their learning styles. Accelerated learning opportunities and social and emotional supports are provided. Topics are explored through cooperative learning and problem-solving

strategies to reach a higher depth of knowledge.

The state averages for students with disabilities in language arts (14.4%) and math (10.1%) are lower than those at DWMS, which has 38% in language arts and 28.2% in math. Special Education teachers focus on gaps in these essential skills.

Explicit instruction, feedback, and metacognitive strategies are utilized depending on intensity of services required. These are used in special education, regular education classrooms, and before-and-after school tutoring.

Specialized instructional uses evidence-based strategies and instructional materials to meet students' individualized needs. For reading comprehension goals, students are taught concept mapping, interactive notetaking, and assistive technology use. Additionally, teachers refer to protocols for instructing students with dyslexia. In math, teachers use algebra tiles and graphic organizers to make abstract problems more concrete.

DWMS collaborates with behavior specialists to develop support plans for students exhibiting behaviors impacting academic progress.

English Language Learners (ELL) are supported through small group instruction and co-teaching. Language instruction is delivered by certified ELL teachers and an instructional coach. DWMS provides translators, Rosetta Stone, materials in the native language, and transportation for summer school. Through DWMS assessments data portfolios on students' proficiency levels are documented and instruction adjusted to increase student achievement.

To address the achievement gaps in language arts (48%) and math (40%), DWMS has added personnel and resources to further focus instruction. Lexile reading materials, adaptive software, and math manipulatives are utilized and DWMS teachers receive ongoing PD in lesson adaptation. With these strategies, scores remain above state average.

Homeless students receive supplies, computers, internet hotspots, transportation, counseling support, clothing, and medical and dental services as needed. DWMS provides supplemental instruction and online tutoring. DWMS has only one homeless student at this time but is committed to provide supports in school and out of school so any homeless student can succeed.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

DWMS is committed to creating a positive, safe, and encouraging environment that promotes the growth, achievement, and success of each student, each day. The relationships built between teachers and students are the foundation of DWMS's academic, social, and emotional climate.

Students begin their day in Gator Time advisory period, during which the teacher facilitates group discussions on diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-bullying, and building empathy. Lessons promoting positive behaviors are taught, modeled, and discussed at the beginning of each day and then implemented in core and exploratory courses throughout the day. For example, texts focusing on the values of diversity, empathy, and inclusion, as well as on personal decision-making, are commonly taught in ELA and social studies courses as well as in exploratory courses in the arts and technology.

During the pandemic, engaging students remains a priority. All considerations of COVID-19 are addressed and implemented. Faculty and students participated in monthly assemblies adjusted to be held on virtual platforms. Extra-curricular, academic, and after school achievements are continuously recognized online. Staff members also lead clubs that foster connections with and among students. Students who share similar interests meet on Microsoft Teams to enjoy sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm in clubs as varied as Fly Fishing Club, Garden Club, Sign Language Club, and Scholar Bowl Team, to name a few.

The Student Council sponsors food drives, and other activities that offer students opportunities for safe engagement and service. Student Ambassadors, with the training and support of the counseling staff, welcome students new to the school with virtual guided tours. DWMS also recently redesigned its library media center, digital learning, and maker spaces.

Recognizing that sports are another way to promote teamwork and to engage students, DWMS staff also offer students opportunities to safely participate in various intramural sports, including volleyball, basketball, wrestling, and cheerleading by following CDC guidelines.

DWMS is a united community that presents a variety of experiences promoting students' connections with the school and each other. This community offers opportunities to learn and grow with peers and adult mentors, thus recognizing students as valued stakeholders.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

DWMS prioritizes engagement with students' families, business partners, and community organizations. The Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) works continually to strengthen the bridge between the school and the community by collaborating with DWMS staff to enhance learning, career exploration, and real-world opportunities. Community members in various professions, parents, and other family volunteers share their expertise virtually to enhance career awareness and support initiatives of real-world learning opportunities for students. A recent example is an older brother of a DWMS student who presented online to science classes on his studies and work in neuroscience at Columbia University.

Local businesses and churches, as well as the Community Services League, which provides help to under-resourced community members, partner with the school to provide school supplies for distance and in-person students and to provide meals, when needed. The local Sonic Drive-In periodically provides drinks for teachers, and the PTSA provides individually packaged lunches and snacks. Family members of students in the Student Diversity Club share information via Microsoft Teams and insights into the various cultural backgrounds represented among DWMS students.

One pre-COVID-19 example of parents, students, local businesses, and the community working together to achieve a common goal and model collegial collaboration for DWMS students is the Gardens and Greenhouse project. The Lakewood Garden Club, a local neighborhood group, collaborated with a local

business, Colonial Gardens, and with Kansas City's largest botanical garden, Powell Gardens, to work with parent volunteers, staff, and students to create the DWMS Gardens and Greenhouse. DWMS science students worked collaboratively with their teachers and volunteer parents to design the garden, maintain the garden and greenhouse, plant the vegetables, and harvest the crops. Besides being introduced to various facets of horticulture through this project, students also learn about ecological interdependence through observing and fostering plant and animal life, including butterflies and other fauna in the Butterfly Garden.

Besides the obvious benefits to students, who learn new skills to achieve a common goal as they design and maintain the DWMS Gardens and Greenhouse, this project also benefits the community. The vegetables and fruits students harvest from the garden provide food for under-resourced families, and the Gardens provide a tangible symbol of the mutual benefits derived from student-staff-family-community collaboration.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

A culture of professional learning ensures that the DWMS faculty has opportunities to engage in meaningful collaboration to discuss, design, and implement best practices for middle school instruction.

Through efforts of the leadership team, varied opportunities for staff to develop their content knowledge and skills were coordinated. Teachers created viable assessments and evaluated results as a basis for ongoing improvement in instruction and student achievement.

Teachers work together in department teams and content-area cadres to develop meaningful lessons, activities, and assessments. This work ensures that teachers are equipped and empowered to engage students in helping them develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in academic disciplines. ELA teachers, for example, work to create activities and assessments aligned to the reading, writing, and listening/speaking state standards for 6th-8th grades. The ELA teachers also attend national PD events such as the annual National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Conference and then collaborate about ways to implement the information and strategies learned. Similarly, math and science teachers collaborate with consultants such as Greg Tang, Juli K. Dixon, Dr. Yeap Ban Har, and Dr. Mike Heithaus to continually revise and update their curriculum and instruction. In all core and elective disciplines, teams are provided time to collaborate and share best practices so they can update their curriculums and instruction based on individual student needs and interests.

To enhance students' social and emotional growth, all staff attended diversity and anti-bullying training. Technology workshops held by district coaches prepared teachers to use the new learning management system, Schoology, and Microsoft Teams to facilitate communication with students, parents, and each other in the challenging situation caused by the COVID-19-19 pandemic. This ongoing support helps teachers meet individual student needs and demonstrate creative ways to keep students engaged in a virtual environment.

Supporting teachers as they fine tune their teaching practices helps students develop intellectually, academically, emotionally, and socially. DWMS provides a professional culture that achieves this goal.

4. School Leadership:

The DWMS leadership team consists of administrators, department chairs, counselors, teachers, support staff, parents, and community members. This team works collaboratively to analyze achievement data as a basis for guiding ongoing curriculum revision and instructional practices aligned to state standards. All members have an equal voice, can recommend changes, or bring up concerns. PD opportunities are customized based on needs revealed through data analysis and team discussions.

The philosophy of DWMS is that learning is a lifelong journey; setting a tone for the culture where professional development is embraced. These ongoing learning opportunities allow teachers to continuously reflect on their practices.

To achieve the primary goal of helping students attain academic and personal success, the team supports

teachers by keeping the curriculum fluid and pertinent. Supplemental resources are provided in response to ongoing, data-based revisions. For example, additional copies of literary texts were purchased so individual students would not have to share materials.

The health and safety of students and staff became even more important during COVID-19. The leadership team responded to this challenge by creating procedures for promoting social distancing, contact-tracing strategies, and school safety protocols. Additional cleaning routines were scheduled, and specific cleaning supplies were purchased and distributed. Master schedules were modified for additional lunch shifts to accommodate for social distancing.

The leadership team supported teachers by holding all meetings online, including faculty and parent meetings. This delivery adaptation allowed teachers to continue to meet and collaborate in a safe way. This extended the sense of community with the staff through the school closure and throughout the school year.

DWMS has seen an increase of students coping with trauma. This led the leadership team to adopt the Trauma Informed Schools initiative. Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) addresses the need to ensure a positive school environment that makes student engagement consistent. Both programs foster progress in developing academic, social/emotional, and personal skills.

To support teachers and staff, the leadership team devised specific academic support systems intended to facilitate learning for both in-person and virtual learners. Through virtual PD experiences, teachers learned to record lessons, post links to the recordings for students who were distance learning and even those quarantined. PD regarding virtual tools and guidance for connecting remotely with students and parents was also provided.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Through PD and personal interactions with students and parents, DWMS teachers and staff work to expand their understanding of ways to improve inclusivity and equity in the DWMS community. Teacher learning takes place through small group discussions. The focus of these groups is to emphasize the need for positive relationships among staff, students, and families. Teachers are trained to facilitate conversations about the value and benefits of diversity within a culture as well as ways to improve inclusivity and equity.

Facilitated by their teachers in small and whole group instruction students are introduced to diversity through texts that focus on racial, gender, cultural, physical, and mental diversity. Students receive guidance particularly in Gator Time, in how to engage in civil, respectful conversations about the current events that are happening in our diverse American society.

members also consistently look for ways to blend content and character growth. Currently, teachers are working with student influencers at each grade level to discuss topics related to equity, diversity, and prioritizing students' overall social-emotional well-being. Student feedback drives instruction, classroom practices, and focused responses to areas identified by students.

As a result of these small group conversations, a student diversity and advocacy group developed, in which students worked with staff to broaden the reading selections in ELA, social studies, and exploratory courses. Through the efforts of this group, all DWMS students are learning the importance of observing, listening, and respectfully advocating because they see the impact on their school community.

Besides diversity training focused on cultural, racial, and gender diversity, DWMS teachers also receive training in the Olweus Bullying Program and Trauma Informed training. Through these

trainings, teachers are equipped with the tools and resources necessary to provide interventions for students suffering from psychological trauma and the effects of prejudicial treatment.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Collaborative learning teams at DWMS are the foundation of success for ongoing achievement for the school community. Forced school closures brought to light the value that collaborative teams have in situations where in-person learning is not a given. It has become increasingly necessary to collaborate and support one another to maintain academic excellence and social-emotional learning. As virtual learning emerged and all instruction, communication, and supports shifted to a distance environment, staff knew the curve was too steep to climb alone. Collaboration and innovative thinking were no longer just beneficial ways to support the school community but were essential in navigating the pandemic, and staff knew they were better together.

Administration and teachers at DWMS recognize the power of collaborative learning teams developed to focus on specific areas of need and design targeted responses. Because these teams are led by teachers, staff members feel a sense of purpose and power to impact the school community. Administrators support teachers' efforts by providing resources and guidance and send a strong message by allowing teacher leadership to determine specific needs and develop innovative ideas to positively impact student development and achievement. DWMS has collaborative learning teams that focus on academic content areas, cross-curricular, diversity, social-emotional supports, and effective technology integration. Through these teams, teachers develop comprehensive plans integrating creative, content-specific lessons that lead to increased academic achievement with data-driven responses and targeted interventions.

In the fall, DWMS opened for in-person instruction as well as virtual instruction. This flexibility served the everchanging population of in-person students in quarantine who temporarily needed virtual instruction but also allowed for continued connection with their in-person classmates. Collaborative learning teams were essential for this multiple delivery format to work. The effectiveness of linked arms in the spring allowed staff to see the benefits of collaborative dialogue which included asking for help and sharing ideas.

This ongoing, purposeful collaboration allows DWMS staff members to meet the needs of all learners through interventions as well as additional academic and social-emotional support. Staff work together to provide these interventions before and after school, during the school day, and both in-person and virtually. This requires many additional hours, but the collaborative teams make it possible to share the responsibility of supporting students while also supporting one another.