

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 369 East 3rd Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Powell State WY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 82435-0000

County Park County

Telephone (307) 764-6185 Fax (307) 764-6155

Web site/URL https://www.pcsd1.org/ E-mail ktrohrer@pcsd1.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. Jay Curtis E-mail JRCurtis@pcsd1.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Park County School District # 1 Tel. (307) 764-6186

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. Trace Paul
(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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 7 TOTAL

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

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

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	59	80	139
7	68	62	130
8	75	66	141
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	202	208	410

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 11 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 85 % White
 - 4 % 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: 13%

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	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	37
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	52
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	410
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Spanish, Nepal

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
9 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 38 %

Total number students who qualify: 155

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
48 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>2</u> Autism | <u>8</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>31</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>1</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	95%	95%	95%
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.

As a learning community, we inspire, engage, and prepare all students.

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.

Powell Middle School has been very fortunate to have our doors open to offer brick and mortar teaching and learning to our students. We offer remote learning to students and families that have made that request and work closely through a remote setting for students that are in quarantine.

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

Powell Middle is located in the northwest quadrant of the state in beautiful Park County, Wyoming and sits between the Big Horn and Absaroka Mountains which offer a great deal of outdoor recreation. We are 90 miles away from the east entrance of Yellowstone National Park. The community is rural with a strong heritage of hard-working farming and ranching families. The community is instilled with strong values, morals, and ethics and is supportive of education. Powell is very family-oriented that supports community activities with schools, the community college, as well as a great recreation program for our students. At Powell Middle School, we strive to continue to unite our families through activities such as sixth grade track meet, STEM day, Shark Tank, Career Day, Probability Carnival, Irrigation Field Trip, Art Extravaganza, and the Civil War to name a few. These are a few examples that bring our students, families, and community together to recognize and celebrate. In addition, our Jr. Building Leadership Team and our Breakfast Club lead our school in a variety of school celebrations, spirit week, and fundraisers to help with local needs and challenge us to let loose and have some fun. A few great examples of how giving our students are from this year are: fundraiser “Turkey Hunt” for the food pantry where our SRO chased the two principals through the school live on Facebook; school fundraiser of over \$3850 for a student that was treated in Denver with life-threatening symptoms; “Lunch with Leprechauns” fundraiser where the school raised over \$2500 for a building teacher fighting cancer; and hand delivered encouraging notes to staff after Christmas.

Powell Middle School is the recipient of students that come from four high-performing elementary schools in Park County School District #1. Traditionally we receive students in strong academic standing and we strive daily to meet each student’s needs in order to push them to reach their maximum potential. In 2019, our school was recognized on the Wyoming School Performance Report as one of the four middle schools in the state that was, “Exceeding Academic Expectations.” This was an honor and affirmation of the collective efforts of every staff member, parent, and child as well as some of the changes to our systems, strategies, and schedule to reach this level of achievement.

The staff at Powell Middle School have embraced the Professional Learning Community framework and adapted to the many system changes with a commitment to collaboration and a mindset of growth for every learner. One other key item to note that has a direct correlation to our academic success was the schedule change that took place in the 2018-19 school year. We made changes to our master schedule to allow for a daily math block of 84 minutes and also made some changes to English language arts and split those standards into a literature and composition class for a combined time of 84 minutes. One final item to note is the outstanding level of participation our students have in both clubs as well as extra-curricular activities. In 2018-19, 85% of our seventh and eighth graders participated in an after school activity. This year, we have added to the clubs we offer in an effort to push that participation rate to 95% which is on our strategic plan as a district goal.

All components of our building, schedule, systems, culture, climate and practices make a strong Professional Learning Community. There is time allocated for all core teachers to both have a planning period as well as team time where they have a dedicated focus that is spent collaborating with each other on professional practices, curriculum and planning, assessment work, as well as intervention and enrichment opportunities for our students and celebrations. We follow the mantra, “By Name, By Need;” we must know how each student is performing, as well as how we will push each student to reach their maximum potential. Data is tracked from both locally developed common formative assessments as well as WY-TOPP modular, interims, and summative assessments and utilized to drive the decisions that are made in the classroom. We value our time together and make certain our focus is on the right work and we are not distracted with items that are out of our control. Socially and emotionally, we cover all health needs in a health exploratory class for all sixth and seventh graders. Our counselors partner with our health teacher to provide mini-units, implementing social emotional education for students. Our counselors have worked with our staff on second step in order to embed strategies into daily lessons as well as Question Persuade Refer. Additionally, we have recently partnered with Heritage Health to bring a licensed counselor/therapist to district buildings to provide services within our building during the school day.

Throughout the past three years, we at Powell Middle School have anchored ourselves in our mission and vision and have been intentional to follow through on our core value statements and commitments which remind us to focus on the whole child and celebrate positive character and citizenship. We hold tight to taking the time to celebrate together and focus on the positives as well as what we can control. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports is our foundation and roots us in all of our celebrations. In 2018-19, we implemented the following: principals “PAWS”ative 100 board where students are recognized for both positive academic and behavior; Classy Cubs given by all staff for positive recognition and the administration leads the kids in, “Friday Live” and draw names from a wheel for cookies and store bucks; and staff take time on a weekly basis to send home “PAWS”ative postcards to students and parents for positive recognition.

As a staff, we feel the time taken to provide positive reinforcement minimizes our distractions and puts more emphasis on all the great things happening at Powell Middle School.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Our district has committed to the Professional Learning Community (PLC) framework to increase student achievement as per the Park #1 Strategic Plan. The PLC framework focuses on answering four questions:

1. What do we want our students to know and do?
2. How will we know when they have learned what to know and do?
3. What will we do if they have not learned it?
4. What will we do if they have already learned it?

Curriculum and assessment are interconnected and our focus on answering the first two PLC questions.

Question 1 - Identify Essential Skills and Content: Departments will meet periodically to check alignment and agree on “essentials” 6-8. The essentials are developed from prioritized state standards and assessment data. Each teacher or co-content teacher will teach and assess essential skills and knowledge (what to learn and how well) for their grade level and content area. The essentials should have a scope and sequence for the year. This should be developed and adjusted every year as necessary.

Question 2 - Common Assessments: Common assessments are standard assessments that measure essential skills and content (Mastery). Common assessments are administered to all kids in the grade level, content (class) and administered at the same time— within a week is recommended. By doing this our students receive the guaranteed curriculum from each co-content teacher. Please note that it is never an option for any teacher to decide not to administer a common assessment, to change a common assessment, or to deviate from the timeline whether they collaborate with their co-content teacher or not. All concerns about assessments and timelines should be proactively addressed and problem-solved by the co-content teachers. Common assessments should be documented on the assessment calendar for communication purposes.

As a Professional Learning Community (PLC), Powell Middle School provides a guaranteed and viable curriculum that is engaging to our students. Our master schedule provides the foundation for PLCs to thrive, as there is allocated time for our teachers to routinely collaborate and share best practices which allows our students to grow and learn, as we are all continually in an effort to get better and grow. Grade level content teachers often share students when the opportunity arises to allow for students to learn from varying styles and ensure we are doing all we can to meet their needs.

Our core grade level teacher teams including English language arts, math, science, and social studies have routinely worked through and revisited our identified essential standards drawn from Wyoming Common Core Standards. These standards were identified utilizing the work of Tom W. Many, Ed.D in the areas of Readiness, Endurance, Assessed, and Leverage (R.E.A.L.) criteria. These essential standards provide the material to be covered as well as help us to determine the scope and sequence of when assessments will occur, both horizontally in particular grade levels as well as vertically. These essentials are deconstructed into learning targets to guide our teaching leading to our common assessments. Our staff also works on answering questions number three and four in the PLC process of what we do when students do not grasp the concepts (intervention) as well as what we do when they master the concepts (enrichment). Our teachers share the locally designed common formative assessment data with each other to perform an item analysis, as well as look for any trends in commonly missed questions and opportunity to change future practices and time spent. The data collected in all assessments, whether that be through daily formative observations and work completed, or data from our common assessments, lead to adjustments made to differentiate and ensure we are meeting all the learning styles of all students. Paraprofessionals are used to break out in small groups to target students that need additional support. The district has received training in Quantum Learning; therefore, you will see a lot of student engagement through pair/share, callbacks, and frequent student questioning to encourage high student engagement. Typical lessons follow gradual release of

responsibility in the typical, I Do, We Do, You Do format, which allows for students to have a clear understanding of the work to be completed prior to receiving the assignment.

This past year has allowed for all schools to adapt and change prior practices and understand more thoroughly how to work closer with students and parents in remote settings. Fortunately, our staff had been utilizing the Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas for four years prior to COVID-19. Our students and parents were familiar with the system, so we did not have to make extreme changes at the start. Our staff quickly became more familiar with technology programs such as Zoom, Loom, Quizlet, and other programs to help enhance the teaching and learning online. We offered both synchronous and asynchronous instruction to do our best to meet the unique needs of all families. One of the few silver linings that came from COVID-19 was the glaring need to unify our teacher templates on Canvas so they all look exactly the same so parents do not have to figure out how each unique teacher posts assignments, communicates, grades, etc. We surveyed the parents and they have very much appreciated this uniform approach on Canvas. At the beginning of the school year, all content level teachers took extra time to cover content that was covered in the spring, in order to fill in any gaps that may have existed from the spring of 2020. Our WY-TOPP interim assessment showed our students roughly 7-10% lower than in previous years, but the good news is that in the winter interim, our students had gained the ground lost, and are back around the same proficiency levels as past years. The middle school nearly doubled the state in our rate of growth from the fall to winter interim data, as we scored, on average 37 points in Math as opposed to 20 points for the state. On average in reading, we grew 16 points while the state grew 11 points. This is a testament to the hard work of both the staff and students. All involved have worked incredibly hard to close the gap created, and flourish in teaching and learning.

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

At Powell Middle School, we offer three courses that are high school credit: Algebra 1, Computer Science, and Spanish. Several students take advantage of these courses as eighth graders.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our daily master schedule follows the middle school philosophy and provides the foundation and layout for our students to explore several other areas of curriculum as sixth and seventh graders. All sixth and seventh grade students have quarter exploratory electives, which include as sixth graders: health, digital citizenship/computer science, family and consumer science, and music. Our sixth graders are also offered band or a homework help class as an elective. Our seventh grader exploratory classes are: health, careers/computer science, Spanish, and art. The seventh graders are also offered choir, band, or homework help class at the end of the day. Also, all students in every grade level have physical education every day. This foundation allows students to explore their talents and interests as sixth and seventh graders that guides them in the electives they choose to take as eighth graders. Eighth graders are required to take physical education and are also able to choose two other electives from the following list: drama, science stuff happens, PBL video, computer science, robotics, foods, entrepreneurship studies, Spanish, art, choir, band, and yearbook.

At Powell Middle School, we take great pride in offering physical education to all students, every day. Continued, supportive research directs us to give our students the opportunity be physically active within their daily schedule. We understand the connection of social emotional growth and physical activity. We also believe that to create a well-rounded education, the students must be exposed to a wide variety of other curriculum outside of the core, as we know that many students outside interests lie in their electives, and help drive the desire to perform well in school.

The sixth grade exploratory classes of health, digital citizenship/computer science, family and consumer science, and music provide our sixth graders with the initial experience of curriculum outside of the core.

Health covers healthy habits and making good choices, as well as proper nutrition. Digital citizenship/Computer Science informs students how to make positive choices online and understanding digital footprint, while the computer science portion of the class introduces beginning coding in an exciting manner. Our family and consumer science class covers safety in the kitchen while cooking. Students learn how to operate in the kitchen and have several labs that also lend itself to math concepts. Lastly, our music class is an introduction to music and choir where students learn history of music and practice with different rhythms and beat. As mentioned above, students that wish to participate in band may elect to do so and begin learning to play an instrument, while students not interested in band work in a homework help class, which also provides time for intervention and enrichment, when appropriate.

Our seventh-grade exploratory classes consist of health, careers/computer science, Spanish, and art as well as the choice of band, choir, or homework help. Health resumes the curriculum covered in sixth grade and they move on to human development and understanding the changes of the body. Careers class helps students explore the careers as an adult. Students in this class complete a research paper that supports our ELA teachers and cap off the class with a formal interview from staff members. The computer science portion of the class picks up on the coding learned as a sixth grader and serves as a bridge to support those students that may be interested in computer science as an eighth grader. Spanish serves as an introduction vocabulary and sentence structure and sets them up for eighth grade Spanish where they are able to receive high school credit and speak fluently. Lastly, our art class is a basic introduction to art where students explore a variety of projects where students can display their skills and get them excited for eighth grade art. As mentioned above, seventh grade students also have the choice to select band, choir, or a homework help class if they are not interested in either. Providing these curricular choices allows students to show case their talents at performance concerts through the year.

All of the curriculum choices and exploratory classes offered in sixth and seventh grade set up eighth grade students to select what classes they feel interest them the most and will help them be more prepared for the offerings at the high school. If you visited these classes at Powell Middle School, you would see all teachers and students utilizing technology as much as possible to continue to educate our students to be successful in the 21st century.

3. Academic Supports:

It is Powell Middle School's vision to inspire, engage, and prepare all students for their future, and we feel that it is through high quality, research-based instruction that is ultimately tailored to the needs of each student. As a PLC school, we follow the four questions and work diligently to help all students achieve mastery in Tier 1 instruction. Our Tier 1 instruction is focused on "prevention" as much as possible instead of relying on "intervention" to ensure students are learning. We feel we are very successful with the level of mastery due to utilizing formative and ongoing assessment prior to the common assessment, as we are able to provide additional support with the use of classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to intervene before the assessment. Our ELL students have additional support in their core classes and receive small group and sometimes pullout instruction to help ensure they have a strong understanding of the content covered. When there are students that do not achieve proficiency through Tier 1 instruction, we have systems in place to respond to each learners needs. With intervention time built into the schedule, we utilize small group instruction for our students performing below grade level, focusing on the concepts missed on the common assessment through an item analysis. We believe in knowing the individual students' name and their academic need. During interventions, you may see a teacher or paraprofessional pull out small groups to a different setting, as well as flooding in paraprofessionals into a classroom to drive down the teacher to student ratio. After one to two weeks of required intervention and targeted instruction through various teaching and learning styles, these students are provided another attempt to complete the common assessment and gain proficiency.

In addition to these supports mentioned above, pullout evidence-based intervention programs to

remediate more significant academic delays at Tier II/III level are provided through Title I and Special Education during designated intervention blocks as well as Extended School Year services after school and in to the summer.

Beyond the school day, tutoring and further intervention are offered to students in need of more support. Therefore, students have opportunities to learn essentials in the core instructional program through differentiated instructional strategies and high-quality intervention programs. These efforts are designed to close achievement gaps and we have seen significant gains in confidence from students that stay after school as they develop stronger relationships and become more comfortable with asking questions.

Powell Middle School strives on a daily basis to, “know our students by name and by need”. This motto assists us in targeting our students that need additional support, whether that be through small group instruction, a certain style of teaching and learning, or frequents checking for understanding and feedback. This belief allows our staff to intervene well before the common assessments and provide what each student needs early and often.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The schools of Wyoming are very fortunate to have only closed in the spring of 2020. With our doors open in fall 2020, we have been fully functional with necessary precautions from the first day of school. We have been able to offer all extra-curricular sports and clubs as in the past.

The community of Powell and Powell Middle School carry themselves with a lot of pride. From the first day students stepped foot on campus until their last day as an eighth grader and every day in between, it is clear that all staff and students carry themselves with a high level of pride. Staff spend a significant amount of time developing relationships with students and fostering the love and pride of hard work while at Powell Middle School. Our staff follows the motto, “Kids don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” All staff work tirelessly to get to know the students at a deeper level so that students know they are cared for, and in turn, we make learning fun so that students want to work hard to maintain past traditions. We feel this culture and climate created at Powell Middle School provides the foundation for the teaching and learning that happens in the classroom. Teachers provide engaging and high-quality instruction that allows students to interact and work collaboratively, set goals, and realize accomplishments. Our staff stresses the power of “yet,” and continually work with students well beyond school hours to help them see their potential. Systems and practices are in place to ensure no student falls through the cracks and everyone has an advocate.

Our staff sets goals with students both behaviorally and academically and frequently celebrate them. Rewards vary from time outside, shortened assignments, trip to McDonald’s, or any other creative ideas, but they maintain a positive focus on hard work and achievement. As mentioned above, our school is rooted in PBIS, so we have systems in place that recognize the daily positives, as well as some of the larger accomplishments. These rewards and celebrations can be public, private, as well as simply through appreciation postcards sent home to parents. We have found great success in focusing on the positives and utilizing positive reinforcement over corrective behavior. Approximately once a month, we have built in activity days to reward and recognize students’ hard work. These days celebrate the hard work and allow students to pick an activity for an afternoon, while it also allows us to set up an opportunity room for students that may need additional time and assistance getting their work completed.

As mentioned above, we have a district goal of 95% of our students participating in either extra-curricular sports or clubs. Our student participation rates in sports is consistently higher than surrounding schools of our size, and we attribute that to a quality recreation program, strong coaching and heritage, and pride in school, wearing the orange and black. Over the past three years, we have really taken an intentional approach to provide more club offerings both within the school day as well as outside of the day to catch the interest of students who do not enjoy competitive sports. A few of the clubs I have mentioned, such as our Jr. BLT and Breakfast Club, but a few more clubs that have recently been recognized locally and won awards. For the second consecutive year, our Robotics Club recently won state and were recommended for nationals, but cannot attend due to COVID-19, our Challenge of the Books Club recently won the Big Horn Basin competition, and our Math Counts recently has individual winners at the state level. We also have recently added the following clubs: Science Olympiad, Girls Who Code, Creative Writing, Lego and soccer.

At Powell Middle School, we feel all of the above mentioned speaks to the whole child and allows them to grow, academically as well as socially and emotionally. We fully understand the necessary balance to reach all kids is through positive interaction and allowing students to grow in all areas.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The past three years, leadership and our parent group have intentionally utilized multiple strategies to reach out, communicate, and partner with our parents and community in an effort to bridge that gap.

Specifically with parents, we communicate regularly through a variety of ways: Newsletter, Swivl video,

technology messenger, emails, texts, Canvas, parent teacher conferences, and Facebook. We meet regularly with our PTO group and survey our parents to determine our strengths and weaknesses. We are transparent about our data responses as well as our plan to address our deficiencies; parents seem to appreciate the transparency. As a staff, we identify patterns and have professional discussions around how we can get better. We also hold a minimum of two Title I Parent Nights per year and keep topics as relevant as possible to draw in larger numbers. We have found we have to be creative to attract busy families to the school on the weeknight due to the fact we are competing with recreation sports, family nights, and overall busy lives. COVID-19 has had an affect on parents coming into the schools during typical events, but we have been intentional to offer appropriate safety measures as well as alternatives to work with them during these times.

Some of our student groups have taken the lead on fundraising both money as well as food for our local Loaves and Fishes to assist with families in need. Our school has also partnered with a couple of churches in the community to provide a backpack blessings program to provide food to students in need over the weekend.

Powell Middle School continues to work with local businesses to maintain strong relationships as well as partner with them in some of our school events and projects. A few of the projects we work with several businesses on as community events are: Shark Tank, Civil War Re-Enactment, Local Field Trips, Career Day, Probability Carnival, Big Day, and Science Expo. All the above mentioned allow our staff and students to work with the community and businesses and represent Powell Middle School outside of our building.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Teachers at Powell Middle School have the single greatest impact on student learning. We realize we are the ones that can ultimately make the difference in the future of each and every student. With that said, we all have to continually strive to hold on to that passion of making a difference and maintain our love for education. As a PLC school, we allow time for our teachers to collaborate and that time is built-in to the school day. Teachers continually reflect on teaching and learning, analyze data, share successful strategies, and reflect with their team and co-content teachers. Administrators and counselors also meet with all teams on a weekly basis to discuss celebrations, school items, students, curriculum, technology, and general topics. These meetings are evidence that our teachers are supported and we are all working as a team for all students; they know they are never on an island and can always look to their peers or administration for support.

Our district has taken a very intentional approach to professional development and we routinely have professional development every other Friday afternoon. The professional development days are split between district and building days and the schedule is established before the start of the school year. District days allow for curriculum work, such as essentials, common assessments, outcomes, and vertical articulation. School days allow for building administrators to cover all necessary and relevant topics in order to keep all staff members informed of initiatives and decisions, time to collaborate as whole, share new strategies, technology, planning, and safety.

In addition to scheduled and structured collaboration and professional development meetings, our staff has developed the culture of thanking each other and providing administration with staff “Shout-Outs” that are then communicated in a weekly newsletter. We stress that we should never overlook all the positives happening around us, both with our students as well as with each other. Gratitude from colleagues and administrators is the largest contributing factor to job satisfaction; we all have to know that we are valued and appreciated. A few ways we go above-and-beyond to show our gratitude for each other are coffee cards to our Cub Café, 30-minute break cards, written postcards, pictures of and celebrations on our Facebook page, time to work in their rooms, and making a habit of verbally letting staff know they are appreciated.

Specifically during remote learning, administration and our technology leader met two times a week with all teams through Zoom to support our staff with new ideas as well as technology hiccups. We created a Google Doc where staff could share tips, questions, concerns, etc. so we were able to maximize the time in meetings. To continue with professional development in the area of technology, we implemented weekly

meetings on Wednesdays so our technology leader could spend time with teams helping them to grow with the technology we have. We have been very fortunate to have all the technology needed to be successful, as far as devices, programs, desk cameras, and Swivl devices. This technology has allowed us to be the best we can for our students during remote learning and while in quarantine.

4. School Leadership:

At Powell Middle School, collaborative leadership is the means by which the principals operate and continue to grow as a learning community. The principals view themselves as servant leaders and are quick to respond and support students and staff as well as reflect on practices and policies to help ensure Powell Middle School is always moving forward. Our mission, vision, core values, and commitments developed by the staff set the stage for putting kids first, and “doing what’s best for kids!” In all team meetings, we maintain our focus on what we can control and what we need to do to support all students’ unique needs. Decisions are made through vetting ideas and initiatives in the individual teams before they are taken to the staff as a whole. This process allows for teams to collaborate, ask questions, and provide input in a smaller setting, as opposed to a room full of forty adults. In teams and discussion, we take pride in keeping our conversations professional and never personal, and we are committed to being honest, positive, maintain professionalism, and coming to meetings with solutions to proposed problems.

As a PLC, we continually reflect on what we feel we are strong at as well as where we can grow. Principals survey staff to seek input on their thoughts and ideas to make Powell Middle School an even better place to learn and work. We feel this process demonstrates trust and transparency when showing the staff the results and working together to grow in areas that appear to be deficient. We also grow as a staff and in teams through book studies, and educational articles that allow us to grow professionally and share professional dialogue with our peers. These discussions lead staff to try new ideas and take risks and know that it is ok to fail. As mentioned above, the culture of gratitude and trust has to be engrained in all conversations and initiatives so staff know it is ok to take risks, learn and grow. Administration places a lot of trust and autonomy in the teams and in the teachers in their classrooms, and trust that they are the expert in their fields, and do not micromanage. With that said, administration performs frequent classroom walkthroughs and observations to provide both feedback and praise. Dialogue and discussion is created through the walkthroughs.

Lastly, it is an expectation that all staff continually strive to grow and get better as an educator. Three years ago, administration placed the expectation that all staff would have a quarterly growth activity. Staff could choose one of the three quarterly activities: visit another teacher’s classroom for a 20 minute visit and provide feedback and praise; survey their students to solicit feedback on what is going well and would could be changed; record their lesson with a Swivl for self-reflection and share with administration areas of strength as well as identified areas to grow; or visit another teacher’s classroom for a 20 minute visit and provide feedback and praise.

Receiving staff buy-in to grow professionally has had a bigger impact than expected and broken down barriers that previously existed. Staff now regularly visit other grade level classrooms and share dialogue on strategies. Simply put ongoing improvement and ensuring academic growth of every child is a team effort.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At Powell Middle School, we understand the need to ensure we are providing a safe learning environment that offers the same access and opportunities to all students. The foundation starts with the expectation of respect for self and others, regardless of any differences. Our school handbook clearly spells out both academic and behavioral expectations as well as guidelines and responses to student infractions. Teachers are diligent to maintain structure, order, consistency, and safety both in the classroom as well as passing period and lunch for all students. Our counselors work closely with staff on second step and embed units in learning and on Fridays that focus on empathy, managing relationships and social conflict and kindness. At Powell Middle School, we all fall under the umbrella of the Golden Rule, “Treat others the way you want to be

treated.” Students that do not adhere to the expectations are worked with in a progressive manner through teachers, counselors, administrators, and with the parents to ensure we are able to learn from our mistakes and make better choices in the future. On typical years, Powell Middle School provides a survey to parents to seek their input on how we are doing as well as how we can grow. This survey allow staff to be aware of how our parents feel we are doing in regard to offering a safe learning environment to students.

Our teachers intentionally embed culturally responsive lessons into their teaching. This provides the platform for the class to have discussions on making the right choice as well as how to respond in certain situations. Some of our electives that were previously mentioned, specifically health and digital citizenship have assignments that focus on diversity, respecting others, empathy, as well as social emotional learning. In certain classes, such as social studies, we weave current events in with history pertaining to local events, civics, and government. Connecting current events to history lends itself well to how situations were handled in the past and how we are handling current events as well as lessons learned. When applicable, our teachers will even tie units into local history such as Heart Mountain Relocation Center, the history of farming and irrigation, and other topics as students often times can connect the learning to their family heritage and culture.

At Powell Middle School, we understand the need to offer additional support to certain students within the day to ensure equity and access for all students. We utilize additional support staff with English Language Learner paras, Title I paras, or Special Education paras for these students to reach success. As a district, we provide a translator for meetings as well as translation for communication that goes home. The district also provided a cultural awareness and sensitivity training to all staff, which helped prepare staff with understanding and navigating current and future times.

In general, as needs arise, we work with groups of students and families on topics that may come up during local events as well as within the school day. Our staff routinely work with our students on topics that have multiple viewpoints, and work on hearing them out. We feel by intentionally spending time on these discussions that we are teaching our students tolerance and empathy. This all connects to our staff mission, vision, and collective commitments and feel we are setting all our students up for success to be a positive contributing member of society.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In the community of Powell and at all the Powell schools, you routinely hear the word, “pride” and along with that, the commitment to do what is best for kids. There is a tremendous amount of pride in the community of Powell and that is true when speaking about Park County School District #1. Although there are currently several strategies for success, and there will continue to be many more as we continue to collaborate and grow within our PLC, we are quick to realize and see the changes that have happened and are continuing to happen in our society and community. With that said, the bottom line that sets us apart from other schools is the commitment and willingness to make whatever changes necessary to do what is best for our students.

We are quick to realize these changes and adaptations are not small and take a significant amount of time, energy, collaboration, and laser-like focus, but when we know the changes are necessary and in the best interest of our students, this staff is all in and 100% committed. Most staff members live in the small town of Powell because of the community and the schools. We realize Powell has a first-class education to offer to our students, and if we want that for our own children then we owe that education to all students that enter our doors.

We are very fortunate to work in a school and a district that is committed to Professional Learning Communities, as the collaboration and planning that is necessary to stay ahead of the curve and with the times takes commitment and time. Collaboration is not necessarily something that happens on a given time on a given day, it is something that is happening before, during, and after school and is woven into the practices of our educators. We have times allocated within the school days as well as early release Fridays to collaborate and grow as professionals so that we can offer the best for our students. We continue to push ourselves to be the best, so we can offer the best.

The school closure in the spring of 2020 was extremely difficult for all students and staff, but it also helped our staff to grow in several areas such as technology, best practices, and relationships with students as well as parents. Parents seem to have more of an appreciation for their children’s education, and the students are much more thankful to be in school than remote learning. The closure reminded us to be thankful for what we have and not take for granted the great learning experiences, staff and student relationships, collaborative learning and interaction, and all the activities and experiences we are fortunate to have while in school. Overall, staff and students are more grateful than ever, which is helpful when dealing with unprecedented times and situations. We are resilient and continue to adapt to the changing times because that is what is best for kids.