

U.S. Department of Education
2022 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. Demetrius Ball
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 12601 Alcosta Boulevard
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City San Ramon State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 94583-9025

County Contra Costa County

Telephone (925) 790-2500 Fax (925) 824-2830

Web site/URL https://ihms.srvusd.net/ E-mail dball@srvusd.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. John malloy E-mail jmalloy@srvusd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name San Ramon Valley Unified School District Tel. (925) 552-5500

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. Ken Mintz
(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 signatures 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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	178	177	355
7	155	169	324
8	197	176	373
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	530	522	1052

*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 48 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 11 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 29 % White
 - 8 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: ≤1%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	3
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	1041
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

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

Spanish, Arabic, Filipino (Pilipino or Tagalog), Farsi (Persian), Hindi, Mandarin,, Russian, Korean, and Tamil.

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

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

Total number students who qualify: 31

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 10 %
100 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 with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>8</u> Autism | <u>5</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>33</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>35</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</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	2
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.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	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 28:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	99%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2021.

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. 2006

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

The mission of Iron Horse Middle School is to educate, inspire, and empower students in a safe and equitable learning environment.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

https://srvusd-ca.schoolloop.com/pf4/cms2/view_page?d=x&group_id=1275747741703&vdid=i2y0b1x03v122y

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Iron Horse Middle school is located in the central part of the city of San Ramon and the center of the San Ramon Valley Unified School District. Our community has grown in population and diversity over the last twenty years. In the year 2000 our population (total population 44,722) consisted of 19% people of color, and as of 2020 we now 65% of our community's population is people of color (total population 84,600). There has been a tremendous increase in housing in our community which has driven the influx of students. Part of the housing influx has been the city requirement that all new housing developments must have 5% of the units considered affordable housing. This has increased the economic and social diversity in our community and added to the opportunities for supporting diverse students and families in our school community.

Iron Horse provides a variety of strategies that encourage student growth. All three grade levels focus on developing literacy skills beginning in the sixth grade emphasizing reading and writing skills. Notice and Note is one of the active reading strategies that the sixth-grade teams implement throughout the school year for close reading.

Our seventh-grade core (world history/language arts) is piloting evidence-based grading, which is moving away from the traditional A-F scale and students are earning grades based on their mastery of the academic standards. This system has allowed for more academic discussions between students and teachers and has seemed to increase student motivation to engage with the learning. Evidence-based/standards-based grading is an initiative that our district began exploring several years ago but has not really taken off district-wide until this school year. Our district has begun to invest the resources in the research and the training necessary for our district and school to move toward Evidence/standards/mastery-based grading at the secondary level over the last two years. This is something that students are used to at the elementary level, yet at the secondary level, we have been focused on grades so much that it has taken away from the actual learning experience and created an unhealthy environment where students and families are only focused on getting the grade. If we truly want learning to be our focus, this is a transition that we must make, and we are seeing a trend of universities wanting to more high schools to make that move to mastery-based systems.

The 7th-grade core teachers are also diving into social justice by reading contemporary literature with a history unit on *Stamped by Ibrim X. Kendi* that begins in the 4th quarter of the school year and continues into the first quarter of 8th grade. The first half of the book lays out race as a construct from the world perspective (7th-grade history standards), and the second half covers the United States perspective (8th-grade history standards). This move has been spurred by highlighting motivated teachers, including our teacher-librarian, who is devoted to creating a library space that reflects the experiences of our students and their families. We have increased our collection of texts with culturally diverse authors, characters, and themes to include the variety of lived experiences that exist in our world.

At the school-wide level, we are focused on supporting the social and emotional needs of our students. The last two years have been extremely challenging as we have faced the COVID-19 pandemic. We have added two very critical programs to help our students cope with their return to campus. One is a social-emotional tool called TrustCircle. We work closely with the developer to personalize TrustCircle for our school community. It is a web-based application that allows students the opportunity to reflect on their feelings and think through why they are feeling the way they do. Students have access to the platform 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Students log their emotions (joy, anger, sadness, and fear) and have to type in an explanation of why they feel the way they feel. The application keeps track and graphs their feelings over time. There is also a journal component that allows students to reflect in a longer format if they choose to. The creators of the application have included a "streak" component that allows students to keep a streak of recording going and students are motivated to keep their streaks alive. The section social-emotional strategy that we have implemented is weekly mindfulness. We have a teacher that leads a mindfulness session with a different class each week, he records the session, and then the whole school participates in the mindfulness sit on Tuesday mornings before we start our day. Trustcircle has a resources tab that allows us to upload each mindfulness session into the resources, so students can conduct mindfulness sessions on their own through our own application.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:

The teachers and staff of Iron Horse Middle School are not just a group of people that work together - we are a team. We know that every student is “our” student, not just the students that physically attend our classes. Therefore, we know that every interaction that takes place and every lesson that is taught is part of a bigger picture. We are all a part of our students’ most formative years, and we aim to do everything we can to make a positive impact on their journey.

The overall philosophy of our staff and school is perfectly worded through our school mission: Our mission is to educate, inspire, and empower students in a safe and equitable learning environment. The common approach amongst all classrooms and staff members is to live up to the mission each and every day. We aim to not only teach academic content, but to inspire students to dream big. We give students a voice so that they know they have one and that they can advocate for themselves. Across all classrooms, our goal is to help students feel not only powerful, but safe - safe to be their true selves, safe to make mistakes and learn from them, and safe to speak up and speak out. In addition to being taught the necessary academic content required of a middle school education, students are also taught the importance of taking care of their social-emotional health and personal wellbeing. Weekly mindfulness, the implementation of TrustCircle, community building circles, and school-wide Wellness Days are just a few of the ways that our students and staff come together as well.

1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

In 6th grade, we understand that we start the year with 5th graders, so, in knowing that, we aim to help ease the transition from elementary to middle school for our young learners. We calibrate with 5th grade teachers in our district so that we know, and are better prepared for, what our students already know, coming into 6th grade. We start the year off launching into both reading and writing workshops and narrative writing. We use mini-lessons and direct instruction, as well as guided practice to teach reading and writing skills. Through peer revision and partner work, students are able to learn and work cooperatively. During the second semester, our students work through auto/biography, argument, poetry, and response to literature reading and writing units.

In order to provide multi-tiered systems of support, our students receive differentiated instruction based on their needs. Through formative and summative assessments, such as the Fastbridge Reading assessment, given three times a year to mark progress, we are better able to gauge student needs. We also allow for student choice in regards to book clubs, projects, and assignments, which allows for more student buy-in and engagement.

In 7th grade, we teach our students to read with insight and to talk and write in thoughtful ways about their reading. This is accomplished through a reading and writing workshop style of teaching which is less dependent on a textbook and more dependent on authentic learning opportunities.

We also teach to free minds, to inspire, and to equip learners. Reading comprehension and knowing how to learn are the most critical skills to prepare students for an unknown job market. Students need to learn how to read, search, and evaluate information. They basically need to understand why they believe what they believe. Our job, in today’s information saturated world, is to give our students an armor of sorts to develop critical thinking skills to be able to read and tell fact from fiction. Lastly, it is hard for students to unlearn empathy, to forget discernment, to dismiss the importance of solid evidence once they’ve grown used to demanding it.

In 8th grade, we gear the majority of our instruction to what the students will need for high school.

Therefore, we work to establish a culture of literacy and love of reading. We closely follow Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher’s approaches to building stronger readers and writers. Our students read daily, both in and out of the classroom, to develop reading stamina. In addition to our extensive classroom libraries, we also work closely with our teacher librarian to give our students access to a wide-range of literature. We also focus on increased vocabulary exposure through our practice of consistent and focused reading.

Our eighth graders write daily, whether it be a free-write, a reading response, or a response to literature. We teach our students “TIQA” (topic sentence, introduce quote, quote, analyze quote) as a way to build a strong paragraph and then, in time, a strong essay. This is also a technique that the high school teachers expect our students to master.

To meet our students varied needs, we regularly practice scaffolding and the “I do - we do - you do” apprenticeship method of teaching. We understand that our students come from diverse backgrounds, both personally and educationally, so we work to meet students at their levels, while still holding all students to high expectations. We also utilize a variety of Chromebook apps to personalize learning since our students are each issued their own district device to use for the school year.

When assessing our eighth grade students, we practice a variety of modalities to keep it interesting for both students and teachers. These range from the tried and true essay assessment to a one-pager, which allows students to more creatively express their knowledge. We have used flashdrafts as pre-assessment to direct and lead instruction. We give both physical assessments, as well as digital assessments, so that our students have practice with both.

1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Our math standards are addressed using various methods including direct instruction, projects, exit tickets, worksheets, formative assessments, and summative assessments. We use direct instruction with guided fill-in the blank notes for students to fill in as instruction is being given. The notes include both steps to solve the problems and practice problems. We spiral homework so that students have had direct instruction, done practice problems, and had that type of problem as a “Bell Ringer” before asking students to try to complete work independently. Exit tickets and formative assessments are used to help the instructors decide if the students are ready for a summative assessment or what other remediation instruction may be needed to support successful learning the standard. Students who are unsuccessful with either the exit ticket or the formative assessment are signed up for more instruction during a tutorial period before the scheduled summative assessment. Students also have the option of retaking the summative assessments to master the standard being taught. Our math department works together to decide on essential standards that every student must know for each math level. We also work closely with our Multi-tiered Student Support Coordinator. She worked as a math teacher at our school previously, so she takes the lead in teaching before and after school small group intervention classes to allow students extra practice needed to master any particular standard.

The math department uses a computer based screening tool to make instruction personalized for each student. The program allows the student to work both above and below grade level. Therefore, students may “fill” gaps they may have in their instruction and/or develop more knowledge of a topic in math that interests them.

Following our year of remote teaching, we have found that we are backfilling standards from previous years to enable our students to be more successful. Mastering standards is taking a long time, including reteaching more often than we have needed to in the past. As teachers, we are trying to be sure that our students are mastering the standards needed to excel in their math careers.

1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At Iron Horse, we cultivate curiosity in our students. Sixth-grade science starts with an inquiry question. Students begin with a probe to look at students’ prior knowledge and then base learning on the discovery. We continually go back to the question and encourage students to change their thinking. We know that in

science it is hard to override misconceptions about how things work. Through asking questions and changing minds, students are comfortable applying scientific thinking processes to new problems posed in our labs. Seventh grade builds on this foundation by continuing to explore students' misconceptions about the world around them. We focus on a streamlined curriculum to make learning accessible and engaging by participating in a variety of hands-on and virtual activities to best meet the needs of each student. Students in 8th grade include project-based learning and approach physical science with engineering skills.

Science focuses on problem-based learning. The use of technology helps us to support a variety of different learners. Gizmos and PhET simulations are examples of tools that we use to visualize abstract concepts. (air pressure, high and low air pressure, population change). We use physical demonstrations as well to provide a tactile experience to observe phenomena that are challenging to observe otherwise (Starburst rock modeling, Parallax). The labs we do are designed to emphasize the scientific method and creative problem solving through discovery and exploration. We have student's design logs and redesign logs, which allows them to engage with the engineering design process. Students felt more connected to their work and were in charge of their own learning. Finally, we have students apply lab data to real-life situations (heating earth's surface lab, adaptations to changing environment).

When assessing students, we have them use CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) writing, which teaches students how to back up and connect a claim with quantitative data and qualitative observations from experiments while providing a way for teachers to assess student learning on scientific inquiry. CER ties nicely in with the TIQA writing that students use in their English classes, so, in this way, our departments work to support each other and our students.

After an extended period of online learning, we are adapting to the needs of our students. We can't teach the way we used to. Our students come with shorter attention spans. Students need more practice with cooperative learning where each student is important to the success of the group. We problem-solve to connect our content to events outside of the classroom. There is a lot of repetition, approaching concepts through a variety of experiences. We have incorporated more formative assessments. Since we know that it is challenging for our students to break away from technology, we incorporate technology with purpose and with thought. Especially with our older students, we have shifted to project-based assessments to further emphasize the importance of critical thinking and collaboration with others.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

In 6th grade, our focus is on early civilizations, spanning from ancient Egypt to ancient China. Many of our English reading and writing strategies are also taught through our teaching of the history content. When planning our history units and lessons, we are guided by the California Standards for history-social science. Together, our team collaborates on the essential standards that should be covered throughout the school year.

In 7th grade, we teach our medieval world history by focusing on:

Why did the events happen the way that they did?

How did these events affect people and change things?

We consult multiple sources to develop an understanding to compare and interpret different versions of history. We focus on the connection of ideas, not on the memorization of facts of whos, whats, wheres, or chronology of events. Our students capture, organize, and synthesize important information in order to clarify big ideas and important details. Our tests focus on higher-order thinking skills in which students are asked to apply their learning and explain their reasoning.

In 8th grade, we teach United States history from colonization through the Civil War. To teach content, we utilize both our TCI textbook as well as a thematic unit that is created by teachers in our school district. Similar to our English instruction, we assess students in a variety of ways, with a lot of focus on student choice. For example, to close out the school year, students complete a Civil War Multi-Genre Project where

they are able to not only pick their own topic of study, but also their own projects to complete from a menu of choices. This allows them not only to stretch not only creatively, but critically, as well.

1f. For secondary schools:

As a middle school, we serve as a bridge. It's our job to meet our students where they are at as incoming 6th graders and to build on their knowledge as they progress into 7th and 8th grade, where our focus is then getting them ready to be successful in high school and beyond. Although college and careers seem to be a world away for our 8th graders, we know that it's not. Rather than focusing on the letter grades, we teach our students to focus on the feedback they receive, so that they can learn and grow from it. We also emphasize the importance of the skills gained during these middle school years. In all classes, students are faced with situations that force them to think critically, to collaborate with their peers, and to present to others. These are the skills that all subject matters, here at Iron Horse Middle School, reinforce on a daily basis. These skills are what help to get our students college and career ready.

One class that specifically focuses on teaching skills for success to our students is AVID. We have two AVID elective courses, one 7th grade class and one 8th grade class. We started teaching AVID four years ago. The purpose of the course is directly aligned with AVID's mission statement: "To close the opportunity gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society." Our AVID site team closely monitors the progress our AVID students are making in their AVID elective as well as their core academic classes. To help our students access the world of college readiness, we focus on student agency, organization, time management, note taking, critical reading, collaborative practices, and college and career research.

We also have a very strong leadership presence on the campus. Our students gain entry into this course through a difficult interview process and are selected because of their potential to be a leader in our school community and our larger community of San Ramon. Students have the opportunity to hone their leadership skills while also planning events for the campus. Among others, students learn communication skills, presentation skills, and delegation skills. We bring in guest speakers to support these lessons with the hopes that they are able to thrive in a high school leadership program, and ultimately in the community where they live. Our leadership students also have the opportunity to run for the ASB officer positions of treasurer, secretary, vice-president, and president.

As a school community, we work together to give our students the best chance possible at a bright future.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Iron Horse Middle School not only offers rigorous academic courses but highly engaging physical education and electives courses as well.

In 6th grade, all students participate in a "wheel" elective, which is an exploratory course that rotates between four subjects: art, drama, technology, and world language - Spanish and French. The "wheel" provides our students with a "taste" of the different electives that we offer so that they can make informed choices when picking electives for their 7th and 8th grade years.

In 7th and 8th grade, students have the opportunity to take their choice of two electives. We offer meals, baking, 2-D art, 3-D art, beginning drama, advanced drama, musical theatre, tech 1, tech 2, video production, stagecraft, yearbook, AVID, jazz band, leadership, environmental science, symphonic band, string orchestra, ukulele, computer science, computer projects, and media/graphic arts.

Our physical education program provides age-appropriate movement opportunities through game-play and sports skill development, to teach students the importance of a physically active lifestyle. In addition to

providing unit instruction designed to elevate the heart rate and enhance motor skill development, we frequently utilize technology such as heart rate monitors and GPS watches to help students focus on individual performance, improvement, and accountability. All 6-8th grade students come away from our program having developed competency in a variety of movement forms and equipped with the tools and knowledge to maintain a physically active lifestyle.

All of the aforementioned courses focus on providing our students with the “whole child” experience and education. Where certain students may struggle in some core academic courses, they may shine in their elective courses, as electives tend to reveal students’ skill sets that may otherwise remain unknown. They also provide the much-needed social-emotional break that all middle school students need. Iron Horse students are lucky enough to be able to participate in both their physical education class and their elective classes every regular school day.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

To meet the needs of our students performing below grade level, we offer a variety of interventions and assistance. Based on a math screener that students take in 5th grade and the Fastbridge assessment data, students are identified for math intervention. We have one math intervention class, and it is offered in place of one of a student’s elective periods. One of the district goals is to decrease the number of African Americans in SPED. so this population has priority. Students who are not proficient on regular formative assessments in math are assigned to weekly tutorials for extra instruction and opportunities to re-assess essential standards that are necessary for success in the next grade level. Tutorials occur twice a week, in the middle of the school day, for 30 minutes. Teachers have the ability to create their own tutorial focuses, and this allows many teachers the opportunity to reteach and provide intervention, as needed.

Using data from Fastbridge, running records and teacher observation, students are identified for Reading Intervention. If students increase their reading level up to grade level before the end of the semester they exit early.

This year we have Before and After School Reading and Math Intervention. Both groups are serving students who are in the lowest 10%. The groups are no more than 4 students to give individualized instruction based on the students' needs.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

We try to meet the needs of our students performing above grade level through a variety of enrichments. We have acceleration opportunities in math. Students are able to take math courses over the summer in order to move ahead to the next course during the next school year. We promote a year-round Math Olympiad team. This is technically open to anyone but as there is an application process and a limited amount of spots available, it is the high performing students who opt to participate. Iron Horse also has a robust California Junior Scholarship Federation Program (CJSF). Students apply to be a part of the CJSF program, meet monthly during the school year, and have rigorous academic expectations that they must meet along with required volunteer hours.

3c. Special education:

At Iron Horse, we have 3.6 resource teachers, one mild special day class teacher, one intensive special day class teacher, and thirteen special education paraprofessionals to help support the approximately 90 special education students that we serve. In addition, we have one full-time school psychologist and one speech pathologist that is on campus three days a week.

Resource teachers support our RTI Math essentials class by working with a small group of 14 students who are a mix of gen ed and SpEd students to work on essential skills to be successful in Algebra in high school. They also help support all students twice a week during tutorial periods. Our resource teachers and para’s

support resource students as well as gen ed students in 21 push-in classes per day.

The school psychologist provides social skills groups at lunchtime and during tutorial time and plays an important role in supporting the emotional well-being of both students within the special education program as well as general education students including students with 504 plans. Alongside the social worker, school counselors, Multi-Tiered System of Supports Teacher and members of our administration, our psychologist serves on the student support team to help provide strategies and support for at-risk students. She also provides a “wellness space” for students who may need to take breaks when overwhelmed and need safe space for emotion regulation. In total, our school psychologist and our resource teachers assess between 42 and 48 students a year to see if they qualify for special education

Our speech pathologist provides therapy for students requiring articulation, language, fluency, voice, and/or social skills support.

At Iron Horse, we have one intensive special education class and that teacher provides academic support, behavior needs, social skills, functional and daily living skills, OT, and speech support for seven students with intensive needs. There are also three paras that assist in that classroom. The teacher also provides modeling and training to tutorial students as well as peer support that push into the classroom.

Our mild SDC teacher works with students who are working at approximately 2-3 grade levels below their grade. She provides academic support, behavior needs, and social skills to sixteen students with one Paraeducator. One student has a 1:1 Paraeducator who supports the class as well.

All of the existing IMHS special education team members work to support each other and any new members who join. Collaboration is an essential part to the success of Iron Horse Middle school, so all resource teachers and our school psychologist also support general education teachers with brainstorming ideas to better support any gen ed students with accommodations in areas of behavior, academics, and curriculum in order to meet the unique needs of all students at IHMS

3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:

At Iron Horse, we have one social worker that comes to our school every two weeks to meet with, counsel, and serve our homeless students. She meets with each student for about 30 minutes per visit. As necessary, our social worker will provide needed resources, such as bus passess, food, and gift cards.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Our pursuit of creating the climate and culture that is safe for all students begins from the year before our 6th grade students join our family. Every May we host the current 5th grades for a welcome event. We bring all of the 5th graders from the 5 feeder elementary schools for a big rally in our multi-purpose room with our band performing, introduction of our school leadership team, and our 7th & 8th grade leadership students lead a short campus tours to introduce our incoming student to our campus. In August, right before the start of school, we host our annual “Jaguar Camp” which is a full day of activities to welcome all of our new incoming students. Again, our event is led our 7th & 8th grade leadership students and our leadership teacher, to build community through fun interactive activities, lunch, and a tour of the campus. Our new students will review their new schedule and visit each class so that they are ready on Day-1.

Greeting students in the mornings. Getting the day started off right is critical to success. Our staff sets the tone by actively greeting students with a “Good morning,” as they enter the school with staff members who are at the drop-off lane, including our principal, making sure that everyone enters school safely. Teachers are also waiting outside their classrooms to greet students as they enter. Greetings are a great way to gauge the temperature of our students. We can tell their mood, and check-in with them as needed, and it helps determine how to start the lesson. Do we need to bring some extra energy? Is a mindfulness session going to be a great way to get the class focused? The four to five minutes that we take can do so much to inform our instruction for the day.

Our students have a lot of energy and need the change to get that energy out at mid-day during our lunch periods, especially our 6th graders. With the support of our PTA and noon duty supervisors (classified campus support team), we are able to host games in our courtyard as well as other sports activities on our blacktop. Our PTA purchased two ping-pong tables and a set of corn hole and our students love it. On our clear weather days, an administrator or noon duty supervisor takes students out to our black top area to play basketball, volleyball, kickball, and soccer. Students even will play tag. It is such a joy to see our students enjoying the outdoors after almost two years of experiencing school at home online.

Morning announcements are a staple at most schools, and Iron Horse is no exception. Our morning announcements are another way that we get the day started off right. Our principal along with members of the student body provides daily updates to students and staff. One tradition that is unique is the fact that we recite our mission statement every day. We don’t just recite the mission statement, but we also conduct mini-lessons throughout the school year to inspire our students to live the mission.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parent involvement is essential to student success. We have a philosophy of working as a school community to support all students. That community is not complete without parent involvement. First and foremost we prioritize proactive communication with families. We utilize our website to keep families aware of everything going on at campus, our principal produces a weekly update communication that highlights the past week and previews the coming week. The update included video and pictures to give as much life as possible to the action on campus. Our principal also hosts a quarterly coffee question and answer session with parents to get their feedback and share any updates that he has.

We also depend on three very important parent groups to help us fulfill our mission. The parents that lead our parent groups, PTA, Education Fund, and School Site Council, are amazing people that volunteer their time to raise money for student and staff social activities, exercise equipment, additional technology, and additional FTE for staff to reduce class sizes. Our School Site Council is a very special parent group that includes parents, students, and staff. The group collaborates to establish goals for the school and see to it that we take action steps towards reaching our goals. The ideas that our School Site Council develops have often been implemented. Items such as wellness days and school-wide assemblies have been a result of the School Site Council’s efforts.

One community partnership that offers amazing opportunities for our students is with Chevron and Project Lead the Way. We have been working with Chevron and Project Lead the Way through their local grant program for several years, and this past year our partnership expanded. In our STEM technology class, our students are developing their project planning, development, and execution skills. With the curriculum developed by Project Lead the Way, our students are participating in projects that are hands-on and focused on developing collaboration skills and increasing the level of engagement of students because they are building using 3D printers, designing C02 cars, and building robots, among a variety of other science and technology projects that develop engineering skills.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Showing that we value and support our teachers is foundational to the success of our school. From an administrative perspective, we feel that high levels of organization, communication, accountability, and celebration show that value and support. Our teaching staff needs consistency from the leadership team, so we develop a professional development calendar over the summer so that our teachers know when and what we will do during staff meetings and professional development days. The calendar has hyperlinks to that particular day's agenda, so there are no surprises throughout the school year. When our district made the decision to transition to remote learning, we gave teachers a week to prepare by developing training on the new technology necessary to maintain the high quality instruction that our students were used to. It was extremely difficult to learn and execute as we went, but our staff was able to do it.

When we were conducting learning through Zoom and Google Meet with no one on campus, days were long and the continuous screen time was physically taxing. Full staff meetings helped the morale of the staff and helped us maintain a sense of community even though we were unable to be in our usual in-person meeting space. The leadership team made sure that meetings were efficiently run and maximized our instructional time together. Our leadership team also communicates with staff weekly. They feel that it is important to maintain consistent communication, provide reminders about upcoming events, and receive feedback on the level of support that staff members actually feel. The pandemic guidelines for online learning and on-campus learning seemed to change by the day. Leadership had to receive the new guidance and interpret it in the most clear way possible so that staff could execute with minimal interruption to their instruction. Failure to communicate just was not an option. Accountability exist in our school through the sharing of department meeting agendas along with the unit and lesson plans produced.

4. School Leadership:

Iron Horse Middle School is a school where the school leadership team trusts staff to be professional, know their job, and love students. The majority of our staff was hired because of their subject matter knowledge. One of the most important skills that an educator must have is a strong knowledge of their content area. Our students deserve master teachers. We understand that no one comes into the job knowing everything, so the leadership team is focused on instructional leadership and providing the support and resources that our staff needs to successfully serve our students. The principal is our primary instructional leader. The principal sets the example for our mission and vision for the school and constantly engages staff, students, and the community in messaging. During the pandemic, the principal's role was heightened as it was necessary to stay on top of all the changes in COVID guidelines, so they communicated with the students and families three times a week through YouTube video messages. In return, the community gave amazing feedback on their appreciation for the constant flow of information.

The goal of our leadership team is to observe formally and informally, provide timely feedback, ask questions, and work with staff to plan how to best serve each individual. We are in the early stages of initiating our philosophy as competing needs may pull us away from the instructional leadership focus. The principal is the face of the school and has a strong presence in classrooms, in the hallways, at the front of the school, and throughout the community. The principal works closely with the assistant principal on all things instructional leadership. They have divided the site in half and oversee their respective departments to provide instructional leadership. The principal also oversees the budget, parent groups (PTA, Education Fund, and School Site Council), and department chair meetings.

In addition to instructional leadership, the assistant principal is also responsible for overseeing our student leadership and activities program, student attendance, facility use, and many other logistics within the school. The principal and assistant principal share responsibility for staff development, discipline, and 504 and IEP meetings. The special education team along with the administrative team works closely with families of students that receive special education services. Navigating the education system alone is difficult, but when a child has more specific needs it can be overwhelming. We take special care to provide all the details to families to ensure that they are as knowledgeable as possible and have all of the resources that we can provide.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The COVID-19 pandemic opened up many people's eyes to the inequity in our country. The pandemic highlighted the economic, housing, income, healthcare, social, and racial inequities that many have been openly ignoring for generations. Prior to the pandemic, Iron Horse Middle School was conducting professional development on identity and bias because we identified the fact that 90% of our staff identifies as White while 70% of our student population identifies as part of the Global Majority. Identifying our biases is one thing, but the goal is to make sure that our words and actions do not harm our students. We conducted two book studies with the texts *The Person You Mean to Be* by Dolly Chugh, and *Blindspot* by Banaji and Greenwald to help us explore the ideas of microaggressions and the impacts they have on students (and staff) of color. We were just beginning to analyze how we were impacting the community when schools shut down in March of 2020. We found out who in our community had access to technology and internet, adequate housing, food, and even a space to have an online school. As a district and site, we stepped up to meet those needs by issuing a laptop computer and WiFi hotspot for every family in need. Our child nutrition team received federal funds to provide meals to students and we distributed thousands of meals to students across our district. As a school site, we had five families that were in need of food and the administrative team personally delivered meals to them. From a social aspect, we saw the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Aubry and our principal addressed those killings head-on in several messages to the community, including a personal perspective of being the only Black male school administrator in the district. The highly publicized deaths of these unarmed Black individuals led to marches in our community and calls for us to have a more equitable curriculum, especially in our English classes that focus on texts with European American authors and characters. As previously our Teacher Librarian has done an outstanding job of diversifying the books and authors that our students are exposed to. Race, gender, and sexuality have all been areas of our curriculum that have been and continue to be addressed. We have a long way to go to continue to make sure that all of our students are seen in their classrooms, yet we are well on our way.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One practice that has been most instrumental in the success of Iron Horse Middle School is staff collaboration. At Iron Horse, every teacher sees every student as their student, not just the students that attend their own classes. Our staff collaborates so closely because we know that is what's best for our students.

Staff members meet weekly in their specialized departments. These weekly meetings provide the time departments need so that teachers that work in the same department are on the same page. This doesn't necessarily mean that every teacher in each department is in lockstep, nor do we believe that's how it should be, but we really do value true collaboration. This collaboration includes planning units and lessons, calibrating before and after assessments, and, most importantly, sharing best practices. By not only working together but sharing together as well, our teachers become stronger and more knowledgeable teachers for our students.

In addition to weekly department meetings, grade-level teams also come together to meet a couple of times a quarter. For example, grade level teachers come together to discuss students' progress and plan for conferences at the midpoint of each semester. Grade level meetings are a great way to meet and communicate face-to-face with other teachers that our students see on a daily basis. In person, we can each really open up to the behaviors or trends that we see in our own classes, and we can get valuable insight from one another.

Iron Horse teachers and staff members also take part in monthly all-staff meetings. Here is another venue for great collaboration and sharing of ideas. This is also where we build our staff community. Working together is our main purpose of being together, but the staff at Iron Horse goes one step further - we work to be a true team. Although the department, grade level, and whole staff meetings are productive and effective, a lot of what makes Iron Horse a truly collaborative environment takes place behind the scenes - it's the minute or two chatting at the copy machine or even in the line waiting for the restroom, it's our debriefing and consulting with one another in the lunch room or the hallway. Teachers are collaborative by nature, but Iron Horse teachers just take the power of collaboration to a whole other level, and that's what makes Iron Horse such a special and successful place.