

U.S. Department of Education
2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Van Meter High School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 520 1st Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Van Meter State IA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 50261-7706

County Dallas

Telephone (515) 996-2221 Fax (515) 996-2488

Web site/URL https://www.vmbulldogs.com E-mail adam.lamoureux@vmbulldogs.com

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. Deron Durflinger E-mail deron.durflinger@vmbulldogs.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Van Meter Community School District Tel. (515) 996-2221

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 Ms. Jessica Drake
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not 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	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	44	39	83
10	38	40	78
11	40	26	66
12 or higher	39	17	56
Total Students	161	122	283

*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):
- 0.7 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.3 % Asian
 - 0.3 % Black or African American
 - 2.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 94.6 % White
 - 1.7 % 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: 2%

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	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	5
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	286
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
1 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8 %

Total number students who qualify: 24

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 6 %
17 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>4</u> Autism | <u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>4</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: 5
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	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 15:1

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	96%	94%	93%	93%	97%
High school graduation rate	97%	99%	100%	96%	100%

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	59
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	56%
Enrolled in a community college	24%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	5%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	14%

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.

Personalize learning for each student's success, today and tomorrow. Our vision is to make learning personal through innovative practices that align to the principles of competency-based education to produce college, career, and global ready graduates.

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

<https://www.vmbulldogs.com/page/van-meter-non-discrimination-policy>

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

Van Meter is a small, progressive district about 15 miles west of West Des Moines. Nestled in between farmland, the Raccoon River, and the growing suburbs of Des Moines, it has maintained its small-town feel and sense of community. The district is home to many different types of families, yet they almost always have the same reason for staying or moving into Van Meter: the schools.

The mission of Van Meter Schools is to personalize learning for each student's success, today and tomorrow. The district is housed in one building for all students in grades PK-12. High school students are given opportunities to serve as mentors and leaders for younger students on a daily basis. From mentoring younger students, to supporting classrooms as a cadet teacher, to engaging in project-based learning with younger grades, the single building has allowed our high school to encourage students to show leadership and to understand the importance of giving back. The high school students are invested in the future success of both the schools and community.

Along with leadership opportunities, the district has had high levels of academic success. Van Meter students have consistently scored above the state average on the ACT and students averaged a composite score of close to 23 over the last ten years. Van Meter students have also performed well on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP). The test is required annually for all students in grades 3-11. The exceptional performance in 2021 was demonstrated when over 94.85% of high school students were proficient in English Language Arts and 85.57% of students were proficient in Mathematics.

Being a small district, it is not always possible for us to meet the needs of each student within the school's available courses and facilities. Despite our size, Van Meter High School is committed to providing the best education possible for each of its students. Through collaborative efforts with Des Moines Area Community College, Iowa Online AP Academy through the University of Iowa, Central Academy, Central Campus, Madison County Academy, and Waukee's APEX program, Van Meter Schools are able to offer students classes in almost any area in which they are interested. Students learn and train in a variety of fields to prepare them for the future: computer science, trades and construction, bioscience, education, agriculture, and Advanced Placement classes to name a few. This commitment to helping students learn within areas they are passionate about helps prepare all Van Meter graduates for careers or college in a personalized manner.

With ample opportunity to participate in activities, Van Meter students have performed just as well outside of the classroom as inside. This is evidenced by excellent fine arts programs, Student Leadership Team, National Honors Society, our national qualifying FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America) program, state championship sports teams, and many other quality extra-curricular programs. Over 90% of our students are involved in at least one extracurricular activity. Because of our supportive environment, students can easily find their niche or be active in many organizations.

Van Meter is known in the state of Iowa as being a leader in the use of technology in the classroom. Since 2011, all high school students have been provided with a MacBook. The secondary building has been identified as an Apple Distinguished School for its work multiple times in the last decade. The Van Meter staff believes that providing students with the best tools enhances the learning opportunities we can provide.

Not only have these tools become an integral part of daily instruction, but they also helped students and teachers to navigate the closure of schools in spring of 2020 without losing instruction. Students were able to complete their courses and continue to connect with their other classmates and teachers through the use of virtual instruction. Those same tools allowed the district to keep the schools open and provide in-person education throughout the entirety of the 2020-2021 school year. While the school utilized methods to ensure the safety of students and staff such as teachers moving classrooms instead of students, creating cohorts of students to limit exposure, and implementing CDC-compliant safety measures, Van Meter high school students were completing a full schedule of classes and being given as many opportunities as possible to challenge themselves academically, to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities, and to maintain the excellent education that they have experienced throughout their time at Van Meter.

Van Meter High School is committed to developing the whole student with a focus on developing well-rounded, good people. Combined with quality instruction focused on student-centered classrooms, assessment for learning, rigorous curriculum, and teaching for learner differences, Van Meter students are challenged and taught in an environment designed to develop global, digital citizens who can collaborate, communicate, create, and think critically.

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 Van Meter Community School District’s mission is to personalize learning for each student’s success now and in the future. In order to personalize the learning, Van Meter Schools believes in the components of competency-based education: where individual learner needs are identified by various levels of proficiency, students advance upon mastery, assessment is meaningful and positive, and transfer of knowledge is the goal of learning. The Van Meter High School has been a school with a 1:1 computer ratio for over a decade. By using technology as a tool in their learning, students engage in complex yet meaningful learning experiences assisted by limitless access to information and authentic, innovative approaches to display their learning. Each class’s curriculum is rooted in national and state standards, providing students with a clearly defined pathway to college and career readiness. Content teams regularly review curriculum and course material in order to personalize the learning experience for students in all classrooms. Instructional methods are shared in content teams, leveraging the knowledge and skills of teachers in their discipline, as well as grade-level teams that review the effectiveness of teaching and learning based on classroom and district assessment data. Student-centered classrooms at Van Meter High School employ standards-based grading, where a clearly defined progression of learning proficiency distinguishes the degree of learning that has occurred. By solving complex problems, Van Meter students learn to collaborate, communicate, persevere, and think globally in order to prepare for the uncertainty of the future.

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

The Van Meter High School English department strives to personalize learning for all students while impressing upon them the value of reading, writing, speaking, and listening to more fully understand the world around them. At all levels, teachers design concept-based units while leveraging national and state standards as a focal point of the learning. Classes are designed to provide students with opportunities to encounter a variety of genres, maximize student interest and choice, and engage in meaningful, text-dependent projects, essays, speeches, and discussions. The district has worked to provide multiple pathways for students based on their academic pursuits, interests, and future aspirations. While all students take both English I and English II to form a strong foundation for their skills, students can then move forward to enroll in Advanced Placement courses, dual enrollment courses through Des Moines Area Community College, traditional courses such as English III, or an interest-based course such as Sports Literature. The English Department understands that students need to be motivated in order to learn, thus they have adapted to student needs and interests continuously over the last decade to provide course offerings that make sense for the students and the community.

Through collaborative efforts during monthly content team meetings, Van Meter English teachers align standards and develop learning progressions based on levels of proficiency. Learning maps provide teachers with purposeful, targeted instruction, guiding students on a pathway of college and career readiness. Van Meter English teachers employ a student-centered approach to instruction, creating a classroom anchored in collaborative learning where discussion fosters a sense of community, collegiately, and deep thinking. English teachers commonly co-teach lessons, receive feedback from instructional coaches, and model different instructional strategies in order to more effectively reach all levels of learners. The English department strives to create opportunities for students to become empathetic, global thinkers by engaging with texts that represent multiple cultures, perspectives, and experiences. Assessment in Van Meter English classes is designed to be purposeful and meaningful, with collective rubrics that clearly distinguish a progression in proficiency. Van Meter English standards are designed to communicate different levels of learning on specified skills to more clearly communicate with students and parents the learning that has occurred. By instilling a strong foundation in reading, writing, speaking and listening, the Van Meter English Department helps develop important skills necessary in all content areas.

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

The Van Meter Secondary math curriculum is designed to create meaningful learning experiences for students by integrating the key math domains (number systems, algebra, geometry, functions, and statistics and probability) throughout the year. Each course offering is aligned with national and state standards, ensuring that all students achieve at high levels and are on the pathway for college and career readiness. A variety of math courses, ranging from Integrated Math I to Calculus, serve to personalize the learning and appropriately challenge students as they become more adept to the skills and concepts related to the curriculum. High achieving math students are offered concurrent enrollment opportunities in statistics and calculus through a partnership with a community college. Through monthly content team meetings, teachers clearly define course standards to distinguish different levels of proficiency and maintain vertical alignment of the curriculum. Content PLC teams frequently discuss district student achievement data as well as their classroom data in order to make sure all students succeed in the rigorous curriculum. The Van Meter Math Department's student-centered approach to math instruction provides students with the opportunity to collaborate with each other while solving complex problems and generating accurate solutions. By building knowledge through class discussion, students experience deep learning and math proficiency. Based on formative and summative assessment data, teachers provide students with individualized practice to help with learning gaps as well as fulfill the necessary challenges for high achieving learners. Assessment in math is made meaningful and positive with the frequent use of technology to provide students with immediate feedback on key learning and practice. A standards based approach to math assessment distinguishes differing levels of math proficiency on standards, which clearly communicates to students and parents the level of learning that has occurred.

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

The focus of the Van Meter High School Science Department is the demonstration of the scientific processes and skills related to the Next Generation Science Standards. The entry level courses start with a foundation in biology and life sciences, followed by a shift to physical sciences. After building a strong foundation of science background in entry level classes, students are provided a choice between a pathway in chemistry and physics or a pathway in health sciences. To develop courses that maximize student learning and engagement, science teachers content teams meet regularly to discuss course content and standards, alignment to the Next Generation Science Standards, and student achievement data. Collaborative labs, collaborative experiments, research projects, and dissections drive the learning in Van Meter High School science classrooms. Data collection and analysis is emphasized in order to provide students with meaningful, challenging, and authentic learning experiences. Activities throughout the years include dissections, genetic analysis, field studies at the school pond, and experiments involving the growing field of biotechnology, supported through resources and materials provided by Iowa State University. Students in Van Meter Science classrooms regularly collaborate with each other in order to conduct engaging experiments and solve complex problems relating to course content. The goal of the science department is for students to be able to develop strong knowledge, skills, and ability across all fields of science to prepare them for college and career readiness.

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

The Van Meter High School Social Studies Department strives to help students make meaning of the world around them. Courses are designed around the Iowa Core Social Studies Standards and aim to make students actively informed citizens of the world they live in. Courses begin with World History and Geography so that students better understand how their life connects as a larger world view. A strong foundation in American History teaches students how the country started, key events from history, and how those events shaped the country to what it is today. Government is presented to students as part of the Life Skills Curriculum, essential learning that focuses on understanding the function and structure of the government, the processes involved in a Democratic society, and the importance of being an involved and informed citizen. During content team meetings, teachers review standards, student achievement data, and align curriculum so that it is meaningful and attainable for all students. A key component of Van Meter High School Social Studies courses is helping students to think globally and develop a broader view of how places and events connect. Van Meter Social Studies teachers help students become civic minded, informed,

global ready, and actively participate in Democracy. Assessment in social studies is designed to accurately assess proficiency on the Iowa Core Social Studies Standards through authentic projects, presentations, discussions, examinations, and writing. Through collaboration with the English department, the Social Studies Department has committed to using the same structures and key words in writing to show students the cross-curricular application of writing. The goal of the Van Meter High School Social Studies Department is to help students become informed, globally aware citizens knowledgeable about the world around them and the democracy they live in.

1f. For secondary schools:

The pathway to college and career readiness is deeply rooted in all levels of learning at Van Meter High School. State and national standards clearly identify the learning in all classes, and strong belief in the components of competency based learning foster a sense of collaboration, student ownership, and purpose among students and staff. The Van Meter Vision points of Collaboration, Communication, Employability, Perseverance, Create and Innovate, Solve Problems, and Think Globally are embedded in all of the planning surrounding course offerings, business partnerships, and potential learning experiences for students. Van Meter Secondary students are provided with a variety of opportunities to explore college and career skills, including multiple Advanced Placement Courses, Dual Credit Courses, and courses for college credit offered by a local community college. A partnership with a nearby high school provides students with an opportunity to explore possible career and trade paths through a collaboration with educators and business professionals. The Van Meter Counseling Department provides students with a variety of career exploration opportunities through events such as career fairs, job shadowing, and visits from college representatives. In addition to classes, the Van Meter Student Leadership Team and the National Honor Society organize multiple opportunities for all students to engage in community and civic responsibilities. All junior students are also required to take a year long rotation of courses called Life Skills. Based on feedback from alumni and parents, Van Meter High School wanted to ensure that all students are prepared for life beyond high school. With a focus on self-awareness and resilience, Van Meter High School believes that all students need to have as many opportunities as possible to explore future pathways so that they can find a path that leads to fulfillment and happiness in their lives.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Van Meter High School strives to personalize learning for students to help acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become college, career, and global ready graduates. A variety of course offerings and experiences are provided related to performing and visual arts. Students in grades 9-12 are offered the opportunity to participate in a musical and play each year, as well as debate and speech as extracurricular activities. The visual arts program offers a variety of courses each semester, ranging from an introduction to art to more advanced classes like 3D art, Advanced Art, and Collaborative Art. Van Meter High School students in grades 9-12 also take physical education each semester in order to become aware of current and future fitness levels as well develop an appreciation of a physically active lifestyle. Van Meter High School offers Spanish and French on site, and students are also provided with expanded foreign language offerings due to sharing agreements with nearby high schools.

The Van Meter World Language courses views cultural awareness being an integral part of language acquisition, and language is explored through the use of stories, media, music, adapted readings, and class discussions using comprehensible input for its learning model. Spanish classes have been added into all students' learning for grades 3-8, and our high school students have access to high quality foreign language instruction as well as the opportunity to take concurrent enrollment college-level Spanish. Over the past four years, the majority of our senior students have graduated with the Seal of Biliteracy: a designation that will make them a desirable employee as well as a better global citizen.

Van Meter High School has been a 1:1 school for over a decade, and technology is infused in each Van

Meter High School classroom. Each student is provided with a MacBook Air and uses the computer as a tool for learning and a means to create, collaborate, communicate and be a global learner. Additionally, students in 9-12 are provided the opportunity to take courses focusing on digital literacy, ranging from Advanced Computers to Coding. In order to help students become rounded in all areas of learning, each junior takes Life Skills, which includes the key topics related to government, family and computer science, and industrial technology, and covers topics such as goal setting, decision-making, money and time management, relationships and the development of the self. Other life skill courses offered to students include finance, accounting, marketing, architecture, and manufacturing.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Due to a strong belief in standards based grading, teachers regularly monitor student progress on specific skills and concepts related to the curriculum. By using state and national standards, classroom teachers clearly indicate learning that is to occur in their classrooms. Teachers use formative and summative assessments to gain a clear understanding of the impact of their teaching, and classroom data is used to drive instruction to ensure that learning has occurred. If students fail to make progress on standards, they are immediately supported by classroom interventions and specific skills related to the curriculum. Study tables, structured work time with teacher supervision, are set up at each grade level to provide students with additional time, support, and study skills necessary to make progress in the standards. Instructional coaches are available at all grade levels to help teachers implement strategies to meet learners of all levels. The high school At-Risk Team meets regularly to monitor student progress and classroom data in order to facilitate parental support, teacher interventions, and students' social emotional needs in order to make progress in the classroom. Grade level PLC teams regularly collaborate about student needs, where different learning strategies and social emotional support strategies are shared to help students develop life-long skills while facing their current challenges. Teacher teams work hard to identify the root cause of the learning gap. Some students may need to build their academic skills through scaffolded instruction and workshops. Other students may need help building their executive functioning skills through the use of planners and goal setting. Others may only need a teacher to believe in them and show them that their learning matters. Whatever the root cause of a student's progress being below grade level, Van Meter believes in developing an individualized approach to meet the needs of each student.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Van Meter High School provides multiple opportunities for students performing above grade level. Within each course, clearly identified standards are used as indicators of student progress, which allows teachers to quantify the learning and provide descriptive criteria for the next steps in learning. Differentiated instruction is embedded in all areas of instruction, and teachers are able to make the necessary adjustments to the curriculum to meet the needs of high achieving learners. Grade level and content team meetings regularly to discuss the needs of all learners, which provides teachers the opportunity to share strategies that ensure high achieving learners continue to grow. In addition to challenging course work, high achieving students who are sophomores and above can enroll in Advanced Placement courses in a variety of subject areas. Additionally, students who are sophomores and above with the necessary prerequisites are able to take courses offered by a local community college, and the Van Meter Community School District also offers multiple concurrent enrollment options by qualified instructors. Students identified as Talented and Gifted complete Individual Learning Plans, a process which helps students gain ownership over their education and to ensure that students are able to be challenged at an appropriate level. Secondary students identified as Talented and Gifted are provided with individualized support from the district TAG teacher to help them stay challenged with the limitations of the curriculum.

3c. Special education:

The Van Meter special education department has worked tirelessly to provide a tiered system of support for all students with individual education plans. For students who have academic goals, teachers use progress monitoring and collaborate with classroom teachers to ensure that students are being provided the

appropriate support to be successful in the classroom as well as build their skills to close achievement gaps. Special education teachers provide students additional support by co-teaching in math and English classes when possible. By working directly with content teachers, the special education teachers can develop necessary scaffolds and adapted assessments to accurately assess student learning.

Aside from the traditional academic support, the special education department has built two additional programs to support students. Students who struggle with communication and collaboration have an opportunity to meet with other students and teachers to discuss and practice social skills. These skills, while not always directly assessed in a traditional classroom, are a necessary part of being an independent adult. The social skills class introduces concepts from conflict resolution, to hygiene, to building relationships. When the social skills class is not enough of an intervention, the special education teachers have collaborated with the secondary school counselor to build social-emotional skills and to help students be productive students and prepare for the real world.

The final level of support that our high school special education department has developed is a transitional education program. Students who will need additional support beyond high school are given opportunities to learn about workplace readiness, visit different employers, and experience different work options for after graduation. Van Meter special education teachers partner with local employers to help with job placement for students after graduation. This program is not only a support for students, but it is also a large support for their families.

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

Being a small district, Van Meter High School does not have a consistent number of students who need the support of English Language Learner Services. While the size of the program fluctuates from year to year, this program is essential to having a school and culture where all students feel seen and supported. To ensure that the district is always prepared to support students who enter our district with language support needs, the district has two instructors who are certified as ESOL instructors.

The support includes programming using reading, writing, speaking and listening supports. Students are given the ELPA21 summative evaluation each year to determine their eligibility for ESOL instruction. Classroom teachers collaborate with the ESOL instructors to determine accommodations and tiered supports that may be needed. In addition to academic needs, the ESOL instructors understand that the school needs to assist each student in other ways as well. In the past few years, students have been supported with their financial needs, family needs, social-emotional needs, cultural awareness needs, as well as language barriers. Simple culture norms such as class Valentines can be difficult for these students to navigate. Empowering our ESOL teachers to support the whole student has improved student morale and achievement. The program works to engage families so that they can feel connected in the district and be knowledgeable of their students' learning.

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

Van Meter has a substantial percentage of students who are above grade-level on standards. Working with advanced students means that our school needs to challenge students both inside and outside of the traditional classroom. Van Meter has created partnerships with many different entities to ensure we have the best opportunities for all students. Students who want faster-paced and advanced coursework can attend Central Campus for their available AP-level courses. Students who are looking for courses that are career-focused attend Central Academy. Through Central Academy, the district has had students study marine biology, welding, auto mechanics, and aeronautical engineering.

Another partnership that almost half of graduating students have taken advantage of is the school's partnership with Des Moines Area Community College. Students are able to take courses online or in person to earn dual-enrollment credit. The Van Meter High School counselor works with DMACC to ensure that students are taking classes that transfer to colleges and that also meet the needs and interests of our students. The counseling team also holds seminars with students taking DMACC courses to ensure they are supported as they navigate their first college courses.

If students are more interested in learning about potential careers instead of college classes, Van Meter has also partnered with Waukee Schools' APEX program. The APEX program works with community businesses to have students work through real world and complex problems. By applying these skills in a real way, students get hands-on experience in a career path.

Through the use of all of these partnerships, Van Meter students leave high school with an average of 15 college credits. Those not interested in college have also been given many opportunities to explore meaningful careers. While Van Meter is small, the district is committed to providing students with a look at life after high school.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Van Meter High School believes in a student-centered approach to learning and the principles of competency based education to foster student success and ownership of learning. Since students are active participants in their education, critical components of learning were still functioning during the COVID closures in 2020. Since then, high school teachers continue to implement a blended approach to learning, using both technology and in-person instruction to maximize efficiency and meet the needs of all students. Van Meter High School teachers use online platforms to provide students the opportunity for asynchronous learning while helping students organize the course work in a single location. To support all learners, teachers differentiate the class material, make accommodations for students based on individual needs, and frequently meet with students individually to provide academic as well as social-emotional support. To promote a positive learning environment with students, teacher teams meet regularly to set goals, address social emotional concerns, and track each student's progress across the curriculum. Van Meter grade level teams ensure that all students are receiving the necessary academic and social-emotional support needed to be successful in all learning environments. Van Meter High School teachers engage students by providing meaningful instruction, specifying the learning based on standards related to the curriculum, and providing specific, timely feedback about the degree of proficiency on standards. To ensure college and career readiness, Van Meter High School teachers align teaching with state and national standards while providing students with a variety of opportunities to transfer learning beyond the walls of the classroom. Project-based learning is embedded in many subject areas and units in Van Meter High School to afford students the opportunity to collaborate, communicate, create, and solve problems in authentic learning environments. Van Meter High School believes in motivating students by providing them access to a rigorous curriculum that is relevant to their current and future needs.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Van Meter High School has multiple events and programs to support and engage families over the course of the school year. Before entering high school, incoming freshmen students and families attend orientation, where they are informed about key information relating to their classes and the multiple opportunities available to them throughout their high school career. Families also learn that each freshman student is assigned a mentor teacher who will meet with them multiple times over the course of the semester about the progress on their school work as well as how habits of success help them become more successful in all aspects of their education. Additionally, the Van Meter Counseling department provides students a career day for the entire high school, where multiple professionals visit the school and discuss the characteristics of different career paths. The Van Meter Counseling department provides workshops for families in areas of college financial aid as well as Future Forward, a workshop that highlights events for students to engage in during the upcoming school year.

During Future Forward, families learn of all the off campus learning opportunities through sharing agreements with local high schools and colleges, such as college career academies that offer courses in engineering, criminal justice, and computer science; the Madison County Career Academy, which offers courses in education, engineering, and health occupations; the Waukee APEX Program, a partnership with different businesses for internships and job opportunities for students; Des Moines Central Academy, which provides students with the opportunity to take classes in trades, such as welding, aeronautical engineering, and electrician training; and Des Moines Area Community College, which offers a variety of online and in class college courses. Van Meter High School recently developed a Work Based Learning program that will partner with local businesses to provide students with internships and on the job training opportunities. To meet students' social-emotional needs, Van Meter High School also partners with a local school-based therapist as well as provides resources for families to get in contact with local counselors. A school social worker is available multiple times throughout the week to help Van Meter students individually and also support teachers to maximize inclusive opportunities in their classrooms.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Van Meter High School's professional culture begins with a shared commitment to personalizing learning for teachers just as it does for students. To establish the professional learning environment, teachers are afforded the responsibility to establish their own goals for growth and design an individual professional development plan to meet those goals. District administrators frequently collaborate with the Van Meter School Board, the Van Meter School Improvement Advisory Committee, and the Van Meter staff to share the vision of education and to solicit input on the direction of the school. The Van Meter Administrative Team values teachers as leaders and empowers teachers with a role in professional development and curriculum implementation. Teacher leadership ensures the focus is on learning happening in the classroom, and the best interest of students is at the forefront of every decision.

When Van Meter High School was forced to transition to remote learning in March of 2020, Van Meter's culture played a key role in being able to continue to provide a high quality education to students. Van Meter teachers and administrators collaborated virtually to design and implement a plan to minimize learning loss and remain attentive to students' social-emotional needs. Through a collaborative effort, the school continued to personalize learning for students, even when they were not in the classroom. Extensive professional development was provided to help teachers identify gaps in learning, structure classes in the case of absence or virtual learning, and be attentive to students' complex social-emotional needs. Throughout the pandemic to the current day, Van Meter grade level Professional Learning Communities meet regularly to discuss academic progress and other factors that play an integral role in students' lives. Through frequent collaboration, grade level teams promote collective efficacy and set a tone for the school by setting goals related to student achievement data that are supported by standards from grade level classrooms. With a solution-oriented approach to problem-solving, grade level teams implement plans that have an immediate impact on students. Additionally, Van Meter content teams contribute to the professional culture by ensuring that state and national standards are implemented with fidelity. To monitor the Van Meter culture, the staff analyzes the results of Iowa's Conditions for Learning Survey and uses feedback from students and the community to maintain a welcoming, professional place to work and learn. Van Meter High School's attention to establishing a professional culture is a key attribute to its success.

4. School Leadership:

The Van Meter High School leadership philosophy is to empower teachers to make informed decisions based on the best interest of their students. The high school is led by the secondary principal, who is responsible for setting academic goals, ensuring that appropriate professional development helps teachers meet these goals, and creating an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere that allows all students and teachers to feel safe and perform at high levels. To help the high school principal be successful, teachers are instilled in leadership positions to proffer voice in key decisions as well as guide other staff members toward the building and team goals.

The secondary principal is supported by Instructional Leads, who fulfill a variety of leadership roles at Van Meter High School. Along with providing on the spot professional development as instructional coaches, they also help design and deliver professional development, prepare student achievement data, and provide teachers feedback on instruction. The Van Meter Teacher Leadership Team meets regularly to discuss student data, student social-emotional issues, and instructional strategies needed in the classroom to help the high school achieve its goals. With the input of the teacher leaders, professional development at Van Meter is embedded in grade level PLC teams and content area PLC teams. Grade Level Team Leads address immediate concerns at each grade level by setting specific goals based on academic data, developing a plan with shared responsibility, and quantifying results relating to the team goal. Grade level PLC teams also discuss social-emotional concerns that inhibit success and devise plans to meet the needs of the students. Van Meter content PLC teams are also led by teacher leaders who help develop and refine class standards, curriculum guides, and curriculum maps. Grade level PLC teams, with the input of the Professional Development Coordinator, align course offerings with state and national standards while offering a rigorous yet personalized curriculum that helps Van Meter High School strive toward its building level goals. Along with supporting veteran teachers, Van Meter ensures all teachers new to the building and new to the district are partnered with mentor teachers to help them navigate their beginning years in the district. A shared vision of leadership empowers teachers to collaborate and take ownership of the instruction and success in their classrooms.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Respecting others plays an important role in the success of Van Meter High School, which is evident when considering the different needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff. An important factor in building an inclusive classroom community that appreciates others' differences is to develop a mutual respect among students and staff through the implementation of social-emotional learning. Social-awareness, self-awareness, and relationship skills are integrated into classroom learning. Each year, the school district administers a perception-data survey to all students to evaluate their feelings about the school environment. According to the Iowa Conditions of Learning Survey, Van Meter students rate the school to be a safe and supportive environment. Overall, the data shows that Van Meter High School students feel respected and are respectful of others.

Within the classroom, teachers structure lessons relevant to students' lives to help them gain an understanding of their own values and culture while being considerate of their classmates and teachers. Iowa Core Social Studies Standards help students gain appreciation of different cultures by examining Iowa history, American history, as well as the history of the world. Social studies classrooms expose students to current events and contemporary issues and movements so that students can develop informed decisions about the world. In a safe, structured environment, social studies teachers provide students an opportunity to investigate questions, problems, and solutions by using multiple sources of reliable information so they can understand differing viewpoints about the world. The use of technology also enables the district to encourage culturally responsive learning. Students are able to access a multitude of resources through the Area Education Agency, the district library resources, and web-based research.

Engaging with the real world and current events is highly encouraged in all classrooms. Bringing in guest speakers with real world stories enlightens students to the realities that others in the world face, building empathy and understanding. During the school shut down in March of 2020, all 9th grade students listened to a guest lecturer, author and historian Kenneth Davis, explain the impact of the Spanish flu and how it compared to COVID-19. Just recently, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Bradley of the United States Air Force came to speak to students about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Providing real world experts, teachers help students gain an understanding of the world beyond Van Meter to help them become future ready learners.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Van Meter High School's mission is to personalize learning for each student's success, today and tomorrow. Van Meter's strategy for fulfilling its mission involves meaningful professional development in grade level and content teams, teacher collaboration around academic and social emotional development, and parent communication and support involving their student's progress.

To meet the diverse needs of all students, Van Meter teachers meet regularly to plan, prepare, and learn about best practices in education to help them continue to be successful in their classrooms. In content teams, the focus is on making data-driven decisions, delivering quality instruction, and providing meaningful feedback on state and national standards. Van Meter Secondary's standards-based approach to grading focuses on content knowledge and skills while maintaining a clearly distinguished emphasis on the dispositions and characteristics students need to be successful. In grade level teams, teachers focus on ensuring that all students make progress on standards related to their classes while being challenged appropriately given their individual learning needs. Through regular collaboration, teacher teams are actively involved in implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework, where each student's progress and needs are clearly identified and interventions are implemented to support student growth.

Van Meter High School understands that parent communication and collaboration is also an essential component in Van Meter's plan for academic success. Teachers and administration regularly communicate with parents about their students' progress, upcoming events and activities, and extension opportunities provided by the school that help students become college, career, and global ready citizens. Additionally, parents have access to a variety of student learning platforms that allow them to be informed and involved in their student's education. At the end of the eighth grade year, each Van Meter student collaborates with the school counselor and their parents to develop a four year academic plan. This plan is meant to begin each student on a pathway of success, highlight where they will be at the end of their high school journey, and develop ownership of the experiences they may encounter along the way. As a final capstone of each student's success, Van Meter Schools has developed a Portrait of a Graduate, informing students of their college and career readiness based on their experiences and accomplishments. Van Meter High School believes that with personalized support, each student can discover a meaningful and successful future.