U.S. Department of Education
2016 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. Kurt Brosamle
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Ar-We-Va Junior-Senior High School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 108 Clinton Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Westside   State IA   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 51467-7583

County   Crawford

Telephone (712) 663-4312   Fax (712) 663-4312

Web site/URL   http://ar-we-va.k12.ia.us   E-mail kbrosamle@ar-we-va.k12.ia.us

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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. Kurt Brosamle   E-mail kbrosamle@ar-we-va.k12.ia.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Ar-We-Va Community School District   Tel.   (712) 663-4312
I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date_____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Sara Skinner
(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, write N/A in the space.

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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.

3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.

6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.

7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.

8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district   1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   0 Middle/Junior high schools
                                  1 High schools
                                  0 K-12 schools

                                  2 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

   [ ] Urban or large central city
   [ ] Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
   [ ] Suburban
   [X] Small city or town in a rural area
   [ ] Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

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	7	5	12
10	7	9	16
11	14	6	20
12 or higher	6	6	12
Total Students	34	26	60

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   the school:
<table>
<tr><td>0</td><td>% American Indian or Alaska Native</td></tr>
<tr><td>0</td><td>% Asian</td></tr>
<tr><td>0</td><td>% Black or African American</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>% Hispanic or Latino</td></tr>
<tr><td>0</td><td>% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td></tr>
<tr><td>99</td><td>% White</td></tr>
<tr><td>0</td><td>% Two or more races</td></tr>
</table>

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 2014 – 2015 school year: 7%

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 *to* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	4
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	60
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.067
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
                                                     69 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 23 %
   Total number students who qualify: 16

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
                                                      7 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. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

0	Autism	0	Orthopedic Impairment
0	Deafness	0	Other Health Impaired
0	Deaf-Blindness	6	Specific Learning Disability
0	Emotional Disturbance	0	Speech or Language Impairment
1	Hearing Impairment	0	Traumatic Brain Injury
0	Mental Retardation	0	Visual Impairment Including Blindness
0	Multiple Disabilities	0	Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: <u>15</u>

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	14
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	1
Paraprofessionals	0
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1   <u>8:1</u>

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	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 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	14
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	14%
Enrolled in a community college	64%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	7%
Found employment	14%
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 <u> </u>   No <u>X</u>

   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.

Ar-We-Va will provide each student with a world-class curriculum within a caring environment, preparing life-long learners to be productive, responsible citizens in the 21st Century.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Ar-We-Va Community School District is located in rural western Iowa. Ar-We-Va school district includes the towns of Arcadia, Westside, and Vail. Together these three towns have a combined population of 1,212 people. Nearly sixty years ago the three towns consolidated to form the Ar-We-Va School district. It was important that each community sustained some part of the district. Students in the district attended preschool through second grade in Vail; then attended third through fifth grade in the Arcadia location. Westside housed students in sixth through twelfth grades. In 2012 an elementary addition was added to the Westside location. All students preschool-twelfth grade now attend school in Westside. This was done to run the school of this size more efficiently.

The economic makeup of the three communities is similar to other rural communities in Iowa. Most members of our community are engaged in the agricultural industry, whether it is actually farming or working at the largest employer in our district, Arcadia Farmers Cooperative Elevator. The three towns are within a short driving distance of Carroll and Denison. Many of the students have parents who commute to one of these places to work in office, retail, manufacturing, health field, or various other professional positions. This creates a diverse group of students with varying backgrounds and ethniciities.

The increase in job opportunities at the meat packing plants in Denison brought workers from other countries to our district. In 2002, the district served the first English Language students. Since then we have seen a steady increase of English Language students to the district. Currently, about 1% of the student population are identified as English Language learners. Although the English Language students created new challenges for the district, they were welcomed; teachers, students, and staff implemented new strategies to meet the needs of the students.

Ar-We-Va's mission statement is to provide each student with a world-class curriculum within a caring environment, preparing lifelong learners to be productive, responsible citizens in the 21st Century. Teachers, administrators, and parents all strive to give our students the best educational opportunities possible. Our district utilizes two local community colleges, Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and Western Iowa Tech (WIT), to give our students extra opportunities that may not be available in our school district. In 2014-2015 over 70% of the graduating class earned an average of 12 dual credit hours. Classes ranged from Western Civilization and Introduction to Psychology to Buildings and Trades and Welding.

For several years Ar-We-Va has had a 100% graduation rate. Ar-We-Va also continues to produce students that go on to successfully complete their college degrees and become active members of the work force. The 2014-2015 graduating class had 85% of the students go on to pursue a post-secondary education. Iowa Assessment data is another indicator of academic success at Ar-We-Va. Over the last five years, 88% Ar-We-Va students scored proficient or higher in reading, 92% scored proficient or higher in math and 93% scored proficient or higher in reading, math, and science. Ar-We-Va School district continually meets its annual progress goals and has never been designated a school in need of assistance.

Ar-We-Va has several academic organizations that provide a sense of belonging and unity within the school setting. Some of these organizations, like National Honor Society and Student Council, provide students with an opportunity to lead and to practice democratic skills. The yearbook and newspaper organizations provide a wealth of real world experiences for students. Athletically, we have ten sports to challenge the minds and bodies of our students and teach valuable lessons on teamwork, collaboration, sportsmanship and work ethic. Additionally, students are provided opportunities to participate in speech, drama, and dance.

Community support at Ar-We-Va is exceptional. The Ar-We-Va Educational Foundation is a non-profit organization that has supported the school since 1994 in endeavors that go beyond what the school district is able to support. They have assisted in raising money to upgrade technology and provide additional educational materials. Additionally, our music and athletic booster clubs continue to actively support our students in their respective programs.

Over half of our students are second and third generation Ar-We-Va students. 29% of our student population is third generation Ar-We-Va students; while 28% of our students are second generation. The school is a

huge source of pride for many generations in the three communities. Many parents and even grandparents continue to play a major role in the success of the district by volunteering time, money, and resources. This creates a culture where all stakeholders: administration, staff, parents, and community members are committed to the education of every child. This is what makes Ar-We-Va High School worthy of National Blue Ribbon Status.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Ar-We-Va's core areas of reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and socials students follow the requirements of the Common Core Curriculum. In order to graduate from Ar-We-Va students must earn 54 credits. Each curriculum area is listed below with a brief overview of the classes offered.

As a graduation requirement, students must earn at least eight English credits. The reading/language arts department offers the following courses: English I, English II, and English III. For additional English credits, we offer Senior Writing Lab, Individualized Reading, and Sports Literature. All students must successfully complete English I, English II, and English III. Students also have the opportunity to challenge themselves by taking Composition I, Composition II, and Speech as concurrent class offered through DMACC. Students not ready to take college level classes must take one semester of Senior Writing Lab, a class designed to prepare students for college level writing. Students not proficient in reading, according to the Iowa Assessment results, are able to take Language Arts Lab, which utilizes the Second Chance Reading format to help students learn necessary skills needed to become proficient readers. Teachers have seen dramatic gains in student reading proficient by implementing the Second Chance Reading format. Every level of language arts' curriculum includes reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language.

Students are expected to take at least three years of Math to earn a total of six credits. The math department offers the following core courses: Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Applied Geometry, Senior Math, Consumer Math, and Personal Finance. Both college preparatory and remedial math classes are provided to meet the needs of all students. Generally, most students follow the Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry path. Most students pursuing a secondary education also chose to challenge themselves by taking Senior Math, which includes Calculus and Trigonometry concepts. Students needing remedial math classes (based off teacher recommendation and Iowa Assessment scores) find themselves still working toward the same course objectives, but incorporate smaller class size and hands-on application to help meet varied student learning styles. The math department continually works to align the curriculum based on Core Standards by incorporating increased attention to technology and problem solving. Individual assistance is given to students during study halls and before and after school.

The science department offers the following core courses: Physical Science, Biology, Chemistry, Anatomy, and Science in Society. Students must have six credits in the science department. At every level STEM concepts are embedded in the curriculum. Each class asks students to critically think about science concepts or issues and how it affects their everyday life. Students are also challenged to problem-solve through various projects assigned.

The social studies department offers the following core courses: Conflicts in American History, U. S. History, Current Events, Topics in History, U. S. Government, and World History. Students are expected to have six social science credits to include at least one U. S. Government credit and two credits from U. S. History. Social Studies classes are focused on critical thinking. Students have the opportunity to research topics and debate issues in each of the classes. Presentations are a regular part of the classes' curriculum allowing students to regularly practice public speaking.

All subject areas support college and career readiness by offering students the foundational skills needed to be successful. These subject areas teach students to be effective communicators. Students are highly encouraged to use critical and analytical thinking skills to complete classroom tasks using time management skills to effectively balance academics and extracurricular activities.Teachers strive to provide lessons enriched with opportunities that have value beyond school. Students are continually asked to use foundational classroom knowledge and apply it to everyday situations. Most importantly, students are challenged to develop their curiosity and see the importance of becoming lifelong learners.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Ar-We-Va's visual arts curriculum includes: Art Fundamentals, Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, and Computer Graphics. Art Fundamentals serves as a prerequisite for other art classes and allows students the opportunity to explore basic art principles before application. All other art classes are open to any student who has completed Art Fundamentals and can be repeated as desired. Art classes are student-centered with the teacher serving as a mentor. Students are encouraged to display their projects in the conference art festival.

The performing arts department includes: band and chorus. Band consists of marching/pep band and concert band and is open to all students yearly. Students are encouraged to attend individual and small group contests and audition for honor bands. The music department routinely receives high ratings in competitions with the highlight of sending two musicians to the 2014 All-State Band Festival.

Students must receive a minimum of three credits in Physical Education and one credit in Health. PE classes challenge students to lead a healthy lifestyle by teaching them activities and skills they can use later in life. All students are required to take two semesters of PE yearly. Health class gives students the opportunity to see how healthy lifestyle choices affect their body. Students in 11th grade are required to take one semester of Health.

Ar-We-Va offers several vocational programs including: Family and Consumer Science (FCS), Industrial Technology, Business, and Marketing. Students are encouraged to take classes in all vocational programs and not focus on one particular program. This gives students exposure to different career possibilities.

The Family and Consumer Science department offers the following semester courses: Child Development, Family Consumer Science I and II, Foods I and II, Textiles I and II, Family Living, and Housing. FCS I is a prerequisite to FCS II. All classes are open to all students. This department gives students the opportunity to examine personal development, nutrition, clothing, finances, basic design principles, and relationships. Students receive hands-on opportunities to practice real-life skills.

The Industrial Technology department offers the following semester courses: Architectural Drafting I and II, Advanced Drafting, CAD, Construction, Engineering Graphics, Metals I and II, Industrial Tech I and II, and Small Engines. 9th and 10th grade students generally take industrial Tech I and II; however, these classes may be taken at any grade level. After completing Industrial Tech I and II, students have the opportunity to take more advanced courses. Students are able to program with Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) and use a 3-D printer to apply basic skills in an advanced setting.

The Business department offers Accounting, Business Law, Business Technology, and General Business. General Business is a prerequisite to the other business classes, which provides students with basic business concepts. Typically 9th and 10th grade students take General Business; however, this course is available to all students at any grade level. All other business classes are offered to students in grades 10th-12th after completion of the prerequisite. Other courses in the business department challenge students to use those basic concepts in a more advanced setting.

The Marketing department offers two semester classes: Marketing I and II. Marketing I is open to 10th-12th grade students and is a prerequisite to Marketing II. Students explore the subject of small business entrepreneurship by learning about the skills needed to effectively develop and manage a small business as well as understanding how research, planning, and regulations can affect small businesses.

The Foreign Language department offers the following courses: Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III, and Spanish IV. Spanish I is a prerequisite for all other Spanish classes. Typically 9th grade students enroll in Spanish I; however, any student may take Spanish I. Spanish classes must be taken in sequential order. Students are immersed in the Spanish culture by learning the language, customs, traditions, and beliefs.

Students are offered two technology classes: computer applications and web design. All students can enroll

in these classes. Students are extensively engaged in computer application programs and are introduced to basic software used to create visually appealing websites.

Lessons in these classes are aligned with Common Core Standards for 21st century skills, reading, and writing and have a program of study that is aligned to state career and technical educational requirements.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Instructional methods center on differentiation that cultivates growth at every level of proficiency. The principle objective is to engage students in their learning. Adding to this foundation, special education and ESL provide student and teacher support, as well as alternatives to conventional instruction with assessments and choices for tiered activities to accentuate learning at all levels.

The faculty assists all students in achieving high expectations by providing diverse learning experiences. Many classrooms are outfitted with electronic whiteboards. Faculty embraces this technology by developing engaging lessons, utilizing animation, assessing formatively, and viewing videos.

The faculty has had release time to do curriculum mapping for all courses taught at Ar-We-Va. The goal of this work is to assure all requirements of the Iowa Core are being met. K-12 teachers have worked collectively to identify curriculum gaps and overlaps, and make any necessary alignment changes. Ar-We-Va is committed to every student having the opportunity to learn the concepts and essential skills of the Iowa Core, including special education and English Language students.

When a student has been identified by a teacher or a parent as needing additional academic support, the Learning Center provides intervention through a variety of individually tailored strategies. Students placed in the learning center can be in danger of failing multiple classes or failed at least one class. The purpose of the learning center program is to provide guided study to those students for their school work. The implementation of the learning center for at-risk students has been effective in lowering the number of failures. Another significant aspect of our learning center is the link between school and home as learning center teachers communicate with parents on the progress of their students. They also develop short-term and long-term learning goals with students each semester.

Students not considered proficient in reading according to the Iowa Assessment results are required to take Language Arts Lab, which uses the Second Chance Reading format to help students learn necessary skills needed to become proficient readers. Ar-We-Va started Second Chance Reading in middle school and high school during the 2010-2011 school year. In 2010-2011, there were twenty students in grades 9-11 that qualified for Language Arts Lab. There were only three students who qualified for Language Arts Lab during the 2014-2015 school year. The Language Arts Lab has proved very successful in helping students acquire the skills necessary to become proficient in reading.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Ar-We-Va uses a variety of assessment data to analyze and improve student performance. The first thing teachers do after reviewing the Iowa Assessment scores is evaluate them as grade-level teams. Proficiency and growth of all students are charted, and classroom teachers are able to identify specific students not meeting performance and/or growth expectations. Staff are able to identify the specific Skill Domains with which each student is struggling, and teachers use this information to design classroom strategies and instruction. Student Progress Reports are shared with students and parents to show testing history. Yearly growth targets to increase the number of students proficient in low areas are set.

The ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) is given to Ar-We-Va's 11th graders each year, along with the NWEA MAP test given at all grade levels. These tests provide staff and administrators with multiple measures of looking at performance and growth of all students.

Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) is another way the faculty and administrators use assessment data to improve student learning. Ar-We-Va High School is currently in its second year of using the AIW

framework. AIW requires teachers to have peer review in order to get input on how to improve student learning. AIW focuses on the quality of intellectual work teachers demand and the work students produce. It provides extensive teacher practice in assessing the extent to which teachers require students' construction of knowledge, conceptual understanding, and elaborated communication. Teachers receive this input from peers, adjust their lessons, teach them, and then evaluate if the student's work reflects the expected outcomes. This cycle can be repeated multiple times as teachers work to perfect their lessons.

Ar-We-Va proudly informs parents, students and community members with regards to student achievement through a bi-monthly newsletter, its district website, and the Annual Progress Report. Committees are another opportunity for the district to share student achievement data. The mission of the School Improvement Advisory Committee is to assess school data, create goals, and monitor if they have been reached. The SIAC committee is also used to give feedback regarding new and existing programs and Career and Technical courses at the high school. Finally, parents and students have access to JMC, the district's student information system, allowing them to continually monitor the academic progress of students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Ar-We-Va is a high school that strives to make each student feel welcome and a valued part of our school community. Our work is guided by our building mission statement, which challenges us, as a staff, to help each student to achieve his or her own personal best. We work to exemplify our mission statement and place strong emphasis on creating meaningful learning opportunities for students academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Throughout the day, students engage with faculty and staff through discussions inside and outside of the classroom. "Everyone knows your name" is common at Ar-We-Va High School. Each student has at least one adult whom he/she feels they trust, and be an advocate. Students, families, teachers, administrators, counselors, support staff, and the community contribute to a healthy, positive school climate which is ingrained in the school culture.

A key to success is the true commitment among all stakeholders to hold every individual and every student to high expectations. Students are academically challenged to participate in rigorous courses and are given latitude and support to independently problem solve.

Students are supported academically in the classroom and Learning Center. If a student is in need of supports outside the classroom with a particular subject, a student may be referred to the Learning Center. Students in the Learning Center are provided the opportunity to work in a smaller student to teacher ratio. This allows the teacher to closely monitor student success and provide supports to prevent failure. Interventions used in the Learning Center are a collaborative effort among the teachers, administration, parents, and involved student.

Positive peer relationships are fostered through the extra-curricular activities including memberships in numerous clubs and school organizations. Students are motivated by the opportunities that are provided to them. These opportunities include receiving community and family-based scholarships, being inducted into National Honor Society, and participating in leadership opportunities such as Boys' or Girls' State. When students make achievements through these opportunities or others, they are recognized through the daily announcements, the local newspaper and on the school's website. The frequent student recognition creates an environment in which students feel empowered.

Teachers also feel supported through the school's collaborative environment. Teachers support each other by being consistent with school-wide discipline and homework policies and work together daily to solve problems and align curriculum. It is clear that teachers feel comfortable and valued in the district.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Ar-We-Va has an active advisory committee that supports the school's mission and acts as a partner and consultant on how we should progress as a school. The School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) is made up of community members, parents, students, staff and administration. It meets four times a year and will make recommendations to the school board. The recommendations are based on major education needs, student learning goals, curriculum, assessment, and instruction. The SIAC will also make long range and annual goals that include, but are not limited to the state indicators that address reading, mathematics and science achievement.

The SIAC also supports our vocational programs. Our vocational programs include family and consumer science, industrial technology, business, and marketing. The vocational teachers present information about the programs at the SIAC meetings throughout the year. The committee discusses the programs offered and concerns from employers on what is needed for workers going into those areas and makes goals for the program.

Parent-school partnership is also developed through inviting parents to participate in developing a plan of action for students referred to the Learning Center. Students referred to the Learning Center are struggling in the classroom. A plan to improve students' learning is devised with administration, teachers, parents, and the involved students. These goals and inventions are agreed upon by this team and then documented and closely monitored.

We also have the Ar-We-Va Education Foundation, which financially supports the school with projects that go beyond the general budget. The Education Foundation has held numerous fundraisers that are always well supported by community members and former students. Money raised through these fundraisers has provided scholarship opportunities, SMART Boards for many classrooms, a 3D printer, technology upgrades, and supplemental classroom materials. Recently, Rocket Strong, an umbrella organization under the Education Foundation, raised nearly $15,000 through a Laughs for Learning event. Money generated from this fundraiser was used to purchase Chromebooks.

The Ar-We-Va Music Boosters and Ar-We-Va Athletic Booster club raise money for our athletic and music programs. They also hold successful fundraisers to support the school. The Music Boosters recently purchased a new piano for the music department while also providing other instruments for student use. The Athletic Boosters aid with purchasing team uniforms and equipment.

3. Professional Development:

Our approach to professional development is aligned to the Iowa CORE standards and benchmarks and the Iowa CORE Characteristics of Effective Instruction. The Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM) is the basis for our professional development. The IPDM framework includes peer collaboration, researched-based instructional practices, modeling, observation, and personal accountability. The goal of the IPDM is to provide teachers with high quality professional development that will positively impact student achievement.

Our professional development goals and focus is determined by our data. Each spring, our staff analyzes our data from throughout the year and then develops building goals that are aligned to our district goals. Our professional development is delivered on two-hour early out days that occur twice a month and two full days throughout the year. Professional development initiatives are determined, planned, and delivered through a cooperative effort with teachers and administrators.

Given various student needs, constant policy changes, and multiple developments in pedagogy, we have made a conscious effort to avoid fragmented initiatives that result in shallow learning. We are committed to align efforts around a single focus for three to five years.The district's current professional development initiative is Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW).

The goal of AIW is to improve student achievement as a result of teachers working collaboratively to improve student tasks, teacher instruction, and the quality of work students produce. AIW provides rubrics to guide teams as they discuss classroom practice and provide quality feedback to teachers. The first year a group of four teachers and the principal were trained as the AIW anchor team. Our AEA provided the training and support for the implementation of AIW. One teacher volunteered to become a certified local coach to provide sustained support of AIW in the district. The following year AIW was rolled out to all of 6th-12th grade staff. Although we are only in our second full year of AIW, the district has seen positive results in student achievement since it began its AIW journey.

In addition to building professional development, teachers also establish Individual Career Development Plans. They are accountable for the learning defined by these plans through the formal evaluation process.

4. School Leadership:

At Ar-We-Va, the leadership structure is very simple. Since we are a very small district, there is only one principal and no assistant principals. Additional leaders in the school include the school counselor, AIW

team leaders, and several veteran teachers. These leaders work together to create a student-centered approach.

The principal drives the leadership philosophy for the building. His philosophy is built on a school-wide commitment to never give up on any student. He also demonstrates a capacity to lead through guiding rather than directing. He listens to ideas and suggestions, often waiting to give an opinion until he has had time to think carefully over an issue.

Teachers are given tremendous input in policy and decision-making. Teachers feel safe and trusted and are allowed near-autonomy in the classroom. The principal views his primary function as ensuring that teachers have the tools, resources, and environment they need to facilitate student success.

We have a building leadership team that is comprised of AIW team leaders and the principal. The leadership team promotes building relationships with each stakeholder in order to give students the best opportunity to succeed. Our teachers maintain contact with parents, allowing teachers to stay connected with the needs of the student beyond the classroom. In addition, the team continues to evaluate academic and social deficiencies through a multitude of assessments, including formative assessment, general academic tests, quizzes, mandated tests and presentations. Creating relationships with students and connecting to their academic and basic needs is a high priority for Ar-We-Va High School.

Other school leaders, such as the school counselor and veteran teachers, support the principal and leadership team by also being committed to student achievement. Although the staff consists of only 15 full and part-time teachers, the teachers are highly active in promoting positive change for the school. Teachers have participated in a variety of school improvement committees, including the technology committee, the school calendar committee, the teacher leadership committee, and the SIAC committee. All of these committees include administrators and teachers working together to lead the school as a united team forward into the future.

In conclusion, Ar-We-Va High School prides itself on making sure students and stakeholders have a positive relationship with our school. Relationships and basic needs are a high priority. The role of the administration is to simply create an atmosphere where communication, relationships, and academics can remain the cornerstone of our excellence.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Although it may be easy to look at overall grade point averages or how well our students fared on standardized testing, administrators and teachers at Ar-We-Va look at course rigor as an indicator of academic success. Our students have fared well on standardized testing; however, administration and teachers have agreed that recalling information for a standardized test isn't creating a classroom that is meaningful and relevant beyond the classroom. Teachers in our district felt it was important to provide our students with skills and information they will use to become productive members of society. The framework of AIW has prepared our teachers to stop superficially covering material, but has challenged the teachers to give students an in-depth, rigorous opportunity to engage in the material.

Providing our students with an intellectually challenging environment has led to increased student interest. Teachers are finding students are more engaged in the learning process making the material covered in class that much more relevant. Also by giving our students a more rigorous classroom to work in, students are given skills needed to be successful beyond the school. Many occupations ask students to apply basic skills to solve complex problems. Recreating this rigorous environment through the use of the AIW framework, allows our students to use higher order thinking skills like evaluating, synthesizing, organizing, and interpreting information. For instance, in a science class, students analyzed the types of simple machines. Students then had to take the simple machines to create a model of an original amusement park ride. Creating this model allowed students to not only work with the simple machines concept, but also allowed them to apply math skills needed to scale their model. Once students created the model, they needed to come up with a sales pitch to sell their idea of an amusement park ride. Students took basic skills and applied higher order skills in this lesson, but most importantly every student was actively engaged in this whole process.

Ar-We-Va is only in its second year of using AIW, but the benefits students and teachers have seen this far has been rewarding. By creating this more rigorous classroom, we feel our students will be better able to meet the challenges posed to them in the contemporary world helping create lifelong learners to be productive, responsible citizens, just like our mission statement declares.