U.S. Department of Education
2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 38 School Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Belmont   State NH   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 03220-4511

County   Belknap County

Telephone (603) 267-9220   Fax (603) 267-9228

Web site/URL
https://sites.google.com/a/sau80.org/
belmontmiddleschool/   E-mail   apope@sau80.org

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

_____Date_____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Michael Tursi   E-mail mtursi@sau80.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Shaker Regional School District   Tel.   (603) 267-9223
I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

_____Date_____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Bob Reed
(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. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.

3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.

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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.

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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

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.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district   2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   1 Middle/Junior high schools
                                           1 High schools
                                           0 K-12 schools

                                           4 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, 2016 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	38	38	76
6	45	40	85
7	44	55	99
8	53	48	101
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	180	181	361

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school: 1 % Asian
                                          2 % Black or African American
                                          1 % Hispanic or Latino
                                          0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                          96 % White
                                          0 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 8%

    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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	11
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	29
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	361
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.080
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 42 %
        Total number students who qualify: 153

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
                                                      57 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.

4 Autism	0 Orthopedic Impairment
0 Deafness	16 Other Health Impaired
0 Deaf-Blindness	30 Specific Learning Disability
1 Emotional Disturbance	4 Speech or Language Impairment
0 Hearing Impairment	0 Traumatic Brain Injury
2 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>10</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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	16
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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>17:1</u>

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

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2016.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes <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.

Engaging All Learners to Succeed in Their Ever-Changing World

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

Tucked into the Merrimack River valley, a few miles north of the state capitol of Concord, the Shaker Regional School District serves the mostly-rural communities of the towns of Belmont and Canterbury, New Hampshire. Where the landscape is awe inspiring in all seasons, a brief look into the district's only middle school will show the diversity of characters and cultures that build within its students the beauty that matches the surroundings.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. **Core Curriculum:**

Belmont Middle School has developed a curriculum that challenges and engages students in unique ways. Common Core State Standards were used in developing the learning goals and guiding principles for math and language arts. Next Generation Science Standards are used to create the science curriculum, and Social Studies uses the College, Career, and Civic Framework to develop the curriculum. Working at both the individual grade levels, as well as with teachers across the middle school and the district, our curriculum provides rigor and a deep understanding of the core subject areas for our students.

The mathematics curriculum provides a strong base, building abstract problem solving and critical thinking, necessary to be successful in higher education classes. Problem based and project based learning opportunities are essential in gaining the understanding of math concepts. Common Core State Standards are unpacked and written in a language the students can understand, so they know the purpose of each lesson and the skills they are mastering.

The language arts curriculum is comprised of two main focuses: reading and writing. Reading is broken into the areas of literature and nonfiction. Student work on their comprehension skills and build upon their analysis of a text throughout their middle school careers. Writing is divided into three categories: narrative, informative, and persuasive. Both reading and writing goals are addressed through a variety of mediums, from short stories, novels, and poetry, to research based projects, essays, and digital media. The language arts curriculum focuses on gathering and using supporting evidence, effectively and ethically, working closely with our librarian and technology educators.

Foundational math and language arts skills are addressed daily in each lesson, on an individualized basis, to ensure students have the skills needed to fully comprehend each learning goal. Students in need of more foundational skills have access to extended learning opportunities through intervention, Title I, and math and language arts lab.

All science classes begin with learning and reviewing the nature of science: how to build a lab report and conduct experiments. Curriculum is developmentally appropriate aligned vertically through the middle school. The science curriculum engages students in hands on activities, utilizing investigation and inquiry skills.

Social studies curriculum focuses on civics, economics, history, and geography. These topics are addressed throughout the grade levels based on chronology and developmental appropriateness. Understanding, comprehending, and analyzing informational texts, as well as, research skill are developed at each grade level with increasing rigor.

Foundational skills, such as research and analysis of information and data for science and social studies are introduced and supported through language arts and math classes. On an individual basis, as needed, additional support is provided to students by special educators, paraprofessionals, accommodations and modifications to the curriculum.

As part of our school culture, students participate in many collaborative events to support our community. School wide events include: The Annual Gobble Wobble Food Drive supports our local families during the holidays; Pennies for Patients raises money for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society; Various Nature's Classroom fundraisers benefit the school community by sending students to environmental camp; National Junior Honors Society has approximately 25 members who sponsor and support many community service programs; Jump Rope for Heart raises money for the American Heart Association. The 5th grade has a hand in keeping our community clean by their annual "Walk to Pout Pond" where the students clean litter from the sidewalks and trails. The 7th grade Citizenship and Court House field trip provides the opportunity for our students to engage directly in the civic process. Students travel to the Federal Courthouse, witness, as well as, participate in a naturalization ceremony, and speak with local judges and law enforcement officials to discuss the judicial system.

At Belmont Middle School, our students have many opportunities to prepare for college and careers. All classes utilize technology in the classroom, all students have a chromebook, to create 21st century learners. The math curriculum is designed to prepare students for higher level classes at the high school, such as algebra 1, a requirement to graduate. The annual STEM and Career days introduce students to community members with over 100 different careers and educational background. This allows our students to see the real world application of the skills they are learning in their core curriculum classes.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Belmont Middle School offers several Unified Arts programs. Students in grades 5-8 participate for 30-36 days in Health, Physical Education, STEM, World Language, Art and Music. The goal of Unified Arts is to increase exposure to other disciplines. Enrichment, Library Media, and Technology are additional integrated programs.

Health Education develops complete knowledge and skills to prepare students for a healthy lifestyle, allowing them to become successful, responsible, and holistically healthy individuals. Students focus on the seven dimensions of wellness through the Ossipee Model: Occupation, Spiritual, Social, Intellectual, Physical, Environmental, and Emotional. Students become skilled at goal setting, decision making, and understanding risk factors.

Physical Education offers numerous activities that promote positive peer interaction and leadership opportunities while having fun. Traditional team sports, individual sports, and life-long sports are introduced through skill development lessons, modified and regular games. Units are taught to meet students' physical, emotional, intellectual and social needs. Additional enrichment activities offered include Jump Rope for Heart, Intramurals, and Hoops for Heart.

Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) is a hands-on program. Topics include: basic woodworking, measurement (metric and standard unit of measurement), engineering, recycling, motion, flight, CAD, and 3D printing. Collaboration with the Art and Enrichment programs occurs throughout the school year.

World Language is offered to all 5th and 6th graders. It is an introductory class that explores Spanish and French language and culture. Seventh grade students scoring at or above grade level on STAR testing may choose to take either Spanish or French as a one semester course. Eighth graders continue their studies for another semester. The curriculum for seventh and eighth grade students is standards-based and aligned with Level 1 courses at Belmont High School. Students who demonstrate proficiency can earn one credit.

Band and Chorus provides all students the opportunities to practice and perform in three bands and two choruses. General music classes are offered for all grade levels. Art classes support the needs of all students in grades 6-8, with an Integrated Arts program for the fifth grade. Additional opportunities include an Intro to Art class for high school credit, an art intervention program for student success, after school Art Club, and a yearly drama production. All arts curricula are skill and competency-based programs, many of which feature cross-curricular links that enrich, expand, or develop competencies in other curricular disciplines.

Enrichment provides additional higher level academic support in the curriculum. Enrichment is available to individual students and small groups on projects such as National History Day, 3D Design and gardening. The program works collaboratively with all teachers and includes orienteering courses, science experiments, stock market studies, research, and Science Technology Engineering Art and Math (STEAM) Day. STEAM Day is a coordinated event with community professionals to share their expertise with students via multiple hands-on activities. In collaboration with the STEM program, a significant grant was awarded to create a makerspace including: 3D Printing, Arduino, sewing machines, 3D scanning and greenhouse support.

The tenets that power the Library Media program are: learning is most meaningful when individual subjects are seen as connected, inquiry and curiosity are actively supported, and finding joy in reading forms the matrix for all of this. Students are free to visit as needed throughout the school day and during Open Library

after school. The full-time Media Specialist and half-time assistant teach the skills of finding, evaluating and using information effectively and ethically in context. The collection is current, dynamic and media-diverse to support student and staff needs.

The Technology program is an interdisciplinary and integrative program that educates and prepares all students to become responsible, technology-literate communicators and collaborators in an expanding global society. Based on the national standards of a 21st-century learner, students develop the essential knowledge and skills to become "Empowered Learners, Global Communicators, Creative Collaborators, Computational Thinkers, Innovative Designers, Knowledge Constructors, and Digital Citizens" through differentiated and personalized-learning opportunities.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Belmont Middle School uses a myriad of instructional strategies and assessment tools to close the achievement gap of our students. We gather student data in various ways to drive instruction. Star Math and Star Reading whole school assessments are administered three times a year. This data is used as a springboard to identify students who will need additional support to close gaps or enrich learning. We are beginning to utilize the SBAC assessment data to cross-reference with our Star data to look for correlations. AIMSweb is another tool that we use with subgroups. Teachers are adept at utilizing daily formative assessments to meet the needs of all students. When students take a summative assessment, the expectation is that if a student is not proficient, they will participate in reteaching until the student is able to demonstrate mastery. This expectation is clear for students and parents and removes the option of giving up.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

As you walk through the halls of BMS, you will see evidence of a school culture that embraces learners in our ever-changing world. Our programs support student academics, meet social needs and develop emotional growth. Our school community fosters an environment of success for each learner. We host trimester assemblies to recognize positive student behavior and academic achievement.

Programs we have implemented for academic achievement include data driven instruction, RTI, a school-wide community read, and NJHS. While most schools use similar programs, BMS has an academic climate which is unique. We are invested in the Growth Mindset philosophy, where students are not allowed to "opt out" of their learning. They are encouraged to persevere, learn from their mistakes (with constructive feedback), and have the opportunity to revise until they show proficiency in specific learning standards. Our school assesses student behavior, using a "Habits of Work" rubric, separately from curriculum standards.

At BMS, school counselors are very involved. They are immersed in our curriculum by focusing on bringing students together and celebrating their differences. They support Mix It Up Day, where students sit with different people at lunch and talk about social issues, and Pay It Forward Day, where students are encouraged to do random acts of kindness. Along with emotional development, we try to promote physical health awareness. We have implemented a Monster Walk, which gets the entire school walking an assigned course on school grounds. Our school has several fundraisers that support the needs of Belmont families that get our students involved. Pennies for Patients and Character Band-Aid Drives are examples of how we interact and mold compassionate empathetic students.

While students drive the culture here, teachers are also an intrical part of our school community. Teachers and students collaborate to create new programs and ideas. This year, a few eighth graders worked with administration to propose a Unified Arts gym class for students with disabilities, as there is already a program like this at our high school. One example of our community gathering to celebrate each other is our Winter Activities Day. The entire school goes to Gunstock Mountain where students and staff participate in various physical activities. This allows students and staff to make connections outside of the classroom.

Shaker Regional School District uses the Leadership Model of Administration, meaning administration promotes staff input through leadership teams and building representatives district-wide. Teachers run book groups, run PD days, and attend PLC at least twice a month. This is just a snapshot of our school climate and culture that fosters unity between students, staff, and the local community.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

At Belmont Middle School we see the education of our students as a partnership between school, families and community. Therefore, we highly value these collaborative relationships and have made increased communication with the families in our district a priority. Over 95% of the families in our community receive our school's daily bulletin via email. Furthermore, families have access to their student's online gradebook through our parent portal. Teachers also communicate directly with parents in a variety of ways including newsletters, teacher websites, google classroom, and emailed curriculum updates. Additionally, we have hosted numerous evening outreach initiatives to increase dialogue between school and home regarding competency based grading, literacy and social media safety among others. Our school wide assemblies to celebrate student achievement are also very well attended by the families in our community. Most importantly, we pride ourselves on the continued success of our various transition activities we host for families to foster security and confidence in our students.

Our BMS family greatly prides ourselves on community engagement. We demonstrate this through both outreach activities and reciprocated efforts from the community making themselves present within our

school building. Our students participate in numerous community service activities including Pennies for Patients, holiday assistance, and the breast cancer walk. However, our students are most widely involved in our annual Gobble Wobble food drive where each year the students have collectively donated over 4000 pounds of food; a tradition that has continued to grow for over 20 years. Our school's wellness committee hosts an annual wellness fair where community members present important information promoting a healthy lifestyles to our students and their families. Our Memorial and Veteran's Day assemblies, which are student led, provide important lessons of respect and courage from community members who have served and regularly attend. These assemblies also allow our students to celebrate and honor those community members who are directly linked to our students who have served past and present through a slideshow.

Most significantly, we have had overwhelming community support around our school wide initiatives related to forward thinking and career readiness. Examples of this include, our annual career day where students learn from members of community about their respective worlds of work, and our career fair, in which students are exposed to real life financial responsibilities. Our STEAM day is highly unique to our school, and immensely meaningful to our students. In 2017 we are slated to have over 60 members from our surrounding communities presenting to and engaging with our students. Past highlights from this event include, 3D printing demonstrations, robotics programming, and drone presentations. We are confident that these examples will illustrate how our school strives to work closely with family and community. This relationship between parents, local businesses, community members, and school staff naturally fosters student success and achievement today and in the future.

3. **Professional Development:**

Belmont Middle School has a system of Professional Development that includes both internal and external sources. Those sources are determined by teacher and administrative feedback through surveys and team/staff meetings where needs are discussed and prioritized. As our district moves to a proficiency based/personalized learning system, much of the external resources have focused on this initiative. This includes bringing in professionals from the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning (MCCL) and Empower; a student information system that supports personalized learning. Our Special Education staff also attends specialized training on Special Education processes provided by the NH Department of Education. Additionally, Shaker Regional School District provides funds for professional staff to take up to nine college credits per year. Sixty percent of our staff holds a postgraduate degree. Funds are also provided for individuals to attend workshops/conferences of their choice.

Internally, BMS provides a great variety of Professional Development pulling from the expertise we have among our staff members. Staff members who have attended training outside the district or extended training in our areas of priority offer "mini-sessions" to help support colleagues. During Professional Development time, we often have several sessions with each session offering a variety of options for meeting all staff needs. Our staff members offer training in using Empower, Google Classroom, Flipped Classroom, creating proficiency scales, etc. all of which support student learning in the classroom.

Students at BMS are each issued a Chromebook to support their learning. With this one-to-one opportunity teachers are often interested in exploring new tools and programs to help engage learners. Our technology coordinator supports these efforts with "Tech Tuesdays". Staff have the opportunity to attend training's on specific topics. These topics are broken down into three categories: GAFE (Google Apps for Education), Digital Literacy, and Instructional Technologies. These training's extend into the classroom as the Technology Coordinator and Library Media Specialist also spend time with students helping to support our "Digital Citizenship" efforts.

New staff within our district are immersed in an environment of opportunities to grow as educators focusing on research based instructional strategies and approaches. Working together to become part of the positive culture within Belmont Middle School.

Our staff dedicates two afternoons a month to Professional Learning Communities (PLC), where we collaborate in curricular areas to develop proficiency scales, assessments, and instructional strategies and

identifying needs within that content area. These PLC's build the staff capacity and professional school culture within our district as we strive to improve student achievement and personalized learning.

4. School Leadership:

Belmont Middle School's leadership philosophy is based on shared leadership where all stakeholders believe in making decisions based on what is best for each individual student. Within our shared leadership model, we believe that all learners will succeed in meeting their potential through the development of strong relationships, clear communication and evidence-based learning strategies and experiences.

Our school's leadership includes everyone who works with students and is led by our principal. An example of our shared leadership model is our BLT (Building Leadership Team) who meet monthly to work on programming and initiatives to improve the delivery of instruction for students. In addition, weekly meetings are held with our BMS administrative team which includes administrators, counselors, the nurse, our student assistance counselor and our school resource officer. Our standing agenda is to discuss students and how to best address their individual needs. BMS also utilizes monthly meetings with our support staff to ensure consistency and program fidelity for all learners. From handbook policies to curriculum development, BMS works together to make decisions.

Feedback from staff reveals that our administrators are visible, participate in learning together as a staff, are interactive and are mindful of meeting staff members where they are in their own learning and professional journey. Staff have communicated that our leaders "learn with us, lead by example and share student accountability with us." An example of this is our leaders frequently recognizing staff for their efforts to make each learner a success. Our administrators create and participate in collaborative book groups and frequently survey staff to see how they can best support staff so that students are best served. In addition, our principal developed PLC's (Professional Learning Communities) so that staff members can collaborate on curriculum and school-wide initiatives, during the school day. Staff members at BMS feel supported which translates into improved and effective instructional experiences for our students.

When our principal arrived ten years ago, we were a SINI (School in Need of Improvement) school. Through clear communication, focusing on providing students and staff with the resources they need and by developing strong relationships with one another, our school has shown consistent improvement in its student achievement results. From statewide rankings to standardized test scores, evidence of our growth is directly connected to our leadership and philosophy which supports shared decision making and accountability for all stakeholders.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One practice that has been successful at preparing all students for academic success is the creation of the ELA and mathematics Labs. These academic courses are heterogeneous and fully inclusive, and are in addition to a student's regular ELA and Mathematics class. Lab was introduced to 7th and 8th graders in 2014-2015, and due to its success was expanded to 5th and 6th graders in 2015-2016.

The Lab curriculum is flexible to support both the regular classroom and meet the individual needs of students. Because Lab is an ungraded course, Lab teachers have the freedom to design and adjust curricula as needed. Thus, instruction, pacing, and assessment are tailored to maximize student potential and growth through ongoing formative assessments designed to promote summative success in all classes. This is achieved through remediation, reinforcement, extension and enrichment activities based upon individual needs which are monitored through STAR and Smarter Balanced data, communication among teachers, and direct student observation.

Since implementation, Smarter Balanced data shows increased student outcomes. After their first year in Lab, the class of 2021 increased Proficiency scores in ELA going from 66% to 83% and 49% to 74% in mathematics. After their first year in Lab, the class of 2022 maintained Proficiency in ELA going from 65% to 64%, but saw a major increase in mathematics proficiency from 18% to 49%.

The ungraded nature of Lab gives students the opportunity to increase their intrinsic motivation and take ownership of their learning as they see their skills improving through frequent and critical feedback from their teachers, without worrying about numbers on a report card. This environment encourages high achieving students to take more risks with their learning, while providing an opportunity to build a stronger foundation for struggling students.