

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Principal Heather Varno

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

Official School Name Merle Sidener Gifted Academy

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2424 Kessler Boulevard East Drive

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Indianapolis

State IN

Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 46220-2867

County Marion County

Telephone (317) 226-4259

Fax (317) 226-3059

Web site/URL <https://myips.org/sidener/>

E-mail wilderhl@myips.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* Dr. Aleesia Johnson

E-

mail johnsonal@myips.org

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Indianapolis Public Schools

Tel. (317) 226-4000

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. Venita Moore

(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 2023 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 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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 (2022-2023) 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):
- 55 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 9 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 14 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 78 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, 2022 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 Students
PreK	0
K	0
1	0
2	33
3	34
4	41
5	52
6	46
7	60
8	60
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	326

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 29 % Black or African American
 - 19 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 39 % White
 - 11 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 7%

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	15
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	23
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	314
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Arabic, French, Hindi, Oryia, Sichamese, Spanish, Yoruba

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
9 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 34 %

Total number students who qualify: 112

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 12 %
Total number of students served 40

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 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>6</u> Autism	<u>7</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>7</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>23</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 6 %
Total number of students served: 21

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 5

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

12. 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 25:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	96%	98%	97%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2014

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

To serve the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of high ability students from diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Within our learning community, we are empowered to become lifelong learners and responsible citizens in a positive and supportive atmosphere.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<http://go.boarddocs.com/in/indps/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=85GM5U7C66F1>

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

Sidener Academy is a school for students who are identified as high ability in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. To qualify for high ability services we use local norms determined for our district. Generally students score at the 9th stanine (96th percentile) or above on an ability test but for students who are close to that we look at a variety of other information such as NWEA scores and a teacher behavior checklist. We screen all students in several grade levels and allow requests in the others. Students that qualify for high ability services and are eligible for Sidener apply through our district run unified application system. If there are more applicants than seats available a lottery is run.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Merle Sidener Academy is a public school that serves high ability students in grades two through eight in the Indianapolis Public School district and surrounding areas. Our mission is to serve the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of high ability students from diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Within our learning community, we are empowered to become lifelong learners and responsible citizens in a positive and supportive atmosphere.

Students who attend Sidener have met the criteria for qualifying as gifted in both the areas of math and language. All first grade students in Indianapolis Public Schools are screened for high ability using the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). Students at other grade levels can be referred for high ability testing by a guardian or staff member. In addition, our district offers this test to out-of-district students at no cost. We believe that all students should have access to this screening and the academic supports to meet their giftedness.

Sidener is made up of diverse families of varied races, ethnicities, and social-economic backgrounds. We are proud of the diverse make-up of our students and use available resources to ensure that all students receive curriculum and social/emotional support for their individual needs. We work hard to create a sense of community even though we educate students from across the Indianapolis area. Families are encouraged to be involved in their child's education, and through the work of our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) we seek to provide safe opportunities for families to engage with their students and with one another.

Our students are the heart of our school and the focus of every decision. We seek to motivate, inspire, and encourage students to always do their best and reach their full potential. In order for us to expect their best, we recognize the importance of creating a learning environment that fosters this dedication. It is our goal that every student feels welcome, sees themselves in the curriculum selected, and feels that the adults within the building believe in their potential. Every staff member at Sidener has completed Racial Equity training, and as a staff we confront and analyze our data in academics, discipline, attendance, and social/emotional support to consistently keep a pulse on how we are supporting all students.

Sidener is a Title I school based on the percent of students receiving free/reduced lunches. The school receives additional funds, which we use to support students with both social/emotional and academic needs. These funds allow us to employ a social worker, this is in addition to our school counselor, and allows us to provide small group support in the academic areas of reading and mathematics. Our Social Worker is imperative in supporting students with 504s and helping to ensure that families have access to resources to meet the most basic needs of their household. Our Title I assistant works with students who are performing lower than their peers and need additional support mastering skills.

The foci of our classrooms are to provide students with grade level content as well as differentiated academics to meet the individual needs of every student. Our academic teachers use a blend of district provided instructional materials and high ability curriculum to challenge and grow each student. Through the use of multiple assessments, including the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress (MAP), we are able to assess the standards students have mastered and plan future instruction.

Our school counselor, social worker, and classroom teachers work to create an environment that is nurturing for students' growth in both academics and social/emotional well-being. Gifted students may present higher levels of anxiety, fears of failure, and ideals of perfectionism. It is important to our school culture that we support students with these needs by teaching them coping skills and techniques to help them be successful.

Sidener Academy was blessed to be a Blue Ribbon recipient in 2014. This allowed the school a platform and point in the media to share our mission and success in supporting the unique learning needs of gifted students. Since 2014 we have worked closely with our district high ability coordinator to turn our focus to underserved student populations. We have increased our diversity and have seen equitable changes in our demographics. Each year we monitor data to track our progress in closing the gaps previously seen between white students and students of color. We are focused on the idea that we should not be able to predict the

outcomes of a test before our students have been assessed. Our previous Blue Ribbon award allowed us to become visible and allowed us to better serve high ability students across our city.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Sidener Academy for High Ability Students provides a rigorous and robust curriculum that meets the unique needs of gifted and talented students. While the curriculum is scrupulous and strong, the instructional methods and assessment strategies are considered best practices for high ability students, as they need different approaches, accommodations, and educational programs. For grades four to eight, we are constantly writing and improving from essay to essay throughout the writing process. In grades two to eight, students read novels that are two grade levels above their current grade, and engage in critical thinking discussions over the texts. In our English/LA classes, students are given choices for projects and are able to display their understanding of texts in a variety of ways.

Sidener Academy's curriculum comes from the Center of Gifted Education (CGE) at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. The Center for Gifted Education is a research and development center providing services to educators, policy makers, graduate students, researchers, and parents in support of the needs of gifted and talented individuals. The curriculum at this school concentrates on delving deeper into thought-provoking, real-world questions, constantly striving for creative and critical answers. This curriculum is centered for gifted education, and focuses on overarching concepts such as change, patterns, and cause and effect, thus developing reasoning, research, problem-based learning, and inquiry skills within each student. High ability students need and crave different curriculums and enrichment than the regular grade level state standards can provide. We want to prepare our students to be successful in their futures, to become citizens of the world, and to contribute to their communities.

Instructional approaches at Sidener Academy include direct and indirect instruction, experiential learning, independent study, enrichment, project-based learning, and creating and offering choice and tiered assignments. Our school also utilizes the Curry and Samara Method, which blends curriculum and effective instructional strategies. Project-based learning is great for high ability learners because they are able to research, learn, and apply their found knowledge in a way that is best for them. Enrichment activities are imperative for gifted and talented students because they are given more independence in their learning; they are able to research what they want to know and learn. Factors involved in increasing student success rates include the design and implementation of curriculum units based on state standards, and the design and implementation of rubrics aligned to curriculum units and state standards. According to multiple research studies, the implementation and continued use of the Curry and Samara Model significantly raises student achievement. This instructional program utilizes the use of cognitive verbs in questioning, answering, and praise; it shows students what is being asked of them regarding their answers.

Formative and summative assessments are used throughout the entire school year. Students take NWEA three times a year—beginning, middle, and end of the year. When assessing this data, we are able to see where each student is, and how to drive our instruction from there. We also utilize Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH), or district's English/LA curriculum, for benchmark tests to see what students have learned throughout that quarter. This way, we can go back and see what we need to review and what the students have learned. Through quick quizzes and assessments throughout the units of study we ensure students are completing work and growing in their learning.

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

Mathematics at Sidener is divided by elementary and middle school based on curriculum and courses offered.

In grades two through five, objectives are taken to the above proficiency depth of knowledge for all students using the state's requirements. Eureka, M2 and M3 Math, and Imagine Learning are the curriculum being used to teach the standards, level of learning, and to address differentiation.

The general instructional approach involves accelerated learning with Eureka. The exit tickets formative data results are used to address reteach. When the module is completed, an end of module test is given. The summative data results are used to address gaps and differentiation. Finally, the district benchmarks are used to check the progress of students. M2 and M3 Math is used after the completion of the Eureka units to reinforce standards and differentiate for the needs of our high ability students.

NWEA assessments are used to identify the need for differentiated instructions. Students with RIT scores two grade levels above are given a pretest to test out of the grade level work so they can use the class time to work on Imagine Math to learn concepts above grade level.

Middle School math courses at Sidener Academy consist of Pre-Algebra, Algebra I and Geometry. As a sixth grader, students take Pre-Algebra, which is a fast-paced course that includes standards typically taught in grades six to eight and provides a foundation for high school math courses.

The units of study are operations with integers and rational numbers, properties and simplifying expressions, coordinate graphing and transformations, solving equations and inequalities, data analysis, statistics and probability, ratios, proportions and similar figures, geometry (2D and 3D figures), and percents. Content is taught through lecture, group work and projects. Assessments consist of quizzes every two to three lessons to make sure students are understanding the content, end of unit tests, and projects (data analysis project where students need to conduct a survey using a numerical statistical question, graphic representation and written analysis of the data and multiple CSI projects from 21st Century Math projects) based on the units of study.

As a seventh grader, students take Algebra I, which is typically taken as ninth graders in high school. The units of study are one-variable statistics, linear equations, inequalities and systems, two-variable statistics, functions, quadratic functions and equations.

As an eighth grader, students take Geometry, which is typically taken as a tenth grader in high school. Content consists of constructions and rigid transformations, congruence, similarity, right triangle trigonometry, solid geometry, coordinate geometry, and circles.

Both Algebra I and Geometry are taught using the Illustrative Mathematics, which is problem-based core curriculum. Students work on mathematics problems during most of the instructional time while the teacher helps them understand the problems and guide discussions to make sure that the mathematical takeaways are clear to all students. Students work in different size groups to make sense of problems, estimate, try different approaches, select and use appropriate tools, and evaluate the reasonableness of their answers. Students then go on to interpret the significance of their answers, noticing patterns and making generalizations, explaining their reasoning verbally and in writing, listening to the reasoning of others, and building their understanding (McGraw Hill, 2019). Assessments consists of a “cool-down” at the end of every lesson to ensure that students understood the learning targets that were set out at the beginning of the lesson and middle and end-of-unit assessments depending on the size of the unit.

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

Sidener Academy has science instruction in grades two to seven. Our eighth grade students take a high school level Biology course. Science is taught at Sidener by using the IDOE State Standards as the backbone of core instruction. These standards are then aligned to our district’s adopted curriculum, Inspire, as well as supporting higher order thinking and engagement through the use of FOSS (Full Option Science System) units. FOSS offers hands-on student engagement labs for each lesson.

Instruction is differentiated through pacing the content based on pre- and posttesting that is done through holistic grade level testing and at the beginning of each unit. This data allows teachers to assess the mastery of science skills and informs instructional needs. Students in grades four and six also take a state standardized science assessment in the Spring as part of ILEARN.

In the sixth grade curriculum, students compare cellular structure and function, illustrate how photosynthesis and cellular respiration during matter cycles and energy transfer, understand inheritance and variation in traits, evaluate evidence to explain the role of natural selection as an evolutionary mechanism. As students move on to seventh grade, the focus shifts to investigating the properties of minerals, identifying and classifying a variety of rocks based on physical characteristics from their origin, as well as explaining how they are related using the rock cycle. Our eighth grade students take the state Biology exam that is part of the suite of ILEARN assessments. Throughout this course students will be able to compare cellular structure and function, illustrate how photosynthesis and cellular respiration during matter cycles and energy transfer, understand inheritance and variation in traits, evaluate evidence to explain the role of natural selection as an evolutionary mechanism.

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

Social Studies and Civics are important to a well-rounded curriculum, so at Sidener Academy we ensure that students receive instruction in these from second through the eighth grade.

In early elementary, second and third grade, students alternate between Science and Social Studies units. This allows them to devote a block of time to gain knowledge in experience through written work, research, and project-based learning. Our district does not have current Social Studies curriculum, so teachers use a variety of resources including Social Studies weekly, and themes tied to HMH ELA and novel units.

In fourth and fifth grade, students have blocked classes for Social Studies. Much like early elementary grades, the teacher creates curriculum based on Indiana standards and uses a variety of resources purchased by the school or accessed online. One key aspect of Social Studies instruction at these grade levels is the use of historical novels. Students can select novels based on interest and use cross curricular themes while reading this literature.

In Middle School (MS) grades, sixth-eighth, state standards help to navigate instruction, but high priority is placed on the idea of Humanities. The MS Social Studies teacher and ELA teacher collaborate on novel selection, essay writing, debate preparation, and project based learning. This allows for students to dive deep into literary concepts while also gaining an understanding of the historical time period that influences the characters, story, and theme.

Students at the eighth grade level compete in a state-wide We The People competition that combines skills in essay writing, collaborative presentations, and debate skills.

Only students in the fifth grade are assessed on State Standards through the Indiana ILearn test. All other assessments are created by the teacher and vary depending upon standards being assessed.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

Sidener Academy supports seventh and eighth grade students with College and Career Readiness curriculum using a district adopted platform called Xello. Eighth grade students have the opportunity to take a personality/interest assessment that allows them to have careers identified for them based on their interests and personality types. Students are then given a list of those careers and are provided time to research those careers to see what they feel interests them the most. Eighth grade students also utilize this list to discuss their career interests through curriculum provided by Junior Achievement to prepare themselves to attend a field trip called JA JobSpark. JA JobSpark is an opportunity for eighth grade students to speak with career professionals in various career pathways about their job responsibilities and roles. Students prepare for JA JobSpark by completing activities and having discussions around employability skills, good questions to ask during job interviews, and exploring the various educational levels needed in order to obtain employment in their desired fields of study. After the field trip, students utilize their new found knowledge about their career interests to discuss what Indianapolis Public Schools high school they could attend based on their given career pathways. Other presentation topics provided to 8th grade students are time management, GPA calculation and how that impacts their college acceptance, high school graduation requirements, and what pathways they can take after high school graduation (employment, enrollment into college, and enrollment

into the armed services).

Seventh grade students will utilize Xello lessons that center around biases and career choices, skills needed to find a good job and learning a bit more about their learning styles and how that effects their ability to study and learn. Seventh grade students will also have the opportunity to attend our first annual IPS High School Extravaganza that will introduce students to the career pathways that each IPS high school has to offer.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Sidener Academy believes deeply in offering multiple unified art options to help students gain experiences, foster new interests, and develop skills. All students at Sidener, second-eighth grade, have Art and Music on average of twice a week.

In the Art classroom, students learn more than just art-making skills. In our art course students are engaged through paintings using mixed color techniques, collages, sculptures and mixed mediums. There are also opportunities to express unique ideas, learn about world cultures through art history and explore Art's role in our modern world. Students practice interpreting Art, persevere through challenges, and foster an environment where they are not afraid to make mistakes.

Through our Music classes, students learn about lyric and music composure. Each student has a chance to experience hands-on activities with instruments and reading music. The class introduces students to a variety of genres and attempts to connect students with different cultures. Students learn about the history of music and its purpose in societies. The class culminates in performances throughout the school year to share the joy of music within our building and with stakeholders.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Students at Sidener participate in Physical education every three days. Students are taught skills in a way that scaffolds throughout the entire unit. From the beginning of the school year students are taught important team skills that will carry them through their time in gym. Students are not only taught the specifics on how to play the game, but also how to officiate game-play as well. This builds a high level of autonomy with students and allows them to play independently while not in class. This is evidenced by student participation in organized games at recess such as kickball, soccer, basketball, and gaga ball.

From a health standpoint, students are given a target heart rate for exercise. Lessons are centered on what activities can help you reach your target heart rate and why physical activity is an important part in keeping your heart strong. Students are taught where to find their own pulse and resting heart rate. At various times because of medical restrictions, students have been assigned supplemental curriculum from our district provided health book as a means to expand what students are already learning from their physical education lessons.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

All students, second through eighth grade, receive Spanish instruction. Our middle school students have this course daily as part of their academic schedule. In elementary, students receive the basis for learning Spanish through a weekly Spanish course through our unified art classes.

credit for Spanish One at middle school, so they must be ready for Spanish Two. Our teaching staff creates in-house resources, so we do not use commercial resources.

To develop oral fluency, we run weekly routines for phonetics understanding in the forms of dictations of common phrases and weekly dialogues. For listening skills, we create recordings with comprehension exercises.

The dialogues combine new vocabulary that is introduced every two weeks. We focus more than fifty percent of the time on developing an oral use of the language. Grammatical features of the language are introduced every two weeks and are part of the dictations and dialogue routines. Seventh and Sixth-grade courses follow a similar approach.

Our success is based on the idea that second language development takes time, and mastering the language's features can be achieved by teaching concepts over consecutive years. We use the common core standards for Spanish, focusing on standards related to the development of oral communication.

Formative assessment is used constantly each week. Monitoring the learning process at each practice session allows us to reach mastery for summative assessment.

2d. Technology/library/media

All students receive designated time in the Media Center through our Unified Art offerings. Elementary students, second-fifth grade, are in Media twice a week. Our Middle School students have Media time every six days.

On Media days, students can check out books if they do not have any that are late, or they can enjoy reading them in the library. They are encouraged to only check out enough books to read between visits as to maximize the ability of all students to check out the most popular books. The Media Center has a calm and relaxing feel where students can stretch out in a comfortable chair, cuddle with a pillow, or lay on the floor curled up with a book. Students learn how to search the computerized catalog by author, title, subject and location of the books. With assistance, students learn how to research and format essays for their core ELA classes using the MLA Format. We have read-a-louds and read-a-longs in Media and sometimes even act out characters in a story or change the ending of a story.

Technology is another aspect of the Media Center. Students are introduced to Coding as part of the Indiana Academic Science Standards for Computer Science. Students also practice their typing skills and are tested on their accuracy and words per minute each quarter. In addition, students are introduced to other programming to present their work such as Story Board That, Canva, Prezi and Power Point.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

While Sidener Academy is a program designed for high ability students, we find that there are students that may slip behind their peers when it comes to assessment achievement. Because of the free and reduced lunch population that we serve, we are fortunate enough to receive Title I funds that allow us to employ a Title I Assistant. This staff member supports students in every grade level by pulling small groups, pushing into classrooms during instruction, leading a middle school intervention time during Study Hall, and remediation time one on one on an as needed basis during Unified Arts time.

Identifying students who may need additional support is built into our professional learning process with each instructional team. At minimum, every quarter, student assessment data is evaluated and students are

grouped based on the level in which they are performing. Data used for this is either NWEA data, which is based off of national norms, or benchmark data which is only focused on standards that are being taught according to our district pacing guide.

As a tertiary level of support, our students are offered tutoring scholarships through one of our community partners, Huntington Learning Center. This allows students to receive targeted remediation after school hours. Huntington Learning Center has been excellent with communicating with the school to pinpoint where we are seeing deficits in learning. If students are unable to access tutoring at Huntington Learning Center, the district has also provided free virtual tutoring for all students through the company Tutored by Teachers. This virtual option allows for more flexibility for students that may not have transportation outside of the school day.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Sidener Academy is unique in that most of our students test above grade level on state and national assessments, such as ILearn and NWEA. However, differentiation is just as important for these students as those testing below grade level. The school uses a variety of methods and resources to meet the rigorous academic needs of our high ability students.

Our top percentile students receive support in meeting projected growth through targeted interventions, accelerated literary groups, use of applications specifically designed for gifted learners. In ELA classes, teachers work to select novels that meet the lexile levels of students while also assessing the content to ensure it is developmentally appropriate. It is common to see multiple novels being read in classes that specifically target academic needs.

Specific applications are used as supplemental curriculum to help meet students differentiated needs and to support academic growth. Math applications such as M2 and M3 are used in second and third grade for learners who are ready for more accelerated math. Khan Academy is used in grades four and five to demonstrate accelerated content and support the growth of small groups who have shown mastery of grade level standards. Imagine Learning is a district provided platform that allows each student to complete lesson in reading and math at their own pace.

When appropriate, Sidener Academy uses a committee to accelerate a student by subject. This is most commonly seen in math, when a student has demonstrated full mastery of their current grade level standards and the next grade level course is appropriate.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Students with disabilities are served at Sidener through our Special Education team. Sidener Academy has two full time special education teachers, a special education assistant and a speech language pathologist that provide support minutes weekly. An Occupational Therapist and a Deaf Hard of Hearing Teacher also support our students on a consult basis as outlined in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Most students that receive services have a primary eligibility of Other Health Impairment (OHI) with the majority of these students with a diagnosis of Autism and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Because most of our students' individual goals are growth in executive function, this is where a majority of our student support is centered on. Special education teachers also lead various social skills lessons with targeted groups of students with a focus on fostering accountability among our students.

Interventions that our special education team uses are: SPIRE, a language development intervention program to address gaps where dyslexia may be present. Megawords is also used to support students who have difficulty encoding. As a social intervention, the program Zones of Regulation is used to support our students who need extra support with emotional control and self-regulation. In addition, our special education team also works closely with our general education teachers to utilize Imagine Learning to assess learning gaps with some of our students. Since this program is adaptive, it meets students where they are so that we can see maximum growth.

Our Multi Disciplinary Team meets regularly to discuss student's goals and determine adjustments in instruction to meet students' specific needs. Special Education teachers work in conjunction with our general education teachers to plan lessons that are co-taught. Weekly consultations are also planned with general education teachers to go over student goals and progress. General education teachers also fill out a digital tracker for identified special education students. This data is used by our special education teachers to frequently monitor student progress toward goals.

3d. English Language Learners:

At Sidener, we work together as a team to meet the needs and goals of our English language learners. Administration, English as a New Language (ENL) teacher, classroom teachers, school testing coordinator, and other support staff are in regular communication to make this possible.

All of our English learners (ELs) have an overall English proficiency level of three (developing) or higher. Based on this data, it is important that we implement EL best practices to pursue the steady growth of our student's social and academic language across all content areas.

The ENL teacher first and foremost provides legally mandated services to identified ELs. The WIDA Framework, an Indiana adopted Framework, provides a foundation for curriculum, instruction and assessment for English learners and is centered on equity. It fosters the assets, contributions, and potential of ELs. At Sidener, the ENL teacher uses the WIDA Framework to guide and adapt materials to the language level of students. If needed, interventions are provided, through the MTSS process, for targeted support if ELs are struggling with core instruction. The ENL teacher and classroom teachers evaluate individual students' understanding through formative assessments and collaborate to provide needed support throughout the units of study in all core content areas.

The classroom and ENL teachers work collaboratively to implement each student's individual learning plan (ILP). They plan and deliver lessons that are visual, build background, review vocabulary, and provide opportunities to practice and interact with language using support strategies. For example, teachers may provide students additional context by pre-teaching vocabulary and linking new concepts to prior knowledge. They may use support structures for classroom discussions with sentence frames, academic word banks, or link text to real-life experiences.

Teachers at Sidener not only advocate for equitable opportunities and access, we also cultivate support for students to advocate and take responsibility for their own academic and language learning. For example, the ENL teacher meets with EL students weekly to discuss specific educational goals. After reflecting, the ENL teacher provides resources and support, specific to personal goals. Whether it's through self-reflection, resources, or goal-setting, the staff at Sidener cultivates opportunities for students to find their voice and self-determination in the classroom and beyond.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Part of Sidener Academy's mission is to help prepare students for a future where they can succeed and become happy, civic-minded individuals. In order to do the latter, it is imperative that we support the growth of the whole child. Sidener works within budget constraints to fund both a social worker and a school counselor. These positions work with both students and staff to provide resources, professional development, and support for academics, social emotional growth, and college and career readiness. Classroom lessons are done to educate each grade level with appropriate content and instruction that is tailored to the maturity level of students. For more specific student needs, small groups and individual sessions are held. Staff receive support with implementing Second Steps, the adopted curriculum provided by our district, through staff meetings and trackers kept by our Social Worker. Another important aspect of engaging with students and assessing the needs of students is through a bi-annual Panorama survey. Students complete this in the Fall and then again in the Spring. This data helps our Student Service Team keep a pulse on strengths and weaknesses of our school culture. The survey assesses student beliefs around rigor, racial equity, school engagement, and a sense of belonging. We can look at the data by subgroup and make real-time changes and considerations to improve the student experience within our building. The administration at Sidener keeps an open door policy for students to engage with leadership to share concerns as well as ideas. Students have brought presentations forward to advocate for clubs and student organizations. Leaders have supported student initiatives by providing spaces for meetings, bulletin boards for visual expressions of support for Black Lives Matter and LGBTQ, and the expansion of athletics and clubs. Administrators also meet with each middle school grade level at the start of each quarter to engage with students on conversations around expectations and school safety. These meetings allow leadership to express the why around school rules and parameters, and allows for sixth through eighth grade students to engage in conversations regarding their classrooms, hallways, and middle school experience. This student engagement has helped to decrease discipline incidents and increase conversations with school leaders. College and Career readiness begins early on with our elementary students learning about various career options and the pathways to these positions. Academics are stressed throughout our program at each grade level as a key to success, and we also strive to support students in reflective practices to know thyself. The goal is to help students select a high school from our many city options that supports their interests and provides opportunities that expand on identified pathways that lead students to a future of their choice.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Family and community engagement is commonplace within the Sidener Academy. The key to our successful engagement is through accessible communication. We offer a school-wide, weekly newsletter that communicates important news, needs, and events within our school. We also translate the newsletter into Spanish to accommodate our latino families. Sidener Academy is a Title I funded school and with those funds we were able to have a family liaison in our building. Our liaison played a significant role in being a point of contact within our school to address parent and community concerns. She also established new relationships with prospective families during weekly tours. With her honest and informative tours, she was able to secure at least 87% of families she toured every year. The heart of Sidener Academy, and where we show most success, rests in our families' compassion for one another. We are a school that runs the gamut of socioeconomic status. Each year we receive donations for our Holiday Boxes from all walks of life. The Sidener community inherently wants to give and help those around them. We encourage this engagement by being honest about our families needs and communicating that any little bit is helpful and appreciated. When it comes to the community at large, keeping partnerships close to home has been the most successful. Our top partnerships, The Can Lady, Huntington Learning Center, and Lowe's, all come within a mile and a half of our school. By choosing local partnerships, we keep things personal and rewarding for both our community. For instance, by families and staff bringing in their aluminum cans to the school, The Can Lady was able to recycle those cans and donate \$1,500 that was needed to pay for the cost of two eighth grade students' trip to Washington D.C. Another strong partnership we have is based on both a student and community need, is with Huntington Learning Center. The organization approached us as not only new Sidener parents but as a community stakeholder as well. They wanted to grow their tutoring business and we

had families who were searching for additional tutoring assistance. With this partnership, we have been able to provide assistance to our students' education while boosting a local business. Sidener Academy's ability to foster genuine relationships, has made us an inclusive and equitable place for our families and an enthusiastic place of engagement within our community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Sidener Academy implements weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings for each teaching team. As part of our School Improvement Plan, we have set a goal to have a percentage of our PLCs focus on student data. Through the use of our data protocol, teachers can look at student data and make intentional instructional decisions that best support our students. In previous years, Sidener also had an Instructional Coach that spent a majority of their time working on professional development opportunities for teachers. The Instructional Coach was also responsible for putting together and leading PLCs with the principal. Real-time coaching was implemented in some classrooms where a need was identified. The Data Protocol we use was developed by The National School Reform Faculty. After evaluating multiple data protocols, we found that this one best fit the needs of our teaching teams. With this protocol, we wanted to develop teachers in a way that would help them use student data as a springboard of growth rather than just focusing on the deficits. This protocol allows teachers to have conversations about student data in a way that promotes a growth mindset. Each quarter we evaluate our standardized assessment data as well as our district assessment data. This gives teachers two different data points to look at when considering learning gaps for our students. Through this protocol, the principal and assistant principal were asked to present at multiple district professional development engagements on the positive shift we have found in using this with our staff. As a staff, we have also worked on professional development for Social Emotional Learning. Through school-led professional development days, we have had our district Social Emotional Coach come in and lead sessions. We have also invited outside guests to lead us in a sound bath experience for our teachers to promote staff wellness. Our guidance counselor and social worker act as our SEL leaders for the building as they have provided professional development sessions from the book *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators* by Elena Aguilar. Through activities in the book, we have focused on creating community, keeping mindfulness in the forefront of our practice, and sharing stories that promote an optimistic outlook on our thinking.

4. School Leadership:

The administration team at Sidener Academy is made up of one principal and one assistant principal. As a leadership team, we work hard to bring up new leaders within our staff through partnering with our district high-ability coordinator. In recent years we have served as mentors for staff looking to expand their skill set in educational administration. We have also found opportunities to allow some staff to complete their masters degree in high-ability instruction. This is a priority to maintain the integrity of our unique program. With keeping student needs always at the forefront of our minds when making decisions, we pride ourselves on maintaining a program that has seen continued success. Each year our school district distributes our staffing budget through student-based allocation. This means that our building and program are funded based upon enrollment. While this does come with some challenges, we do appreciate the autonomy it affords us. As an example, we were able to keep our Title I assistant because of student-based allocation by shifting funds from a collapsed position that was no longer needed. This allowed for more direct, intentional student support throughout the day. We have also been able to maintain both a school counselor and a social worker to support the specific needs of high ability learners. Before becoming administrators, both the principal and assistant principal worked at Sidener Academy as the guidance counselor and instructional coach. Because we both were familiar with staff, students, and families, this allowed us to strengthen and build upon already established relationships. This also helped alleviate stakeholder anxiety with the change in leadership. Because of these strong relationships, transparency in communicating with our stakeholders is crucial. Making sure families, staff, and students are informed is something we do with intention in our daily practice. A key to the leadership philosophy at Sidener is recognizing our teachers as not only professionals, but experts in their field. The administration believes strongly that our teachers are highly qualified, come with a strong skill set, and are, in turn, the best suited for sharing ideas and developing strategies for student achievement and growth. This belief allows for a strong culture within our community that focuses on student success as well as the continuous improvement of our team. Finally, the school

administrative team has a deep belief in equity. The team takes strides to consistently review data and look for areas to improve curriculum, instruction, and culture to help all students achieve to their full potential.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Indianapolis Public Schools as a district is focused on directly addressing racial inequality in education. As a district we are committed to creating schools where student outcomes cannot be predicted by race and ethnicity by correcting practices that perpetuate the opportunity gap and institutional racism. This work is grounded in strengthening and expanding racial equity work to eliminate opportunity gaps, align policies and talent decisions, and interrupt and address institutional bias. At Sidener Academy, every staff member has attended a two-day Racial Equity Summit and complete training each year on equity for all students. In addition, we dedicate time during professional learning community meetings to analyze our school's data in real-time and assess next steps to directly impact disparities that we are seeing in growth, achievement, discipline, and attendance. As a staff we also set aside time for implicit bias training, racial equity team meetings, and to discuss case studies on diversity and social justice in education. We have also engaged in racial equity training with some of our parents through locally provided Ground Water Trainings. Our school administrators also provide school data broken down by subgroups, so that discussions and strategies can be shared with all parents. Families have also been asked to engage with Sidener's administrators and teachers when questions of content and school culture arise. As a school, we have expanded the novels that students have access to based on suggestions from parents and guardians who have shared expertise and experiences with our team. Each year our district has all stakeholders, including students, staff, and families, complete Panorama surveys. This data is then used by the school to help assess areas of strength and improvement. This informs decisions, strategies, and is incorporated in the overall school improvement plan. Sidener Academy also strives to have a heightened sense of who makes up our community and who "has a seat at the table" when decisions and information are being discussed. We work with our Parent-Teacher-Organization, or PTO, to assess the diversity and voices heard at meetings. The school deliberately considers all families when planning and hosting events. The latter may include timing, food shared at events, and the recognition and celebration of cultural holidays. The staff at Sidener Academy completed Responsive Classroom training two years ago. This was to help implement a common language throughout the building and to help recognize the individual needs of our students. Responsive Classroom incorporates class meeting times where all students have the chance to share an experience, idea, or thought on a given prompt. This designated time allows students to share parts of themselves as well as feel and see value in the experiences of others who share.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Sidener Academy employs a number of strategies to pursue excellence for our students; however, if as a school we had to name the most effective and impactful, it would be a relentless pursuit of growth within our building. The word growth is not singular to just discussing the amount of progress we see in an academic school year, but it pertains to everything we do within our building. As a school we, of course, focus on academic growth. This can be measured and studied by our teachers through analyzing data and using this analysis to then inform future instruction and differentiation needs. High levels of growth for high ability students is more challenging than it may seem. Teachers at Sidener must employ a number of academic strategies, monitor growth data, and adjust to ensure that our gifted students are receiving rigorous work that helps them to progress at the rate they are able to comprehend. Growth in academics means focusing on individual student needs, but also challenging students. Growth takes many other forms in our school outside of student academics. There is also a strong focus on teachers as professionals learning and growing in their field. This may be teachers attending a conference, participating in professional development, furthering their own education, or learning from one another as experts. Growth within the staff at Sidener means reflecting on our own practices and having a mindset of continuous improvement. Sidener Academy also focuses on the growth of all stakeholders through socio-emotional learning (SEL). Both staff and students learn through deliberate initiatives to focus on good mental health and collaborating with others around them. Students receive targeted lessons through a grant for Second Steps, a social emotional curriculum, as well as lessons and support from our counselor and school social worker. Gifted learners often struggle with perfectionism and a fear of failure, so Sidener attempts to create an environment where students grow in emotional maturity and learn how to manage the anxiety they often feel. Staff receive lessons from our counselors and social workers as well. These lessons focus on growing as educators, assessing implicit bias, and personal self-care. Finally, Sidener focuses on the growth of our families. The school posts SEL information, upcoming cultural events, information on how to help their child get involved in activities, and works with our racial equity team to offer training focused on equity. It is our hope that through a focus on growth in multiple ways that a mindset is created where all staff, students, and families feel that constant improvement is natural and changing as we learn is beneficial.