

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Castlewood High School - 01
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 310 East Harry Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Castlewood State SD Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 57223-2063

County Hamlin County

Telephone (605) 793-2351 Fax (605) 793-2679

Web site/URL <https://www.castlewood.k12.sd.us/> E-mail peter.books@k12.sd.us

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. Peter Books E-mail peter.books@K12.sd.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Castlewood School District 28-1 Tel. (605) 793-2351

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Alisha Nielsen
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 4 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	0
3	0
4	0
5	0
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	26
10	23
11	26
12 or higher	14
Total Students	89

*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):
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 86 % White
 - 3 % 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: 13%

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	24
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	17
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	41
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	319
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Spanish

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

0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 9 %

Total number students who qualify: 8

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 8 %
Total number of students served 7

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>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>6</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</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: 1 %
Total number of students served: 1

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 2

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.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 11:1

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	98%	98%	98%	98%	97%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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	25
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	20%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	48%
Found employment	28%
Joined the military or other public service	4%
Other	0%

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

Yes ☐ No ☒

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

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

We are committed to working together with our school board, families, and the community to build courage, honesty, and strength through education.

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

<https://www.castlewood.k12.sd.us/cms/lib/SD02206129/Centricity/Domain/15/Employee%20Handbook.pdf>

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

While Castlewood High School represents multiple cultures and family traditions, there are also a number of family and community relationships that are generations-old. Many students come from small family farms and bring the habits of hard work and individualism to Castlewood's school culture. However, Castlewood High School readily welcomes new community members from diverse backgrounds and traditions. The school attracts students from neighboring, larger communities who are looking for a more personalized learning environment as well as a population of immigrants who work and live on surrounding farms.

Though the fact that many families in our district have a long history with the community provides a boon in many ways, that reality also presents challenges. Some students have not ventured far beyond the confines of our community and state--physically or intellectually. Our school, therefore, offers both classes and opportunities that expand students' knowledge and understanding of the world beyond and their unique place in it. Ultimately, Castlewood High School strives to provide students with the tools and knowledge that allow them to constructively work within and enrich both their local community as well as the larger national and global community.

Castlewood High School prepares students to be valuable members of both local and larger communities through myriad formal programs and informal opportunities. The high school houses a special education department that services students with severe and profound mental disabilities. While these students receive entirely separate instruction—as they are a separate institution—they and the high school partner through the Special Olympics Unified Champion program to provide students from both schools opportunities to participate in Special Olympics meets and practices together. Many high school students take this opportunity and form lasting relationships with special needs students that would likely not otherwise materialize. Castlewood High School also has an active National Honor Society program that challenges and requires students to serve both their local and broader communities while maintaining high academic standards.

Castlewood High School also provides students with a wide array of extracurricular programs—as well as highly qualified coaches and directors to oversee them. The quality of students' experiences in these programs is manifest both in numerous State and Regional honors each year as well as the number of students who continue to create and compete in both collegiate and community activities. Strong athletic programs that serve both girls and boys include football, basketball, volleyball, softball, baseball, golf, cross-country, and track. Fine arts and journalism programs include all-school play, a one-act theater team, oral interpretation, all-school band, jazz band, all-school choir, ensemble choir, yearbook, and newspaper. Of course, within each of these programs are many sub-programs and opportunities for competition and refinement that are too numerous to mention. All these programs, of course, are balanced with and compliment students' primary academic experiences and priorities.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

The high school English teacher vertically aligns curriculum between each academic year and analyzes student data garnered from CCSS-aligned NWEA Maps diagnostics which allow for timely identification of weak skills and remediation for classes, small groups, and individual students as necessary. Besides meeting State standards, students' ELA experience is designed to hone their abilities to communicate clearly and effectively as well as to better understand and participate in the millennia-long, ongoing conversation that is literature.

Freshmen build a firm foundation both in literature from diverse genres, eras, and cultures as well as in expository, epistolary, and argumentative writing. Special emphasis is placed on drama, myth, and the epic. Some major summative projects that define the freshman experience include designing a marketing campaign and shooting trailers for a student-produced re-setting of Sophocles' *Antigone*; writing a "local myth" that fulfills at least two of the Cambellian functions of myth; and producing prosecution and defense arguments indicting or defending particular characters in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, culminating in a series of mock trials.

In Composition II, sophomores begin with a review of expository writing before moving on to focus mainly on argumentative and persuasive writing. A major focus is the study of rhetorical appeals. Within this framework of Aristotelian appeals, students learn about the concepts of credibility, aim, purpose, reasoning (and logical fallacies), and propaganda. Assessment for this mainly consists of factual assessment (definition and identification of examples of concepts learned in class) and performed rhetorical analysis. Sophomores' fourth quarter is mostly performance based: students study the three major occasions for speech (forensic, epideictic, and deliberative) and then prepare and deliver a series of speeches that apply to each occasion.

The first semester of Junior year introduces students to foundational American texts, which include portions of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, primary narrative sources, and Native American primary sources such as the Iroquois Constitution. Juniors then progress to personal narrative essays, including those of Fredrick Douglass, Henry David Thoreau, and Benjamin Franklin. American Lit. ends with a unit on American Theater (featuring the works of August Wilson, Arthur Miller, and Susan Glaspell) and a novel study, Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, which allows for lively discussion and research into a host of contemporary issues that students independently choose and explore through class writing and discussion.

The first semester of senior year is focused on research. Students read published articles and essays that examine often-conflicting stances on a number of contemporary issues. They then transition to using that reading as a basis for their own major research project that requires them to identify a real-life question, problem, or issue within a chosen career and then propose a solution or stance which they go on to defend using their own reasoning and myriad credible sources. This research culminates in a community presentation in the spring. The remainder of Seniors' spring semester is spent exploring and ultimately articulating an answer to the question What is success? For context, they study a wide array of contemporary and ancient literature, including Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and *Groundhog Day* (starring Bill Murray). This study culminates in a project-based assessment in which students articulate their answer in comparison with the texts they've studied.

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

Math courses at Castlewood High School are taught in a sequential order by grade level: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II (or Transition Algebra), and Pre-Calculus. Content is aligned with the CCSS eight mathematical practices. Teachers use the NWEA diagnostic testing to identify weak areas, which then guides interventions and remediation. Math courses at CHS focus to develop student critical thinking and

analytical skills that will prepare them for college or the workforce.

Freshman and selected eight-graders begin Algebra I by reviewing key concepts in Pre-Algebra, including expressions and equations. A major portion of the course is spent learning how linear models are used to solve problems, both algebraically and graphically. Students create and construct a model of a chosen real-life scenario and must explain how their model is useful and relevant. Students finish the course by learning the basics of exponential and quadratic functions, including operations with exponents, radical expressions, and polynomials. All lessons are taught in a traditional fashion, but what truly helps students succeed in our classrooms is the use of supplemental materials, such as small group activities (task cards, puzzles, etc.) that require students to be hands-on, collaborate, and use their mathematical thinking skills to communicate their understanding of each topic.

Our Geometry course is based on the concepts of plane Euclidean geometry, where students learn how shapes and structures work both with and without coordinates. The course takes an analytical approach, meaning there is a strong focus on how algebra can be used as a tool to help students understand what is happening geometrically to shapes both on and off the coordinate plane. Students begin by touching the surface of inductive reasoning and learn how a series of postulates, theorems, and axioms are used to construct proofs. The course then moves into triangles, focusing on congruence, similarity, and trigonometry, followed up exposure to other polygons and their properties. The end of the course focuses on transformations in the coordinate plane, volume and surface area, and parts of a circle. Similar to our algebra course, students engage in a multitude of hands-on and collaborative activities to strengthen the concepts and ideas learned during instruction.

Our Algebra II course builds upon topics from Algebra I and Geometry and introduces students to new topics such as logarithmic functions. One of the most important skills learned in Algebra I is factoring. We expand upon this by using factoring to understand real zeros in polynomial functions and apply those to real world situations. The use of trigonometry is also expanded upon in Algebra II by using trig identities to solve real world problems and by expanding its use into the coordinate plane. When introducing logarithmic functions, we first expand and explore properties of exponents. When using exponential functions we find their inverses to show the purpose of logarithmic functions and then use properties of logarithms to help us solve them in a variety of situations.

Pre-Calculus is an upper-level math class available to juniors and seniors. Pre-Calculus completes the formal study of functions that are introduced in Algebra I and Algebra II. We focus on modeling, problem solving, and data analysis of logarithmic, exponential, trigonometric, and circular functions, complex numbers, conics, and quadratic relations. Students work with these functions by understanding transformations of parent functions, properties of the functions, limits and continuity, inverse functions, and understanding rates of change. Students also analyze, graph, and apply conic sections and functions in polar and parametric forms. This course utilizes scaffolding in the form of video explanations, “help me solve it” homework help, immediate feedback when completing homework assignments, and “show me an example” assistance within the curriculum.

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

The science courses offered by Castlewood High School include freshman Physical Science and sophomore Biology. Environmental Science is also offered and is open to students in grades ten through twelve. Castlewood does provide the opportunity for students to take distance learning science courses, such as Physics, Chemistry, and Anatomy. Content taught in all three courses is aligned with the Disciplinary Core Ideas in the Next Generation Science Standards. The high school science teacher utilizes NWEA Maps diagnostics to determine student weakness and strength areas to guide future instruction and interventions. Science courses at Castlewood provide a foundation of science content knowledge and principles and promote active problem-solving and reasoning

In Physical Science, we practice a variety of conversions to reinforce their understanding of the International System of Units. In our Physical Science classroom, students have the opportunity to reinforce their content knowledge with hands-on lab activities, giving students the advantage of seeing science at work and making

it more relatable to them. The second half of the year focuses on matter and the components involved. We can dive deep into the periodic table and how we utilize that information in our everyday world. This deep dive gives students a basic introduction to Chemistry.

In Biology we begin our course with scientific basics in which students apply what they have learned about the scientific method through a project-based learning assignment. Instruction focuses on inquiry-based learning and activities. Lab activities are incorporated to give the students a hands-on experience when learning about content that is too small for the naked eye.

Environmental Science allows students to learn about the world we live in from the smallest units of Ecology to the largest. Instruction is primarily teacher led with many opportunities for both small group and large group discussions. This course utilizes a variety of news articles and reports to both reinforce content, as well as making the content more relatable to the students.

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

Social Studies at Castlewood HS uses the SD State standards as a curriculum guide for the core classes. In addition, several electives are offered for students who are interested in history or other social science related subjects.

State standards are covered as early as the 8th grade when students take Social Studies for a yearlong class, covering from early colonial settlements through the Civil War. Freshman year students take a split course of Geography and World History, each covering a semester. Geography focuses on both physical and political geography of local and world cultures. World History begins with the four early river civilizations through WWII, focusing on industrialization, colonization, and enlightenment periods in between. Sophomores do not take any required courses but many take some electives discussed below. Juniors take a full year of US History, beginning with a refresher of the Civil War and ending with the Vietnam War. Seniors take a semester of Government, with the main focus on the US Constitution with some time also spent on state and local government studies. Seniors also take a semester of Personal Finance class offered by NSU (Northern State University).

Elective courses are offered to all 9-12 students. These include, but are not limited to, SD History/Geography, Psychology, and Current Events. Most classes are offered for one semester and are open to students in all HS grades.

Social Science classes use a variety of teaching methods. Individual research, group study, class discussions and lectures, many hands-on activities, films and videos, and field trips are a few of the many techniques that help to develop and teach the course material. Assessment is done in a variety of ways: through tests/quizzes, with class discussions and feedback, and general daily work of assignments and activities.

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

The Castlewood School District works to ensure that our students are college- and career-ready following their graduation. The first step in that process is ensuring all students have meaningful Personal Learning Plans, as established by the South Dakota Administrative Rule 24:43:11:01. This provides our students a strong sense of ownership over their education by deciding what they want to learn, how they are going to learn it, and why they need to learn it in order to achieve their academic and personal goals.

Another key aspect of ensuring college and career readiness is our course offerings and partnerships. We partner with the Northeast Technical High School (NTHS) in Watertown, SD, which uses career exploration and hands-on experiences to provide academic relevancy and life-long learning. Many of the courses offered from the NTHS also provide students opportunities to earn dual credit. There is also the option for upperclassmen to earn dual credit with reduced tuition through South Dakota's High School Dual Credit Program; this has proven to be a very successful and sought-after opportunity for our students.

We offer a variety of career and technical education courses on our campus, including a class focused solely

on exploring the many post-secondary options available to graduating students in today's society. With the help of the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation's Career Launch program, students enrolled in this course learn about the steps and skills they need to take in order to turn their career aspirations into an attainable reality.

Castlewood seniors also take the National Career Readiness Certificate assessment, which is an industry-recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies relevant skills to any occupation, at any level, and across industries. Not only does this certification give them a competitive edge, but it also provides students with an accurate picture of their workplace skills. This awareness will lead our students to better job opportunities and ultimately, a brighter employment future in their desired career paths.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

The Visual Arts Department is committed to developing the artistic potential of every student by offering a creative environment. Where students are safe to take risks, be empowered to express visual literacy, use higher order thinking and problem-solving skills, while gaining confidence through the application of the Elements of Art and Principles of Design. Young artists choose courses that offer an exciting and extensive variety of media such as: drawing, painting, ceramics, art history, digital photography and design.

The Castlewood band and choir, open to any student, are made up of eighth to twelfth grade students. The music curriculum focuses on the development of strong fundamental skills. Daily rehearsals are designed to develop the skills of individual students as the entire ensemble rises to meet expectations of excellence. Musicians develop knowledge of musical notation, terminology, styles, and interpretation of music. Some of the skills that are inherent in and enriched by music include reading fluency, creativity, analysis, application of abilities, critical listening, evaluation, and working with others.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

In daily instruction, the physical education teacher develops physically literate students through a variety of activities involving catching, jumping, running, and throwing. These skills are developed through a selection of high school courses such as 9th grade physical education/health, team sports, and weight training. A unit that is beyond the typical abilities of physical education programs is our unit on archery. This unit challenges our students' abilities in flexibility, strength and power, and overall skill/technique. It also has the added benefit of enhancement of perseverance and instant assessment of improvement.

In health class, students gain essential knowledge of mental and emotional health, the dangers of alcohol and drugs, and finding valid information and products to enhance health and fitness. Nutrition, managing weight and understanding body composition plays a vital role in personal health. Comprehension of healthy relationships both with family and peers creates a well-rounded individual. First Aid techniques to use during common medical emergencies is included in this class.

One assessment of the understanding of mental/emotional health is an assignment where students make a short video incorporating the six pillars of character. Some of the skills that students will gain from health class are accessing information, practicing healthful behaviors, managing stress, communication skills, decision making and goal setting.

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

Though Castlewood does not have an in-house foreign language teacher, students are offered Spanish I and II at Castlewood through Northern State University in the Dakota Digital Learning network. Many students avail themselves of this opportunity.

2d. Technology/library/media

Castlewood High School provides a Windows laptop/tablet to each student as their own personal learning device. Teachers are able to engage students by incorporating technology into their lesson plans and homework. Across the curriculum, teachers are introducing essential technological skills for all students post-high school, no matter what path they take. Providing one-to-one devices removes the socioeconomic barriers for students and allows all students equal access to curriculum.

Computer Programming I and II, Multimedia, and Computer Applications are four technology courses offered at Castlewood High School. These courses promote computational thinking, coding fundamentals, and creativity. Students are exposed to a variety of software, programming languages, and online tools to prepare them for real-world challenges.

The school has a dedicated Pre-K through 12 library on campus. Students are provided a wide range of in-house reading materials and research resources through a dedicated librarian. Though our school library was destroyed in a tornado that struck our community May of 2023, the school board has prioritized its reconstruction and improvement in rebuilding plans. Until that rebuild, students are provided reading resources both through individual classrooms and the school's purchase of the Sora digital library.

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

Students at Castlewood have the opportunity to take a Career Exploration class that is offered by the Guidance Counselor each fall. Students in this class learn about the different career clusters in detail. Some of the skills students are introduced to are as follows: resume and cover letter writing, interview preparation and mock interviews, financial awareness and exploration, job search and application processes, career interest and personality surveys, post-secondary education options and workplace ethics and attitude. In addition, we find professionals within the community from each of the career clusters to spend a class period with the students explaining their jobs and answering questions.

In their senior year, students complete a comprehensive capstone project that provides them the opportunity to shadow a worker in a career of their choice; research a real-world problem, challenge, or question that workers in the field currently grapple with; and communicate their experience, research, and a resulting product in a community presentation. Through this experience, students not only gain real-world vocational experience, they also learn how to actively engage in real, meaningful problem solving and communication.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

A big part of our special education department in Castlewood is inclusion. We feel that the best place for students to gain academic success is in the general education classroom. The students are given instruction by the general education teacher then are pulled into the Special Education room for assistance on their work. We use accommodations to help our students who are below grade level to gain skills. We pre-teach ideas that are being taught the next day, reteach when necessary, and use manipulatives as much as possible.

For students who are struggling in the general education classroom for math, we have a program called Math U See which is very kinesthetic and uses overlays, cubes, and fractions cards to help the students gain understanding in subject areas they are missing. Our special education department and general education teachers have a close relationship and view all students as "ours". This close relationship helps to ensure that no student falls between the cracks and all get the help they need.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Though Castlewood High School does not have a dedicated gifted program, instruction is differentiated in each classroom to both provide necessary supports for students who need them and provide enrichment activities and deeper dives into subjects and experiences for students who are gifted and talented. The electives offered at Castlewood provide some of those opportunities. Students are able not only to take dual-credit and advanced classes through the Dakota Digital Network, we offer several in-house advanced electives. These electives range from Pre-calculus to Ceramics classes to literature classes such as Gothic Fiction and Shakespeare's Comedies.

While students take core classes with all of their classmates, Castlewood offers opportunities for students to take accelerated courses that align to their personal aptitude. For example, Algebra I is open to eighth graders, allowing them to take more advanced courses in high school. Our school also offers a variety of dual credit courses for students in their junior and senior years, which both provides them opportunities for gaining college credit and pursuing a more rigorous course load.

In the general education classroom, even though students take classes with all their peers from their class year, teachers differentiate to provide particular enrichment and rigor to students who excel. Both small-group instruction and shadowing and career exploration opportunities are used with students who are ready to take the next steps in their learning beyond their peers. Of course, such opportunities are available to all students who excel, whether by merit of talent or hard work and dedication.

3c. Students with disabilities:

All students at Castlewood School who are on IEP's have a diagnosed disability. At the high school level, the most common disability is OHI (other health impairment) and most of them qualify under the area of ADHD. These students often need more one-on-one to small group worktime. They also need someone to look over their grades, missing assignments, upcoming assignments, etc. to help them continue to stay on track to pass and graduate. Students who have a diagnosed disability of Specific Learning Disability are taught in a separate setting before the lessons are taught in whole group. We also use modifications and accommodations to ensure success for our students. Every student who is on an IEP has (at least) a yearly meeting to make new goals and talk about progress, and (at least) has a re-evaluation every three years to ensure gains are being made and to see if the student still qualifies for services.

Even if a student is not on a formal IEP or 504, teachers collaborate with each other and with the SPED department to provide students the supports and accommodations they need to succeed. For example, students who may need preferential seating or may benefit from text-to-speech accommodations are readily allowed those supports if they help. Further, as the school rebuilds after a tornado destroyed much of it last spring, our rebuild plans specifically address meeting all ADA requirements and recommendations.

3d. English Language Learners:

The high school integrates a variety of Sheltered Instruction strategies to meet the needs of multilingual learners. Language scaffolds employed in the past include the use of bilingual support, through translation devices and planned use of the student's L1 in different modalities of communication. For example, a newcomer ML had a well-developed literacy in her L1 and was given structured opportunities to receive content input in both languages by reading assigned texts in her L1, as well as in English. In order to make content comprehensible, visual supports such as graphic organizers, images, and non-verbal cues are strategies used across content areas.

Other recurring language scaffolds include pre-teaching vocabulary, particularly in math and science, sentence frames to guide speaking and writing of English, and providing word banks to make activities more accessible. Modifications to curriculum and assessments are made for MLs in the early stages of development in English literacy to help them meet with success in all content areas. For example, removing or simplifying word problems on a math assessment to ensure the student expresses mathematical content learning rather than being asked to demonstrate their current level of language acquisition.

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

For students who have medical needs or needs that are not covered under an IEP, we use a system called a 504 plan. We have students on 504's for a variety of reasons, from health problems to attention problems. The students who are on 504's have a yearly meeting to come up with a plan to provide them with the best education possible while addressing their disability. We work closely with classroom teachers, parents, and sometimes the nurse to come up with a plan that is successful for all.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Castlewood High School faculty and staff care about the holistic development and wellbeing of each student. While teachers and staff monitor each student's progress in the classroom, they also know students through coaching and mentorship. Ultimately, teachers provide students with an environment of rigor and support that students internalize by the end of their high school careers and which provides them both the confidence and ability to succeed after graduation.

There are many special facets of Castlewood High School that allow teachers and staff to know their students better than they might in other learning environments. Many high school teachers have known and coached students since they were in elementary. Having a single teacher per subject area allows teachers to know precisely where in their learning each student begins each year and then build on that individual ability. Being able to develop multi-year relationships with students allows teachers to assess student abilities and trajectories more accurately. Therefore, teachers can push students to their individual potentials and limits, providing them individualized opportunities even within entirely mixed-ability classes. At Castlewood, students aren't allowed to fall between the cracks: if problems or challenges that compromise student performance arise, teachers communicate both their observations and ideas for helping the students--both formally through problem-solving teams and informally. Each student has the entire high school faculty--and staff--looking out for them and helping them achieve their goals.

Students internalize these high expectations, holding not only themselves to them but also their peers, creating an entire school community that strives for excellence. Not only do Castlewood students look out for each other, they also hold each other to high standards. After spending multiple years together in the same class, students know the potentials of their classmates, and they challenge each other to reach those individual potentials. Students learn to act as an extended family: they look out for each other and support each other's endeavors in the classroom, on the field, and beyond. It is not uncommon to hear students ask each other during a study hall whether they have an assignment done--and if a student does not, his or her peers provide encouragement. At athletic events, it is the boys who regularly show up and root the loudest for our girls' teams and the girls do the same for the boys. This spirit of respect and enthusiastic support transcends every boundary in the school and provides students with a firm foundation on which they can build their futures.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The Castlewood School District utilizes multiple strategies to work with our families and community members for student success and school improvement. One of the most noteworthy and successful initiatives is the Castlewood Education Foundation, made up of community members, faculty, and staff. This is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization whose mission is to enhance, enrich, and encourage educational opportunities for all students in the Castlewood School District. CEF provides our students and staff with multiple scholarships and grants each year. Students in our fine arts programs who have been unable to purchase an instrument have been given the opportunity to participate through the Castlewood Education Foundation's instrument grants. Castlewood Education Foundation gives teachers in the school the opportunity to apply for grants that can be used to bring in outside speakers, presenters, and engagement opportunities for our students.

The Castlewood Education Organization, which is composed solely of staff and faculty members, supports our families by providing holiday food baskets, and scholarships for future educators. Further, there are several student organizations, such as the National Honor Society and Unified Champions, that provide myriad opportunities for students to work collaboratively to address community needs.

Because of these strategic organizations and partnerships, our school and community was quickly able to bounce back from tragedy when an F-2 tornado touched down and caused significant damage to multiple

homes and buildings. It was compelling to witness how we all came together in such a time of uncertainty. Out of the devastation, our school and community grew stronger and plans to rebuild are underway.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Castlewood's administration and school board are supportive of education. There have been open lines of communication with our administrators on various issues. Teachers have freedom to cover content standards in the way that both best serves their individual students and fits with the administration's collective overview. This allows teachers to cater both their curriculum and instruction to students' individual needs. Teachers feel supported by board members and trust that they have teachers' best interests in mind. Teachers are encouraged and actively supported in joining professional organizations and attending conferences that allow them to better hone their craft and support their students. Teacher in-services address the specific needs of students and faculty that arise throughout the year but also adhere to a cohesive school vision.

4. School Leadership:

Castlewood school leaders hold the challenge of leading the school district to become effective and productive learning environments. The Castlewood administration consists of one principal and district superintendent and are charged to clarify their own positions, beliefs, values, and beliefs to engage proactively with staff and to improve their schools. Castlewood school leaders must be effective in clear and direct communication with staff, stakeholders, and the Board of Education. Decisive and positive leadership is a must in running a school district. This must be a strength for a school leader. School leaders continue to be diligent about gaining a positive rapport with both certified and classified staff. Expectations extend to establishing conditions that foster personal empowerment and enhance development both inside and outside of the school environment. The Castlewood Administration works in strong alignment with the Board of Education to recommend policy, create successful academic programs, and approve a budget that can focus on student achievement.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Castlewood High School prides itself on the relationships created between students and staff. Every student has individual needs and together, we tackle meeting these needs. Culturally responsive teaching and learning are embraced at Castlewood High School.

Getting to know individual students is a critical part of designing lessons. Our teachers take it upon themselves to learn each student's behaviors, backgrounds, and challenges. Sharing and listening to students is a way for educators to validate culture and reinforce the value of culture in a community. Informal surveying of students as they enter the classroom creates a welcoming environment and allows the teacher to understand more about the student.

Teachers use various culturally responsive teaching strategies to ensure classroom equity, cultural awareness, and respect. The first strategy is drawing on prior knowledge so students contribute to class discussions. There are many diverse experiences that students are willing to share. Activating prior knowledge provides an avenue to learning for all involved. This not only encourages students to have a voice and share their cultural beliefs but makes the student an expert in their culture to their peers. Teachers will often find literature related to these beliefs or make connections in a history class to either introduce or support the cultural background. Teachers use these strategies to build relationships so all students feel valued.

Castlewood High School provides technology, individual instruction, and access to translators to support diverse language needs and preferences. Professional development is available for staff when the opportunity arises. Families are encouraged to attend Family Literacy Night to learn about additional resources and support provided for students.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

All stakeholders of Castlewood High School actively build and maintain strong, constructive relationships: in the classroom, in competition, in the community, and even beyond graduation. Though most subject areas are covered by a single teacher, no teacher is an island at Castlewood. Teachers constantly share best practices and strategies for teaching challenging skills and actively reaching students' interests and potentials. Between subject areas, departments, and programs, faculty support both student learning and each other.

Constructive relationships are also constantly reinforced and modeled for students. Students know that they must build a relationship with each teacher because they will have that same teacher throughout high school. Likewise, teachers know that they will invest not just a single year or semester but an entire high school career in each student. Treating each student-teacher relationship as a long-term investment, no one is allowed to slip through the cracks. Students and teachers know that they are in this learning journey together, which makes building a positive, professional, respectful rapport both easier and all the more important.

Students' participation in diverse activities connects them not only to a wide variety of students but also a wide range of teachers and coaches, both within the school and across the state. Teachers and coaches actively seek to engage students in clubs and activities. All teachers actively strive to find at least one "place" for each student where that student can learn and grow his or her individual talents and potential. This means that coaches and directors, regardless of their respective activities, actively promote each other's activities to students so that they can decide what is best for them. It also means that coaches make sure their players have the time and opportunity to participate in music and theater, and music and theater directors work with coaches to make sure practice and rehearsal schedules allow students to participate in multiple activities.

Ultimately, every person in the school--whether a teacher, para, custodian, cook, or bus driver--watches out for each student, holding them to high standards and providing support and encouragement. Though it takes a bit of extra sweat and stress, no one works for the sole benefit of a single activity or subject area: we know that we serve students best when we work together--and act accordingly.