

Lewis Central High School 2021 Exemplary High Performing Blue Ribbon School



This Highlight Story shares our application journey to becoming recognized by the State of Iowa and by the United States Department of Education.

Principal: Dr. Joel Beyenhof

Administrative Team: Joe Vinchattle, Jim Haver, Jim Dermody

Instructional Coaches: Lorraine Duitsman, Kim Muta, Christina Woodward

Lewis Central High School

3504 Harry Langdon Blvd.

Council Bluffs, IA 51503

What does it mean to be an Exemplary High Performing Blue Ribbon School?

"The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools based on their overall excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Every year, the U.S. Department of Education seeks out and celebrates great American schools, schools demonstrating that all students can achieve at high levels. Now in its 39th year, this program has bestowed more than 10,000 awards to over 9,000 schools, with some winning multiple awards. This coveted award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content." *U.S. Dept. of Ed*



- **Lewis Central is one of the best schools in the nation according to the US Dept. of Education!**
- "Being selected is proof that having high expectations yields excellence."
Principal Dr. Beyenhof
- **This is the first time in Lewis Central's school history that we have received this recognition.**
- We are the only Southwest Iowa high school to have ever won this award.
- Only one other high school in the Hawkeye 10 has ever won this award.
- We are the only Council Bluffs high school to have earned this distinction.
- Schools must be invited to apply based on the Iowa School Performance Profile.
- Schools may only be selected once every 5 years.
- The rigorous application process involves summarizing school data, achievement gains, instruction, and student and community supports.
- A team of administrators, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders assisted with this process.

To watch the 2021 National Blue Ribbon Announcement, follow this link to YouTube.

The video includes a speech and our school name and photo.



LCHS Demographics

Number of Schools in the District:

2 Elementary

1 Middle School

1 High School

LCHS is an Urban School

October 1, 2020 Enrollment by grade :

9th 260

10th 216

11th 245

12th or higher 219

Total Students 940

Racial/Ethnic Composition

.4% American Indian or Alaskan Native

.7% Asian

1.8% Black or African American

10.3% Hispanic or Latino

0% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

82.6% White

4.2% Two or more races

English Language Learners (ELL in school)

6%, 58 Total number ELL

Students eligible for free/reduced lunch status 33%, 309

Students receiving special education services: 15%, 140 Total number served

Number of years the principal has been in his position at LCHS: 9 years

Administration



Dr. Joel
Beyenhof
Head Principal

Joe Vinchattle
Assistant
Principal

Jim Haver
Assistant
Principal

Jim Dermody
Activities
Director

Average student-classroom teacher ratio: 34:1

Daily Attendance Rates & Graduation Rates

School Information	'19-'20	'18-'19	'17-'18	'16-'17	'15-'16
Daily Attendance	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
Graduation Rate	98%	96%	92%	93%	93%

Post Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	236
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	34%
Enrolled in a community college	41%
Enrolled in a career/technical training program	8%
Found employment	9%
Joined the military or other public service	8%
Other	0%

Our Mission and Vision Statement at LCHS:

In the fall of 2021, we adopted the motto of Lewis Central High School, **"A Community of Excellence!"** A successful community includes people working together, having a shared vision, and supporting each other and our students!

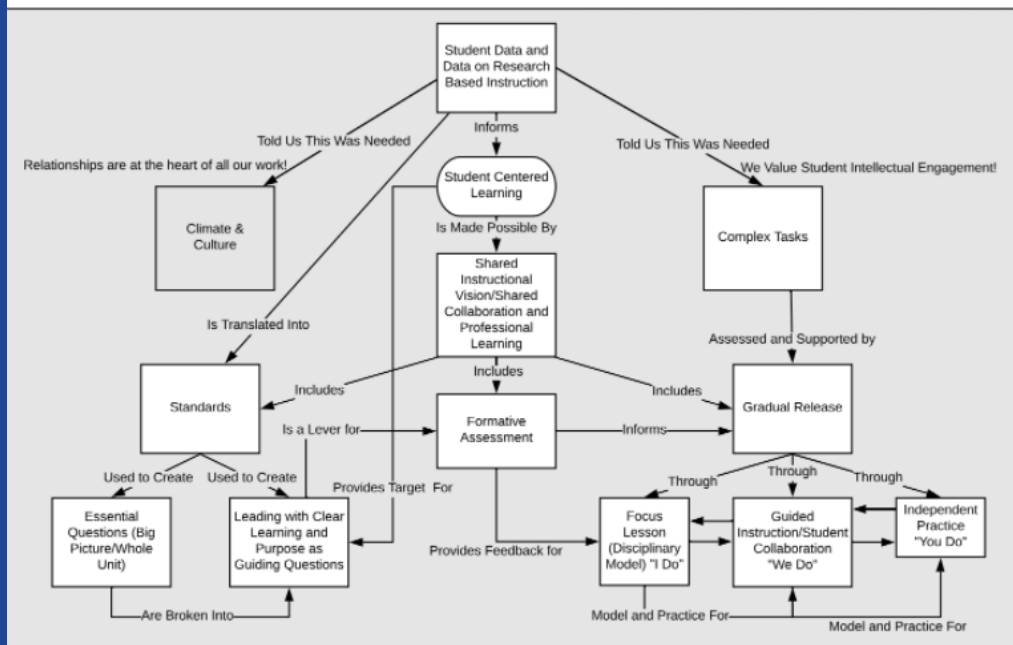
A Strategic Focus on Student Success

Strategically, prior to the 2020-21 school year, the administrative team collaborated to ensure the success of students in the upcoming school year. Through the spring of the 2020 pandemic virtual learning of our whole school, we provided students with enrichment-based learning followed by competency-based testing to earn credit. Students who did not attain credit were then given the opportunity to participate in learning recovery summer school. Testing data was used to create individualized learning plans for students based on course standards and competencies. Two sessions of summer school were offered, an increase from our typical offering. Summer 2020 positioned our students to stay on track with their learning and graduation credits earned. This included roughly 1900 high school credits attempted and over 1600 credits earned in summer school. In the 2020-21 school year, we operated primarily as usual with 90-95% of students in-person all year. Simultaneously, we provided remote learning options for students and families requesting remote status. Teachers have made use of Zoom, Google Classroom, Edgenuity, packet work, and PickATime conferencing with parents to support learning. Innovation, resourcefulness, and our collective efforts as a community have helped us ensure student success and graduation.



Relationships, Resilience, Results

LCHS believes that the three R's (Relationships, Resilience, and Results) are critical for success in school and in life. As a school, we use numerous student achievement indicators as Results to measure the impact of our actions and challenge our students to do the same with their own achievement data. With any lofty goal, we will most definitely be forced to work, think, and act out of our comfort zone, and it is in these times we all must demonstrate Resilience to persevere through adversity and achieve success. For some students, that means that they may need extra support. We lead with and know that Relationships are the key to success for our students and staff alike. **Our Shared Instructional Vision is our recipe for student success.** Components came together slowly over the past nine years, but now we are reaping the benefits. **(See Instructional Vision Map components below.)** Each high-effect size instructional practice represents an area of diligent work on the part of the staff to bring about student learning and achievement. Relationships are the foundation of all that we do, as evidenced by the map below in gray. For example, **quality assessment** includes relationships: helping students understand their performance in relationship to our **learning goals** (standards) and **success criteria** (rubrics/grading) and providing **actionable feedback** to help students improve over time. **Through Gradual Release of Responsibility, we set students up for success:** clearly communicating intended learning goals with learning questions, modeling our thinking about approaching complex tasks, and providing guided practice and student collaboration with lower stake assignments. This ensures students can reach high levels of performance in independent practice and new applications.



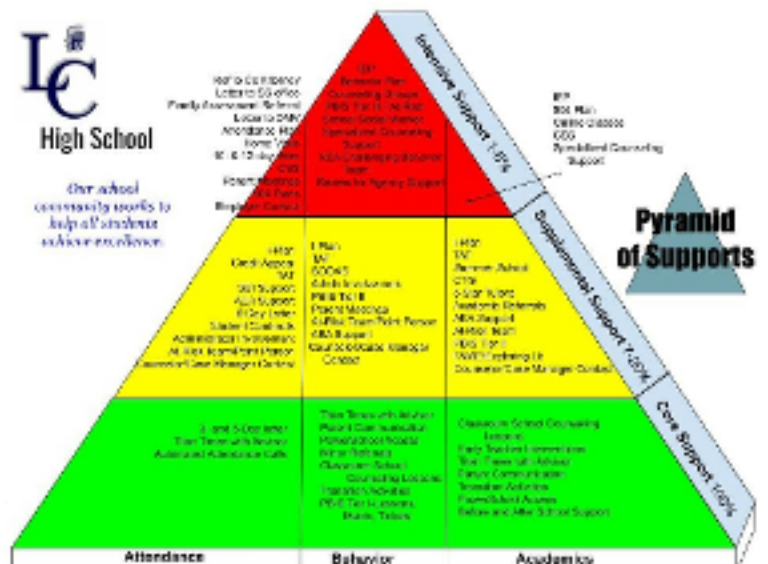
With our Shared Instructional Vision, we develop passionate, innovative, adaptable learners prepared to embrace the challenges of the future and make a positive difference in their community.

Meeting Student Needs with our Pyramid of Supports

In a day and age in which many school districts and high schools have alternative schools for some of their most at-risk students, we have elected not to use such a model, but rather to emphasize our Multi-Tiered System of Supports as part of our Pyramid of Supports, which is driven by academic, attendance, and behavior data.

The key to our success is working hard to ensure that our core supports are provided to all students. To avoid having students falling through the cracks, we run three-week reports on academic, attendance, and behavior. If a student surpasses the predetermined threshold for any two of the three categories, they are placed on our "deuce" list and assigned a point person to ensure interventions are implemented from our Pyramid of Supports. If they surpass the threshold in all three categories, they are placed on the "trifecta" list, and like the deuce list, they have a point person. In addition, we create a Pyramid Plan for the student. The goal is to intervene as quickly as possible and provide the support and interventions to the student to get them back on track. For our most challenging students, we add mental health supports through group counseling, specialized individual counseling, and therapy support from our partnership with outside agencies.

These supports have moved our graduation rate from 83.6% in 2011 to 96% in 2019 and 97.8% in 2020. This systems approach to improving graduation rates and student learning has also resulted in an 8-year average of 94% for our 4-year graduation rate.



Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

Standards & Learning Questions:

Lewis Central adheres to a backwards design process (focused on the goals for student learning first and then the intentional actions to achieve those goals). This is combined with Concept Based Instruction (Dr. Lynn Erickson), Understanding by Design (Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe), and uses **state-mandated content** as well as **local standards developed by the state, national, and industry standards**.

Units of instruction are built using standards, focused on important concepts and relationships among those concepts. Aiming for transfer, we intentionally consider the insights a learner gains by doing the work of comprehending.

Essential Questions pull students forward toward the big ideas and "Enduring Understandings" and provoke continuous inquiry.

Standards are communicated to students through learning questions and teachers use both Essential (overarching unit) and Guided (daily lesson) questions as a lever for formative assessment (to find out what students know, can do, and understand).


Questions put teachers and students in a "learning stance," as they monitor student progress toward goals before, during, and after learning.

Collaboration and Assessment

PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) use a comprehensive assessment model that includes common formative and summative assessments within departments and like courses to make unit-based and course-level decisions.

Work also includes the use of pre-assessment. Technology tools and reports using platforms such as Illuminate allow us to identify student learning needs quickly and intervene in timely and systematic ways. They allow us to collaborate with colleagues, including specialists. **PLC learning and instructional actions are directly tied not only to student data but also to our instructional vision.**

Instructional Leaders Keep the Focus on our Vision & Students

The instructional vision is based on some of the work by Fisher and Frey's Gradual Release of Responsibility model and grounded in Hattie's work around high-effect size instructional practices such as student-teacher relationships, leading with clear targets, formative assessment, modeling with examples of strong work, and guided and independent practice. The vision emphasizes the use of student data to drive instructional planning. All of these components go into our planning, instruction, and assessment. **Administration uses a student-centered walk-through process tied to our instructional vision. Feedback is provided to teachers in relationship to "look-fors" that include both teacher and student evidence.** Walk-through letters shared with the whole staff highlight building-wide best practices of high-effect size instructional actions and support teachers in higher levels of implementation. These walk-through letters assist teachers in reflecting on their own instruction and include strong examples from classrooms. Observations, student interviews, videos, and pictures may provide evidence of teaching and learning. Instructional leadership continually directs teacher attention back to our vision and our goal of reaching higher levels of student success. **View an Example of a Walk-Through Letter.** 

**We use teacher and student
"Walk-Through" Look-For's.**

**We learn from
Feedback, Reflection &
Strong Examples**

Fast Forward!

Our Fast Forward! Initiative has a goal of 95% or more of our graduates having plans to attend a 4-year college, 2-year college, vocational school, trade school, apprenticeship, or branch of the military. To assist with this goal, we utilize Iowa Kuder Navigator software to help students explore their interests, strengths, and career investigations to help with course selection and aid in planning. We also host a college fair and a trades fair. Students are required to take either College Readiness or Workplace Readiness which helps them further develop their post-secondary plans. Career and Technical Education is important to us at LCHS. We partner with Iowa Western Community College, Career EdVantage, and Pottawattamie Promise for coursework, apprenticeships, and scholarship opportunities. **Our Nationally Distinguished Project Lead the Way Engineering Program** also prepares students for careers in technical and engineering fields. We also offer capstone Advanced Placement (AP) coursework in core subject areas to provide another avenue for advanced placement or credit earning beyond high school. **Did You Know? The graduating class of 2021 earned 1,669 post-secondary credits. Average credits earned per student is 12.** 136 students earned IWCC credit! Of the 179 total graduating students in the class of 2021: 136 (76%) earned at least 3 credits; 72 (40%) earned 12 or more credits; 30 (17%) earned 18 or more; and 9 (5%) earned 24 or more. **Our 5 year averages for IWCC concurrent enrollments are as follows: approximately 75% of graduates have earned 3 or more college credits before graduating. Well over 40% of students have graduated with a semester's worth of credits or more** (based on 12 credits per trimester).

Career Pathway Articulations with IWCC - Through our partnership with IWCC we have identified 12 different pathways in which LCHS students can accelerate their learning. Our current pathways and articulations include the areas of Accounting, Advanced Nurse Assistant, Automotive Technology, CNC Machining, Construction, Culinary Arts, Electrical Technology, Industrial Engineering Technology, Information Technology, Marketing, Media Studies, and Welding. Students are able to participate in these pathways while attending both LCHS and IWCC for classes. It is also possible for a student to advance their program and potentially graduate not only from LCHS, but also earn a diploma, certificate, or associate's degree from IWCC in the same time frame.

Academic Support

Collaborative school actions with the focus on improvement have led us to becoming recognized as an Exemplary High Performing Blue Ribbon School.
We have...

...proactively reached out to our AEA to participate in a Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAMI) with our Building Leadership Team. Increased programming, data gathering, progress monitoring, and instructional support have been put into place with reading, math, and science.

...completed a district evaluation of our Talented and Gifted (TAG) program. We identified action steps to improve student outcomes and increase efforts to identify and serve underrepresented subgroups. Our high school High Ability Learners team (HAL) also reviews data and supports student achievement by encouraging involvement in advanced coursework and supporting school-wide differentiation.

...undergone extensive program development with our intervention model for at-risk students. This includes proactively identifying students with risk factors for drop-out and matching those students with credit recovery, credit success, and academic, social, and emotional supports. We made the decision as a district and school to meet the range of our learner needs within our building and not to create an alternative school. Instead, we aggressively intervene when students are having difficulty. Our At-Risk Team makes use of data to monitor students and intervene systematically when students rise in two (deuce) or three (trifecta) indicators. This team approach to using data allows us to move through a checklist of supports and match student needs to assistance effectively. PBIS teams also meet at least once monthly to intervene with school and student needs.

...participated in an action planning process with Level 3 Special Education teachers and school leaders to improve courses and curriculum, increase literacy materials, and support students with workplace and career skills.

School Climate & Culture

Engaging Students, Family, and Community

We lead with relationships. Our staff works hard to exhibit care and compassion, beginning with greeting all students at the door before each class. Additionally, the staff has developed the habit of sending "Good News" postcards home to students. By the end of each school year, 100% of students have received at least one card. Titan Times (advisory) period is devoted in large part to social-emotional learning with lessons on coping, character, and respect for others as well as more academically-focused lessons on managing time and knowing how to study. We identify students who are at risk of dropping out or not graduating, and we partner them with teacher-mentors.

We also have a deliberate and compassionate approach to addressing difficult situations with our students. First, we address the traumatic experience in small groups with teachers presenting a unified message. Second, we bring outside agencies in to help our guidance staff provide mental health services and grief counseling. Next, we bring the entire community together to help those who are greatly affected by the tragedy. When the situation concerns one student, we use a solution-based counseling approach that begins with a SODAS conversation: situation, options, disadvantages, advantages, and solution. All of these efforts support our goals of high engagement and increased resilience in students.

We pair social-emotional learning with academics, and so teachers use learning questions and social goals to create clear targets, which immediately engages students. Teachers continue to use those questions to formatively assess students and provide timely feedback, which gives teachers insight into student results and motivates students to continue their work. The administrative team uses walk-throughs to gauge student understanding of the questions and the place of those questions in their learning.

We also make use of a Parent Input Group and a Student Input Group. The make-up of the families invited represents the various demographics of our school population. These groups provide input on current initiatives for growth and refinement, along with input on the planning and implementation of new programs. In addition, like our Building Leadership Team, they review various data sets to keep informed on our successes and identify opportunities to improve.

Leading with Excellence

Professional Culture -Creating a professional culture is done through the lens of setting high expectations around clear targets. The 3 Rs of Relationships, Resilience, and Results are at the heart of our work. Relationships are fostered through staff writing True Titan cards for colleagues, sharing of good news at staff meetings, and reporting out Mission Moments. Teacher/Staff of the Month recognition, teacher leaders presenting during professional learning, and frequent administrator walk-throughs in classrooms all contribute to our goal of building healthy relationships. The LC walk-through rubric design, which is directly linked to the instructional vision, is grounded in an instructional leadership philosophy of teacher development and is student centered. The rubric's interactive design provides strong examples of high-effect size instructional practices through short video clips, linked resources and instructional playbooks, all making the shared instructional vision accessible for classroom implementation. Administration backs the walk-through rubric up with a letter that highlights teachers taking risks in their classroom and implementing practices with fidelity, ultimately producing increased student results. Teachers at LCHS have a minimum of one contractual evaluation observation, but our building expectation is two. Teachers may opt to substitute one of those two observations for a full coaching cycle, which engages teachers and coaches in learning around a teacher-selected goal and student evidence. Collective walk-through data determines our professional learning needs.

Culturally Responsive Teaching & Learning -In an effort to reach all students--and therefore be as equitable as possible--we use frequent formative assessment, pre-testing, and support individual learning needs of students. Common teacher formative and summative assessments help ensure equitable learning experiences from classroom to classroom across our building. Our greatest differences are mostly socio-economic. We support these needs through Teammates and PBIS Mentoring. Thriving Titans helps all of our students and their families have basic needs met such as food and clothing. Each year, we hold a Respect Retreat and use character education in Titan Times lessons. We also encourage cultural diversity in classroom readings and instruction schoolwide.

Strategy for Academic Success

Maintaining high expectations for students and teachers has been the single most important practice that has led to our increased student achievement.

By building **relationships** with students, we are able to keep expectations high and respond to learner needs, even when learning can be difficult. Additionally, we have been **resilient** in times of difficulty, such as the pandemic, by working in collaboration with each other in **a student-centered culture**. With a focus on **results**, we continually reflect on our instructional practices from our vision. One such practice is the use of **complex text**. All teachers are expected to help students learn to navigate text in their particular field of study. All Titan Time classes also read one period per week. We know that reading is the gatekeeper to all subject areas, and that without reading skills, students will face many challenges. **Making use of student-centered instructional coaching, PLCs, leadership teams, counseling staff, community resources, and our Pyramid of Supports, we have found solutions to challenges. Collective efficacy, our shared belief that we can address any obstacle in our path, lies at the heart of our "Community of Excellence."** We have never wavered from our focus on student outcomes and the expectation that all students need to demonstrate proficiency or above. What we have changed is our approach to helping students and teachers meet those high expectations. We have applied some of our at-risk program principles to more students: providing students more time and flexibility to reach those expectations, differentiating learning paths, leveraging pre-assessment and compacting, using technology, scaffolding, additional resources, and personnel to connect with and intervene to help students. We don't see academics and social-emotional learning as an "or" situation; we see it as "and," meaning we prioritize both in learning. Instructional coaches and leadership teams support staff in meeting high expectations and the needs of their learners by utilizing technology, assessment tools, and responding to data from their classrooms. In this support of teachers, there has been a balance between autonomy and dependence on high-effect size instructional practices. Consistency with high expectations and relationships for teachers & students has created a safe, predictable learning environment at LCHS.

A Community of Excellence built by... Relationships, Resilience, & Results



**Thank you to our students, educators,
families, and community!**



We are Inspiring Excellence!

