



# LEWISTOWN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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## ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

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This school year in many respects was outstanding, but for clear reasons it finished as one of our most challenging ones. Lewistown Junior High was rolling along having an excellent year focused on finding and maintaining academic successes in and out of the classroom. We were also focused on our MTSS goals and processes and felt we set see many positives in our assessments this spring. The loss of one of our freshman at the beginning of October was a major loss to students and staff but reminded us of how important student and teacher relationships are in our work. Addressing student needs and building student and teacher relationships became a part of almost all of our work.

However, on March 12<sup>th</sup> everything changed. The declaration of a state of emergency and Executive Orders 2-2020 and 3-2020 mandating the Stay at Home Directive shifted all most all of our focus into distance learning and what that meant for home learners, for our curriculum and for our expectations.

We still kept the realities of student growth and transition in our work but we were hard pressed to address attendance, as we should have, as well, our focus to promote positive student attitudes and behaviors was very difficult long distance. In the first three quarters our morning advisory and homeroom was a positive start to the day for students and staff. That 25-minute period enabled students to get a few homework needs taken care of, but provided opportunities for addressing school climate and student performance. The multiple focuses of advisory included:

- Teacher/student conferences.
- Whole class discussions on specific school climate and personal goals topics.
- Time for students to take surveys, finish homework and connect with the student portal for assignment and grade updates.
- Grade level meetings for planning and discussion of student performance.
- Math and English intervention time for our Tier 2 and 3 student support outside of the classroom.
- Assembly time to recognize academic, activity and attendance awards.

As in the previous year, this Annual Report is organized to reflect the goals of the district as seen through the eyes of the Junior High staff.

### **DISTRICT GOAL AREA 1: MEASURABLE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

Overall achievement comes from more than just the results of criterion referenced testing. Achievement can be measured through:

- Students' ability and desire to attend school on a regular basis
- Daily classroom performance

- NWEA/MAP testing results in the Fall, Winter, and Spring
- Criterion Reference Testing through MontCAS and SBAC testing
- Behavior incidents, both positive and negative
- Intervention effectiveness

1. Daily Attendance –LJHS continues to emphasize to parents and students the importance of regular attendance. The majority of student attendance continues to be very positive; however, the number of students with chronic absenteeism continues to be a national issue. We use an approach modified from the organization Attendance Matters. Our goals for the year were to:
  - a. Provide incentives to reward and encourage good attendance
  - b. Provide tools to assist parents in getting their child to school
  - c. Provide tools to assist students in getting to school

To promote daily attendance we recognized students at the end of each quarter for the first three quarters to perfect and outstanding attendance. Obviously, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter attendances taken from virtual class video sessions or meetings was not addressed in a meaningful way with Infinite Campus. We did consider using a COVID grading task that was promoted by Campus, but chose left it out to prevent confusion when compared to our regular grading tasks and groups

We still believe efforts to positively address attendance is proven to be more productive than any plan based on punishment and missing assignments alone and our statistics are very good when it comes to attendance.

The chart below shows the excellence of our overall enrollment and attendance figures for this school year.

	<b>Oct 1 Enrollment</b>	<b>Feb 1 Enrollment</b>	<b>May 30 Enrollment</b>	<b>Overall % Attendance</b>
<b>7th Grade</b>	80	82	80	94.95%
<b>8th Grade</b>	107	105	106	95.18%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>95.08%</b>

	<b>Student Attendance Percentages (by Level)</b>				
	<b>0% to 80%</b>	<b>80% to 85%</b>	<b>85% to 90%</b>	<b>90% to 95%</b>	<b>Above 95%</b>
<b>7th Grade</b>	2.4%	1.2%	6.0%	27.7%	62.7%
<b>8th Grade</b>	3.6%	0.9%	6.3%	29.7%	60.4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>60.7%</b>

## 2. Classroom Performance

One of the most effective tools for assessing student progress is through continuous monitoring of daily instruction. Formative assessments on a regular basis provide much data for teachers to use to monitor student progress. Likewise regular classroom assignments give students additional time to apply the learned material, and augments what teachers need to assess their instruction and adapt their lessons.

Almost all students strive to make good grades and according to a recent parent survey, most parents reward their children for having good grades but sometimes getting the work done for those grades can be difficult for middle school students. At LJHS, we stress the importance of organization and the need to complete assignments in a timely manner. Students are required to purchase an accordion folder and use a school provided planning book that fits inside the folder.

For many students the use of individual study hall periods is an important time to complete their work as well as attendance in our After School Learning Center. Teachers utilize the Missing Assignment indicator Infinite Campus helps provide student feedback on work completion. Students who have 5 or more missing assignments are targeted for extra support using their lunch period, the After School Learning Center, Saturday School sessions, as well as extra time during field days or student activity periods. These incentives, along with in staff support within the schools has helped many students make what can be a difficult transition in to a secondary school expectation of students being responsible for their own learning by getting assignments completed.

Honor Roll – Making the honor roll is a strong motivator for our students and a majority of our students are on the honor roll. McDonald’s is a great partner in helping us honor our students within the school and the community as they sponsor the LJHS Honor Roll each quarter in the Lewistown NewsArgus.

This recognition rewards students for the hard work it takes to receive excellent grades. At the end of each quarter, we post the names of students who have met one of the four levels of the Lewistown Junior High School Honor Roll. Here is the data from our honor roll.

**Overall Honor Roll Data**

A Honor Roll	Quarter Totals			
	One	Two	Three	Four
7th Grade	12	8	7	11
8th Grade	33	25	19	24

A- Honor Roll	Quarter Totals			
	One	Two	Three	Four
7th Grade	20	16	15	22
8th Grade	22	24	26	27

B+ Honor Roll	Quarter Totals			
	One	Two	Three	Four
7th Grade	14	9	15	12
8th Grade	22	26	15	13

B Honor Roll	Quarter Totals			
	One	Two	Three	Four
7th Grade	12	9	15	5
8th Grade	20	13	12	8

**Total Students Honored**

	Quarter Totals			
	One	Two	Three	Four
7th Grade	58	42	52	50
8th Grade	97	88	72	72
Totals	155	130	124	122

	Quarter Percentages			
	One	Two	Three	Four
7th Grade	73.4%	51.2%	64.2%	62.5%
8th Grade	90.7%	83.8%	67.9%	67.9%
Totals	85.6%	71.0%	69.7%	68.9%

Academic Awards - At the end of the school year, LJHS recognizes students with a plaque or trophy who have maintained a grade point average of 3.667 or higher throughout the school year. The following table indicates the number of students who meet the minimum requirement of a 3.667 GPA:

### **First Year Recipients**

7th Grade – 22 students

8th Grade – 8 students

### **Second Year Recipients**

8th Grade – 36 students

Renaissance Program – The Renaissance Program has been used for many years at both the junior high and high school for additional support and recognition of the importance of achievement and the meeting of high academic standards. As in the past, this program recognizes students who maintain high grades, and/or make significant improvements in their grades with extra privileges and rewards from many local partners and businesses. There are three different levels of Renaissance awards.

Gold Card      Students with a 4.0 GPA or increased GPA by 1.0

Blue Card      Students with a GPA between a 3.50 and 3.99 or a GPA increase of 0.75

Silver Card     Students with a GPA between 3.49 and 3.00 or a GPA increase of 0.50

### 3. Student Assessment – District and State

The Lewistown Public Schools has a tradition of utilizing curriculum assessments to support individual teaching and learning in the classroom. We know that students learn better, when teachers have a clear picture of what a student knows and can do. Over the years, many of our assessments were difficult to write effectively and data to monitor classroom progress was difficult to obtain. The Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) fills that role today for the school district by providing a precise way for the teachers and administrators to measure an individual student's academic level and growth. This reality is even more important with our current COVID environment, but there was no ability to MAP test remotely. That will not be true next year, as the Northwest Evaluation Association has developed the ability to test students that are at home.

In a similar fashion, the state also expects schools to participate in statewide testing to monitor the progress of schools. Even though we know these tests they are far less effective in helping staff monitor individual student progress, they do have a place in supporting schools on a statewide bases. There are many statewide testing programs. Ones for English language learners, another for students with learning disabilities and the more familiar Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC) for all students in testing science, mathematics and English, Language Arts and Literacy.

#### NWEA's Measure of Academic Progress – Winter Data

MAP assessment data is the gold standard when it comes to reliable and verifiable assessment information for Junior High students. Data from these assessments provide information to important making classroom and school decisions to keep student academic growth our top priority. Due to distance learning, there is no data for this spring, but when we look at our winter data, we see significant growth in our scores. For example, when we look at our 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in comparison to their group percentages from last spring MAP score percentages increased 6% in math and 3% in reading without the benefit of normal spring growth. It is too bad we were unable to see what their true growth would have been. Following is the group percentages of MAP assessment data from this past winter.

## 7th Grade

Growth: Math 6+ CCSS 2010 V2 / Common Core State Standards Mathematics: 2010									
Mean RIT									230.6
Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									228.6
Students At or Above Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									57
Lo %ile < 21		LoAvg %ile 21-40		Avg %ile 41-60		HiAvg %ile 61-80		Hi %ile > 80	
count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%
11	14%	11	14%	20	25%	21	27%	16	20%

Growth: Reading 6+ CCSS 2010 V3 / Common Core State Standards English Language Arts/Literacy: 2010									
Mean RIT									222.1
Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									218.2
Students At or Above Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									68
Lo %ile < 21		LoAvg %ile 21-40		Avg %ile 41-60		HiAvg %ile 61-80		Hi %ile > 80	
count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%
9	11%	14	17%	12	15%	27	33%	19	23%

Growth: Language 2-12 CCSS 2010 V2 / Common Core State Standards English Language Arts/Literacy: 2010									
Mean RIT									219.7
Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									217.6
Students At or Above Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									66
Lo %ile < 21		LoAvg %ile 21-40		Avg %ile 41-60		HiAvg %ile 61-80		Hi %ile > 80	
count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%
6	8%	13	16%	12	15%	27	34%	21	27%

## 8th Grade

Growth: Math 6+ CCSS 2010 V2 / Common Core State Standards Mathematics: 2010									
Mean RIT									239.1
Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									230.9
Students At or Above Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									50
Lo %ile < 21		LoAvg %ile 21-40		Avg %ile 41-60		HiAvg %ile 61-80		Hi %ile > 80	
count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%
8	8%	17	16%	24	23%	19	18%	36	35%

Growth: Reading 6+ CCSS 2010 V3 / Common Core State Standards English Language Arts/Literacy: 2010									
Mean RIT									225.8
Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									220.1
Students At or Above Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									53
Lo %ile < 21		LoAvg %ile 21-40		Avg %ile 41-60		HiAvg %ile 61-80		Hi %ile > 80	
count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%
9	9%	10	10%	24	23%	28	27%	34	32%

Growth: Language 2-12 CCSS 2010 V2 / Common Core State Standards English Language Arts/Literacy: 2010									
Mean RIT									225
Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									219
Students At or Above Norm Grade Level Mean RIT									51
Lo %ile < 21		LoAvg %ile 21-40		Avg %ile 41-60		HiAvg %ile 61-80		Hi %ile > 80	
count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%
7	7%	14	14%	14	14%	36	35%	32	31%

## MontCAS Science

The MontCAS testing for Science was to change from the paper test used in previous years to an online assessment. This spring we were to pilot an additional Smarter Balance science assessment. However, because of the distance learning during 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, the state decided against having the students take that assessment. Next school year we will be live with our science assessment occurring as a part of the Smarter Balanced assessments. This test will be tied to the Next Generation Science Standards, much as the ELA and math are tied to the Common Core State Standards.

### Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC) Summary Data from 2019

Rather than show data that has no results or is a year old, we will just mention that the data from 2019 did have improvements from spring data of 2018. Those improvements were the result of last year's change in assessment structure that had students' test consistently each Wednesday to minimize classroom disruptions. The goal was also to prevent test weariness, or concerns with students that either lose interest, or are not able to focus during the stress of taking multiple tests over a short time period. We believe results from maintaining our learning environment in the spring during all these assessments provide results that are more indicative of what our students know and are capable of doing. With those changes, last year's scores matched what was predicted we should expect from our students.

#### 4. Student Behavior/School Climate

In the last few years, we placed more emphasis on recognizing students for their positive behaviors by using staff issued SOAR tickets. Some of these awards include monthly drawings for cash prizes or small rewards around the school based on student input.

Another way of recognizing good behavior was through weekly LJHS positive impact postcards. Each week during our grade level meetings, teachers selected at least three students who demonstrated positive behaviors and sent a postcard home to parents. We also utilized the A+ Award this year as we recognized both 7th and 8th grade students for their performance in Academics, Activities, and Electives.

One of the requirements of all MTSS programs is to monitor Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs). This year we again utilized a Google form to allow teachers to quickly record discipline incidents. The results were not always positive but did showed data staff can use to monitor behaviors and incidents in comparison to previous years. Our most frequent behaviors continue to be related to classroom disruption and respect issues. The unauthorized use of electronic devices is also an area of concern, but is generally monitored effectively at the classroom level.

The school climate continues to be a strength of the Junior High. Our advisory period plays an important role in creating a sense of belonging and community for the students. It was also a way students could connect to with one teacher as a "go to" person, if needed. Student email is used as a direct link to teachers, but especially to our counselor, Teresa Majerus. Mrs. Majerus also works with our Health Enhancement teachers (Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Johnson) to provide the "Power Up, Speak Out" program to all students through their classes. This valuable program helps students better understand healthy relationships and gives them a common language when addressing

boundaries. Mrs. Majerus also worked with them to obtain a grant to provide additional supports for students and staff with the Power Up, Speak Out program over the next five years.

Other impacts on school climate this year have been use of the MyVoice survey data with the student body. The school has utilized MyVoice survey's in the past, but this year the MTSS team targeted specific information from the survey concerning several aspects of student respect and their thoughts on addressing concerns with student boredom. Staff directly involved boy and girl groups from the 8th grade to discuss the findings and to break down the information with students to better understand and use the results to make changes in the school. Included in that process was a survey for LJHS students addressing topics that came from our MyVoice work. A simple change in our morning schedule this year was the result of this work and additional direction from students to staff was provided concerning a lack of electives and general student expectations.

And, while we did not have a formal training for staff this year, teachers continued to have discussions about student trauma and how to understand what students go through who have experienced childhood adversities. Last summer we made for available staff, a training on a culture of safety with trauma informed practices.

## 5. Academic Interventions/Curriculum

An important piece of effective intervention and curricular decision-making is the evaluation of student data using our MAP scores in coordination with a personalized learning tool called iXL.

Initially iXL was used on an intervention only basis but 2 years ago, we incorporated this personalized learning tool into all of our English, Spanish and math classes. iXL uses student data to accelerate student achievement. It is available on any online device or as an app to allow students to work to master skills anytime, anywhere. The curriculum is compatible with ours offering personalized skill recommendations based on what each student has been practicing, so they can grow from where they are.

We still use iXL for interventions, but because it is an integral part of our regular coursework, the extra time a student has to use it is more impactful. Students who had MAP scores identifying them as a Tier 2 or 3 student were required to work on iXL a minimum of one day a week during Advisory. Teachers supervised and monitored student progress and MAP scores to determine the level of student involvement with the intervention. Students were exited from the program if their MAP scores increased to a Tier 1 level.

This extra time allowed students to focus and improve phonics, reading comprehension, writing strategies proportional relationships, linear functions, and essential math skills. All with real-world narratives.

Once students make the connections with iXL and skill development, MAP scores consistently grew and confidence and skills improved. This spring we were disappointed not being able to compare MAP growth this spring because we did see significant growth this winter. We are confident with three more months of school they would have shown many successes.

Additionally, iXL provided much needed online support for our classes during our fourth quarter of distance learning.

Another support we are continuing is the student data tool Tier Tracker, which is used to house student MAP test scores. The Tier Tracker was utilized throughout the year, especially when new data was entered, to monitor student progress and make academic decisions.

### Types of Incentives and Support Systems

During this school year, we continued several additional homework support systems and added strategies. Below is a list of measures we take to assist students with understanding the material and completing homework:

- a. Missing Assignments/Saturday School – Some students have demonstrated a difficult time managing their assignments and tend to let missing work mount to an unmanageable level. As mentioned earlier in this report, the Missing Assignments program has been an incentive for students to keep up with their work on a weekly basis. However, this intervention was not available for students distance learning this spring.
- b. After School Learning Center (ASLC) – Our after school program continues to provide a focused study environment for students who are unable to get work done at home.
- c. Study Hall – Our study hall continues to be an effective opportunity for students to get additional time to complete assignments and to work on organizational skills. Our study hall teachers utilized the Missing Assignments feature in Infinite Campus to help students track their assignments.
- d. Advisory – A major goal of Advisory is relationship development. Teachers are expected to connect with their students and open the door to discuss their strengths and concerns. We ask teachers to track that information and support them as they start the day.
- e. Level specific courses - In the subjects of Math and English, we utilize our assessment data to place students in different ability leveled classes. This placement process allows us to address the specific needs of students in a smaller setting. It also allows use to identify for inclusion of middle and upper Tier 2 reading and language arts students to move them back to the regular English and math classes to better prepare them for the high school.
- f. One-on-one instruction – Our teachers work hard to help students beyond the classroom. Teachers frequently and consistently spend time with students during their lunches, before school, or after school to help students who are struggling with a concept or engagement.

## **DISTRICT GOAL AREA 2: FACILITIES**

With the District's facilities assessment review process a year ago with CTA, new priorities were made concerning maintenance and safety needs here at the Junior High. As our building nears its centennial (100<sup>th</sup>) birthday, we look to make continual minor improvements to the building itself, and as always, hope we can continue to make it more accessible and efficient for students.

As you know, a couple of summers ago, our basement flooded a couple of times. In recognizing minor changes outside the building to help prevent flooding in the future, we also focused on the need to make changes to include or incorporated this part of the grounds into the Campus. The need to improve lines of sight around the outside of the building is now a priority of the school that has the support of the Board and District. Moreover, we are tickled it is being addressed this summer as we believe the improvement of this area will create an area for students to use, rather than a place students are prevented from using.

Therefore, we believe the school climate will improve as we open up this part of our campus. Kudos to the Board and administration for helping make this needed change.

However, we have been less than successful adding cameras to improve the safety and security for students. While there are installation concerns due to the age of the building, it is in part because of that age and its design, that this change is needed. We cannot see who comes into the building much less monitor who leaves and we cannot go back and review student behaviors when away from teachers inside or outside of the building. It is not a change that needs a bond election to initiate a solution, and is imperative to address it in the near future. Smaller scale camera systems are not expensive and need to be added to the school as requested. Likewise, we need to address a failing phone system to improve communications within the building and guarantee needed communications to and from the building for student safety.

As there has been in the past, discussions of a possible move of the sixth grade to the Junior High will come up again in the future. Nevertheless, before it becomes a reality, the need to study of that change and its impact on our all students need to be a priority. How we provide services to all students needs to be addressed. Concerns include: how we would find enough classroom space for an additional grade, how the building would need to be modified to support them, and how to address and improve the limited career and technical courses we currently have in our curriculum. At best, current classroom space for science is inadequate and the gym does not support full classes and is a poor lunchroom. Much classroom space still does not have adequate egress. The safety concerns listed in the previous paragraphs also must be addressed. Without resolution to those issues over time, it would not be responsible to add additional students into the Junior High. Comparable recent changes show that addressing student needs now can have a very favorable impact. For example, having additional exterior staircases are crucial for student safety. Having an elevator for our students needing access, changes that students world at the Junior High. Likewise, improving our student drop-off areas, removing the footprint of the railroad and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue to unify our campus would be very positive changes in the atmosphere at LJHS for our students and for the community.

It is worth noting that the new windows installed three summers ago improved on both the appearance of the building, and supported better, more efficient climate control. The addition of window shades in most classrooms (more needed) is also a big benefit to the learning environment. This spring we painted several classrooms and the book room in the basement has been cleaned and reinstated. The new PE curtain added a couple of years ago to separate the gym from the stage has proven to be of huge benefit. Curtain protectors for our stage curtains are being built this summer to protect and add to the ability to keep and maintain them well into the future. We still need to add helmet storage in our athletic cage but the improvements in the cleaning and building of new equipment cages in the basement storage room has been a very positive improvement. Likewise, the remodeling in the basement this summer to bring back our shop space will be of huge benefit as we start to add classes that have been absent since 2000 and bring those classes and that space back into the curriculum.

### **DISTRICT GOAL AREA 3: COMMUNITY AND PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT**

Involving students within the community and bringing the community into the school continues to be a goal for the Junior High. Below is a list of community engagement activities this past school year:

1. Community Involvement
  - a. Samsung Solve for Tomorrow - Mrs. Flentie's GIS students were selected again as a Samsung Solve for Tomorrow state finalist and state winner. This year's project addressing school safety became a huge collaboration with our partners at HCR, their engineers and staff, as well as

Eastman Signs, just to name a few. Additionally, as a result of being a state finalist the previous year, Mrs. Flentie was able to purchase a 3-D printer for our students, which ultimately became a large part of the local COVID mask making solution to the pandemic this spring.

- b. Montana Science Olympiad – The 2019 LJHS Science Olympiad team became perhaps the most successful group ever to represent the school in the state competition, taking second place among the 64 teams in attendance. Much of the push behind its successes came from community members and the leadership of our special coach Dana Leininger who has dedicated much of each fall toward helping our students participate and succeed in this competition. She and her several volunteer community coaches provided not only weekly support during team practices but also spend 22 hours of help outside the regular meetings and practices.
  - c. Stream and pond monitoring - Mr. Shelagowski has taken over the project of collecting data on Spring Creek and the frog ponds. This year we dedicated two days in the fall and were to add a full day in the spring to involving students in collecting data and participating in activities in and around the frog ponds.
  - d. Builders Club - Mrs. Blazicevich and the students have participated in community activities including shoveling snow for those in need, highway clean up with the Kiwanis Club, reading to elementary students and sharing Christmas spirit with downtown businesses and area senior citizen centers, assisted living and nursing homes.
  - e. Veteran’s Day – Mrs. Spraggins and many teachers put together one of our better Veteran’s Day programs to recognize are Veteran’s and their families. Mr. Sean Kepler, as a member of our staff was the featured speaker and students participating were outstanding. Our choir continues to shine at this event and we had many volunteers from the student body and the American Legion to make this particular event outstanding.
  - f. Donations are another area of strong support from the community. To supplement our financial situation, classroom purchases and all academic travel is supported by the Lewistown K-8 PTO. The Junior High specifically relies on our PTO Cookie Dough sales, which raises approximately \$5000-7000 each year. We also have huge benefactors that help each of our schools. Jim and Cindy Moodie fall into this category, and their donation this year was directed to improving the library media center and its environment. Last year, their donation supported our choirs by providing new choral risers across the district. Both improvements are game changers and would not have been possible without their huge hearts.
2. Parental Engagement – The list below show ways we strive to include parents and keep them informed:
- a. Infinite Campus- Parents are encouraged to utilize Infinite Campus to keep track of their child’s progress. Parents are encouraged to sign up for the smart phone app available for Infinite Campus.
  - b. Staff Websites - A number of staff maintain teacher websites to provide access to assignments when at home.
  - c. Social Networking – In addition to the district and school websites, LJHS continues to provide parents information about our celebrations, current events and changes through our school’s Facebook page.
  - d. Website - The school posts all important parent communications as part of the school’s website news. Additionally, the digital backpack on the on the website has been a great digital repository

to provide an information and easy access to every form and letter that is sent home to parents. Likewise, our website provides a webpage for every teacher and almost every other staff member. Each page includes information or links to sites that help parents connect with their students classwork and provide an important source of connection with the home.

- e. Parent Volunteers - Parent volunteers are always an important source of help to the school. Our many volunteer coaches and activity sponsors are invaluable to our mission and are greatly appreciated. Our PTO and their support provide valuable funds and support for classrooms and communication. We looked to include a parent as a part of our MTSS team, or develop a Parent Advisory Council but were not able to complete those tasks this year. I hope those goals can be a focus for next school year.

#### **DISTRICT GOAL AREA 4: TECHNOLOGY**

Over the years Lewistown Junior High School has been fortunate to supplement our student technology with Samsung awarded Chromebooks and other devices. This year is no exception as we received an additional 33 Chromebooks and science technologies from winning the Samsung Search for Tomorrow competition. With the regular technology supplied from the District, we are able to use technology in every classroom and are even able to take our online assessments school wide as we currently exceed the student to computer/device ratio of one to one. The benefit of having this level of technology was extremely beneficial during this spring's "Stay at Home" directive and our ability to "jump" into distance learning.

The most important aspect of technology is not how many devices you have, but how technology is implemented into instruction and management of our school environment. Below are some of the areas we utilize technology at LJHS:

- a. Use of staff and student websites to allow easy access to shared documents, forms, and information. The schools website's digital backpack is essential to providing a repository of all needed forms, letters and general information for easy access by parents.
- b. Data collection with Google Forms has allowed us the opportunity to collect and manage data from, and on, student achievement. This data is easily shared and evaluated.
- c. Infinite Campus- Utilizing the Missing Assignment option in the gradebook has given students, parents, and staff the ability to monitor assignments more efficiently.
- d. Facebook and Remind - Parent Communication improved with the use of Facebook as a means of getting information out to parents. Facebook use by parents is vital to communicating almost everything and Remind is a texting tool that has been very helpful to students and parents alike in reminding them of upcoming events and updates on a live basis.
- e. Teacher websites- All teachers now have a web presence on our school website and a number of teachers also have additional classroom websites that help augment instruction by providing students easy access to needed instructional materials, assignments and important electronic resources.
- f. Google Classroom – Several instructors have been using Google Classroom since the GoogleFests LPS sponsored four and five years ago. With that information, guidance and direction, we were able to create a completely new instructional model when the Governor closed the schools on March 12<sup>th</sup>. With only a few days of preparation, teachers were able to create and use this platform

to provide almost all of our instruction this spring. As we head into the uncertain future this next school year, we plan to utilize Google Classroom on a full time basis.

- g. Document sharing with Google Drive provides opportunities for students to edit their work and collaborate with a group on work. In conjunction with Google Classroom, also students can also electronically turn in assignments to their teachers.
- h. Google Meet and Screencast-o-matic quickly became an important part of teacher instruction this spring. Google Meet is an easy to use video conferencing and recording tool used day in and day out by staff to share needed instruction to our students. It allowed teachers to maintain connections with students and when “off air,” allowed teachers to share their video recordings for students unable to attend live lessons. It will influence regular instruction as we come back to school by allowing teachers to present materials to their classes when they, rather than the students, are gone from their classroom. Screencast-o-matic licensing will give all staff a software program to modify or edit recordings that were initiated with Google Meet.

## **DISTRICT GOAL AREA 5: HIGHLY QUALIFIED STAFF**

The key to the success of any school is not only that teachers and support staff are highly qualified, but that they are individuals who truly care about the academic and emotional growth of our students. The staff at LJHS not only meets these highly qualified standards, but they continually demonstrate their dedication to helping students do their best. A high percentage of the staff have a Masters degree or higher level of education.

New staff for the 2019-2020:

- Certified Staff: Sean Kepler –our new 8<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies teacher; Nicole Wichman – 7<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher (replacing Kim Miller); Jocelyn Krogstad – FCS teacher (replacing Mandy Eike); and Lora Poser-Brown as our Library Media Specialist (replacing Chuck Cloud) in both the Junior High and Lewis & Clark Elementary. All four of these new members of the staff were extremely effective in their first year and easily fit into the overall makeup of our excellent staff.
- Custodial Staff: Shawn Schuchard who will work at the Junior High and Lincoln Building is coming from Lewis & Clark (replacing Jim Lefever)

Staff changes for next year:

- Certified Staff: Maida Walters – 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher (replacing Kristina Smith) and Chase Auger – Instrumental Director for the LJHS and FHS Bands (replacing Karl Ortman).
- Paraprofessional Staff: - No new paraprofessionals are to be added as we plan for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Custodial Staff: James Phillips who will work at the Junior High and Lincoln Building is new to the District (replacing Shawn Schuchard who will be at Lewis & Clark).

Staff who were released and not replaced:

- Sean Kepler – Non-tenured 8<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies teacher was released just prior to our successful mill levy election in May. He will be missed. In the future it is my hope that the school will be able to regain enough core staff over time to make sure that each core class has a teacher, at each grade

level, that is responsible for making sure that all students successfully address curriculum expectations.

## **DISTRICT GOAL AREA 6: FISCAL MANAGEMENT**

A couple of years ago the enrollment at the Junior High was at the lowest it has been in the history of the school, with both classes at, or just above, 75 students throughout the school year. The 2018-2019 school year was different as the 7<sup>th</sup> grade coming in was at or above 105 students all year, and this year that class was at, or above, that enrollment level as 8<sup>th</sup> graders. With that increase in enrollment, we were a bit unprepared for the increases in class size and elective slots. This upcoming year the large Class of 2024 will head to the high school so our enrollment overall will drop about 15-20 students.

On the financial side, since budgets are mostly based on previous year student enrollments, the operating budget was, and continues to be, tight. In the last eight years, there have been a number of staffing reductions to address budget concerns. Those reductions were difficult and in some respects harmful to students and the instructional choices, they can make. The Junior High has barely met minimum staffing it needs to meet the accreditation requirements for accredited junior high status. We have been fortunate to have found a way to “borrow” staff next year to again teacher shop related course that have been gone since budget justified cuts in previous staffing. Examples such as sharing of staff will need to continue to be a need and priority for the next few years.

## **SUMMARY**

We hope we were able to share everything of import to the Board within the confines of this report. The expectation to keep its design based on Board expectations or goals makes sense in many regards and we hope our responses are beneficial for the Board and its deliberations. However, it is not conducive to providing an overall summation of the year, chronology of events, or listings of highlights or celebrations for the school year. We did try to “fit” much of those types of detail of our work within this report above.

Aspects of our unusual home learning fourth quarter is an example where we cannot convey everything within this report format. For that reason, we are including here are a few thoughts that need to be shared about our unique quarter of instruction to students. Likewise, we will share a couple of highlights to our year.

First of all, the impact of the declaration of a state of emergency and mandating the “Stay at Home” directive will be what is remembered relating to this school year, as it should be. Many aspects of this need to be addressed in future preparations. There are some things that cannot be made up, such as the loss of our athletics and any group work such as music classes and performances were extremely impacted with the closure of schools. Students love to engage socially in the spring, enjoy their health enhancement classes and get a chance to have our field and vocational days. All was lost. Some home learning situations were untenable and students there struggled without the support schools provide. It is assumed that there will be some deterrents associated with the loss of in person instruction and any far-reaching effects will not be known for some time.

Nevertheless, there were also positives that occurred. Many students shined when they had to be responsible in a totally different learning environment. We recognized almost 50 percent of our student body as Distance Learning All Stars during the fourth quarter mid-terms and 48% of our students had an A or B in their coursework by our May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline to identify students that needed to continue working the

last two weeks. When you realize we are talking about 12-14 year-old students performing like that in a very new and different type of learning, which is impressive.

And, in almost all aspects, we are extremely proud of the LJHS staff for their hard work and excellence during these difficult times. There were many, many positive comments that came from parents about the flexibility of teachers to not only shift gears concerning their instruction but also their performance in doing so.

Second, there were tons of positives that occurred prior to the “Stay at Home” directive. Our activities had many positives occur during the school year. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys and 7<sup>th</sup> grade girls teams were almost unstoppable and our other sport teams improved almost more than you could imagine. It is really a shame that our spring track and field season was cancelled.

Science activities were extremely successful, providing a huge sense of pride for the students, the school and the community. As mention above, our 2019 LJHS Science Olympiad team became perhaps the most successful group ever representing the school in state competition, when they took second place among the all Montana schools and the 64 teams competing. This year our budding scientists had 14 events to compete in with LJHS students winning two events and many more earning metals and ribbons. We believe the completion helps participants obtain skills that will help them in future course work or even in their careers. We are very fortunate to have Coach Dana Leininger work with our students.

And, for the past six or seven years LJHS and Mrs. Flentie’s GIS students were selected as a Samsung Solve for Tomorrow state finalist, most of that time winning the competition on the state level. This year’s project addressed school safety by designing a door blind to provide another level of defense for classrooms in the event of a school shooter. Their efforts earned \$15, 000 for the school and became a huge collaboration with our partners at HCR and Eastman Signs, just to name a few. Last year’s project led to the purchase a 3-D printer for our students and became a part of the COVID mask making solutions this spring.

Mrs. Spraggins and Mr. Donaldson’s math students were super successful this school year. This 8<sup>th</sup> grade class have a very large and very talented group of math students with 29 students moving into the high school sophomore level classes. Both grades had many students recognized for their prowess in the MCTM regional and state math competitions. Our MathCounts team was not able to earn another trip to the state competition but competed very well with all team members having close to the same score at regionals, as well as having success at the quiz bowl portion of the competition.

There were more highlights that we will only touch on, with many more that we are unable to include. Mr. Vallincourt was able to secure a great opportunity for our students and staff to participate in the Yellowstone Expedition and our always-popular Veteran’s Day Program was one of our better efforts. The science block schedules in the fall are always popular with the students, and this one was no exception. This group of students enjoyed homecoming and all our dances. Our music concerts were well attended and the students performed very well in almost every situation.

To conclude, as principal of Lewistown Junior High School for the past two years, I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with an excellent staff who, on a daily basis and without fanfare, make positive influences on the youth of our community. Junior high students are in a unique time of their lives and staff here have the task of helping them transition from a time in their lives where they have recess every day at an elementary school, to a time where they are learning to drive to high school. The responsibility to remain connected with them is huge and the adolescent years are critical to student success. I am proud of the LJHS staff for their dedication and I have been honored to work with each and every one of them.