U.S. Department of Education
2012 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program
A Public School - 12MT1

School Type (Public Schools): (Check all that apply, if any) ☐ Charter ☐ Title 1 ☐ Magnet ☐ Choice

Name of Principal: Mr. George McKay

Official School Name: Columbus High School

School Mailing Address: 433 North 3rd Street
Columbus, MT 59019-0433

County: Stillwater State School Code Number*: 1112

Telephone: (406) 322-5373 E-mail: georgemckay1031@yahoo.com

Fax: (406) 322-5028 Web site/URL: cpc.mt.org

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

_____ Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*: Mr. Allan Sipes Superintendent e-mail: aldsipes@yahoo.com

District Name: Columbus Public Schools District Phone: (406) 322-5373

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

_____ Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Joe Morse

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

_____ Date _____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

**Non-Public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager (aba.kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2011-2012 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2006.

6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011.

7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

12MT1

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
   - 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
   - 1 High schools
   - 0 K-12 schools
   - 3 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 10868

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Small city or town in a rural area

4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 21

5. Number of students as of October 1, 2011 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total			# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0		6	0	0	0
K	0	0	0		7	0	0	0
1	0	0	0		8	0	0	0
2	0	0	0		9	35	27	62
3	0	0	0		10	39	16	55
4	0	0	0		11	23	21	44
5	0	0	0		12	28	27	55
							Total in Applying School:	216

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:

2 %	American Indian or Alaska Native
1 %	Asian
0 %	Black or African American
2 %	Hispanic or Latino
1 %	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
94 %	White
0 %	Two or more races
100 %	Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting 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.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2010-2011 school year: 6%

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred ***to*** the school after October 1, 2010 until the end of the school year.	5
(2)	Number of students who transferred ***from*** the school after October 1, 2010 until the end of the school year.	7
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	12
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2010	216
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.06
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	6

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 0%

Total number of ELL students in the school: 0

Number of non-English languages represented: 0

Specify non-English languages:

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12%

Total number of students who qualify: 26

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 9%

Total number of students served: 19

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

0	Autism	0	Orthopedic Impairment
0	Deafness	6	Other Health Impaired
0	Deaf-Blindness	9	Specific Learning Disability
2	Emotional Disturbance	0	Speech or Language Impairment
1	Hearing Impairment	0	Traumatic Brain Injury
2	Mental Retardation	0	Visual Impairment Including Blindness
0	Multiple Disabilities	0	Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	Full-Time	**Part-Time**
Administrator(s)	1	0
Classroom teachers	12	7
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	1	0
Paraprofessionals	2	1
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	5	3
Total number	21	11

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1: 13:1

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

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Daily student attendance	94%	94%	95%	93%	95%
High school graduation rate	94%	88%	90%	85%	92%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**
Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2011 are doing as of Fall 2011.

Graduating class size:	47
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	49%
Enrolled in a community college	21%
Enrolled in vocational training	2%
Found employment	19%
Military service	5%
Other	4%
Total	**100**%

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

☒ No

☐ Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

PART III - SUMMARY

Columbus High School is located in Columbus, MT approximately 40 miles west of Billings, MT on Interstate 90. Columbus is the Stillwater County seat housing various county offices. The Community serves as residence for 1700 people surrounded by agricultural interests, small businesses and the primary economical impact of a platinum/palladium mine located 35 miles to the southwest.

While most of the students are tied to the agricultural and or mining economy of the area the Columbus community acts as residence for a small number of commuters into the Billings business economy. A supporting contributor to the area economy is found in tourism and recreation tied to the confluence of two rivers at Columbus and the recreations generated by them and the mountains nearby. Much of the business economy originated with and is sustained by the community's founding families. Two banks and two credit unions finance the business economy.

Enrollment in the high school has ranged from approximately 200-240 students for the past many years and continues to hold fairly stable at about 220 students in recent years. Traditionally, these students have pursued more of a college preparatory education that has provided foundational academics for them to go on to further schooling if they chose. Military service has been the career selection for a few graduates each year and employment in the local economy has served as a career path especially in family owned businesses and agricultural operations. In recent years the growth of mining and the decline in family agricultural operations has shifted the community's traditions and demands on the educational institutions of the area. The cost of college education, a growth in vocational occupations and the demand for alternative post secondary programs has changed the nature and curriculum of our schools. While a college preparatory curriculum is still the primary focus of our program the school has expanded opportunities in the arts and even more so in vocational/technical trades education.

The school's mission statement reads as: "Building a Community of Excellence, One Student at a Time." The District's goal is to provide individual support through varied opportunities to all the students in the schools. Opportunities and avenues of achieving the goal of 'excellence' are open to all students with positive encouragement and facilitation to realize their aspirations. Columbus High School graduates have contributed to demands near and far for solid citizens having competent and marketable qualifications and foundational skills. The school's staff and administration take great pride in providing developmental programs and a variety of elective offerings in the core subjects of mathematics, science, language arts and social studies. As part of the demands for a rounded curriculum made by post secondary educational programs, the business and social community, and patrons of the arts, substantial educational programs have been developed in vocational education, competent use of computers, music and visual arts, foreign language and health/nutrition education. In an age of increasing costs of education and decreasing government support of special programs the school district, with the support of the community, has managed to develop and sustain a heritage of quality education for its students.

The District has always voiced pride and satisfaction in comparisons made between the students of the District and those of the State and Nation. Since the implementation of NCLB and its requirements for AYP our school has successfully managed to meet or exceed the defined and dictated student proficiency guidelines of the state's CRT assessments. Columbus High School has been nominated for Blue Ribbon Schools designation because of its history of providing state accredited programs through qualified teaching staff and for demonstrating consistent and strengthening growth in student performance on required state wide assessments. In light of the recognized quality of our educational system and the exceptional and consistent performance of our students on the state wide assessments, our staff and administrators feel that we have demonstrated the characteristics and qualifications of Blue Ribbon Designation.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

A. The State of Montana has contracted with Measured Progress to develop the CRT assessments for all public schools. These assessments are conducted by the local district and scored by state approved readers. There are four performance levels defined by these assessments. Novice (N) performance designates the lowest level of achievement on these assessments (200-224). Nearing Proficient (NP) performance designates those students who perform near the criterion established by the state as meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) (225-249). Proficient (P) performance is achieved by students who meet or exceed minimum criterion established by the state AYP standards (250-288). Finally, Advanced performance (A) is awarded the students who perform at the upper end of the scoring range of the assessments (289-300).

The primary goal of the district is to meet the AYP mandates of the state. Our school has done this successfully. The district also recognizes performance levels that surpass the AYP mandates. This is a bonus, and also a stimulus, to continue with the development of effective instructional and student preparation practices that have contributed to the successful performance of the students. Part of the focus of our analysis and implementation of improvements cycle is to identify students who performed in the nearing proficiency level on the assessments and provide them with remediation/reinforcement practices that may lift their performance to the next level on future assessments.

Overall, there is a district wide awareness of and focused effort to continue to improve the performance of our students on the state CRT assessments. Knowing and understanding the requirements and expectations of meeting state AYP standards heightens the intensity of effort on the part of the teachers to meet/exceed mandated student performance levels.

B. Columbus High School is a relatively small rural school in Montana with an enrollment of 200 + students. In Montana only 10th graders are required to take the CRT assessments. In our school, that amounts to an annual assessment of between 44 and 58 students during the five year span recorded. These numbers are nearly evenly dispersed in gender (males/females) but heavily lopsided in ethnicity. There are no ethnic subgroups in which more than 10 students were tested except white. Therefore, comparisons of student performance between different subgroups are not available.

Analyzing assessment results for the past five years is much simpler with these fewer divisions to consider. The 2006-2007 Reading data shows proficient or advanced performance by 91% of the 10th graders. While this level of performance certainly justifies notation its significance begins to wane as compared to the 2007-2008 (96%), 2008-2009 (96%), and 2009-2010 (96%) results. The 2010-2011 results show a slight decline in percentage of advanced/proficient at 93%. The lowest advanced/proficient performance level of 91% (2006-2007) corresponds to an increased consciousness on the part of the district's teachers to research and implement more effective and productive instructional methodologies. The efforts of the reading teaching staff have resulted in positive gains overall in student performance over the five year span reported. Throughout the five year span student performance has exceeded significantly the state levels accepted for AYP.

An additional side note is made of gender performance results from the tables. The most recent scores show similar performance by males and females in the advanced and proficient categories. Over the five year span of records the males scored slightly higher than the females in these same categories. Also noted is the difference in performance between males and females has narrowed during the last two recorded years. Overall, the performance of our 10th graders is quite admirable.

Analysis of the mathematics assessment results show notably lower percentages of students performing in the proficient and advanced categories than in reading, but still improving over the five year span and still meeting the state's requirements for AYP. The data from the first year reported show an eye opening advanced/proficient performance of 52%. Successive years show dramatic increases in advanced and proficient levels into the 70+% range (74% in '08, 72% in '09) and still higher for the last two years of reported data (79% in '10, 77% in '11). As with reading, the results from the 2006-2007 assessments initiated district wide concern and concentrated effort to demonstrate improvement in these scores over time. This goal was achieved quickly and sustained most recently.

Differences in gender performance in the mathematics assessments, as in reading, also gains notation. While the total percentage of proficient and advanced performances by males is somewhat equal to females there is a distinct difference in their performance in the individual categories of proficient and advanced. The 2011 results in math show that 48% of the males assessed scored in the advanced range while 38% of the females were recorded as advanced. Inversely, 43% of the females assessed scored within the proficient range while 26% of the males were recorded as proficient. The data from the previous four years show a similar, while not necessarily as wide, percentage difference between males and females. The district's teachers and administrators have made note of these differences and are attending to the causes of, and solutions to them.

Overall the district is satisfied with the improving assessment results over the past five years and continues to implement strategies to maintain them.

2. Using Assessment Results:

Upon return of our state's assessment results (early September) and brief analysis of those results by administrators and counselor(s), a meeting of the teaching staff is convened to discuss the school's general performance results and to begin work on more specific item analysis methods. Of course, comparison of student results to state performance levels AND to state mandated AYP performance levels is the first order of business. The next step is to observe and compare student performance in each of the standards upon which the assessment is built. In Reading there are four general standards. In Math there are seven general standards measured and tabulated for student performance. The district's primary goal is to meet or exceed the level of proficiency/advanced performance that is mandated by the state's guidelines for meeting AYP. The next step in our analysis is to make observations and tabulate how the students performed on each individual item on the assessment(s). This allows observers to see how many of the students answered the assessment item correctly, how many students picked the incorrect responses for that item and what standard each item correlates to. This process can be extended to a more specific individual item analysis for each student's performance.

Analysis of these results is very beneficial to the investigatory eye. An overview of these results indicates the standards which are effectively and successfully addressed in preparation and which standards need to be reviewed and/or reinforced through more effective and focused instruction. An additional benefit of this analysis is found in the identification of students who performed at a lower level on any of the standards than the district accepts and who may be identified as in need of reinforcements in the study of any numbers of the standards assessed. The most important conclusions to be drawn from this analysis are those that direct teachers toward making modifications in their instruction which are designed to help the next group of students achieve a higher level of performance in the upcoming year. The content area teachers demonstrate the greatest interest and have the greatest stake in the results of the statewide assessments. However, the item analysis is done by groups involving cross curricular content areas. The purpose for this is two fold. Group analysis generates concern and interest among teachers outside the assessed areas and gives them a 'stake' in the process and results. More importantly the item analysis may enlighten teachers outside the specifically assessed content areas of applications of content that are studied in their classes. For example, an item on the math assessment may pose a question regarding the interpretation of graphs. Such a problem may be referenced through a social studies survey and/or may require an application of reading skills to respond to. Such cross curricular reference is frequently found in the state's CRT assessments. Including cross curricular instructors in the analysis of items not only

offers all teachers a stake in the assessments, but also connects them to the assessments through the application of principles in their subject area.

The parents of students assessed each year certainly have a stake in their child's performance on these assessments. They demonstrate, as well they should, interest and concern in their child's preparation and performance on them. Parents are informed of their child's performance via formal documentation of the assessment results along with a layman's explanation of those results. These same results may be used to tag students who may qualify for additional programs to address both deficiencies and advanced needs. Parents are encouraged to contact appropriate personnel at the school for more detailed explanation and/or availability of additional services. The general community is largely unaware of the requirements and/or significance of the State wide assessments. If AYP is not made, the local and regional newspaper will most definitely publish the results and may choose to make headlines of them. By and large though the assessments are more important to the schools and students as a measure of their programs than they are to the community they belong to. Greater attention is given to school results if and when they are compared positively to those of other area and state performance levels. Still the notability of this achievement is largely a designation that the general public does not understand. The community of the Columbus Schools demonstrates great pride in the schools' and students' achievements, even without appreciating the significance of them.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

The progressive growth documented in our assessment scores is attributed to a cyclical process of preparation of students, providing optimum environmental conditions, analysis of results, evaluation of curricular content, and planned and purposeful instruction. While this process is applied between cycles of the yearly assessments it can, and is, done within the scoring periods of the singular school classroom. Since the requirement for conducting annual CRT assessments was implemented by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) there has been concerted and coordinated collaboration between the state’s individual schools and its educational agencies and consortiums aimed at improving student performance and teacher instruction. In addition to the requirements and suggestions put in place by state and federal mandates, the district’s schools have collaborated with other schools within a 30 member consortium toward improving the whole of the educational system. The consortium has been productively effective in pooling the professional and methodological resources of its members. Our staff has been actively involved in, and in many cases, a driving force in the direction and collaborative efforts of the consortium. The methods our schools employ in evaluating and analyzing our assessment results is but one of many topics shared by and among consortium member schools. Others include the writing of standards and assessments, the sharing of effective teaching practices, the use of newer technologies and software programs in the schools, sharing strategies in preparing for and taking formal assessments, and the development of vocational programs within the academic curriculums of the schools, to name a few.

The English Language Arts curriculum/teachers have developed state recognized writing programs aligned with the principles of Six Traits Writing and the Montana Writing Project. Our teachers have shared the success of their writing programs as trainers for consortium members, as well as statewide instructors through regional workshops and Montana Educators Association conferences.

There is a statewide collaborative effort in place which allows schools to seek suggestion, adapt it for local implementation, and share their successes with other schools. Columbus High School has been active in both reaping the benefits of this sharing process and sharing their successes with other schools.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

The internet has done wonders in closing the communications gap between the school, the parents, and the community. The internet has opened the doors of public education up to the general public. Traditionally, communication with the school occurred four times a year with report cards and possibly a parent/teacher conference somewhere in the middle. More recently, schools have added internet access to the public via school home pages. Columbus High School maintains its own homepage access where a

wide range of information becomes available at the touch of the fingers. The most direct contact with students and parents is obtained through an individual grade book program set up by the teachers for each of their courses. With the keying of a personal access code the student and parents are able to monitor class room assignments, lesson plans, and student grades throughout the grading period. Many teachers have created on-line contact information and, in many cases, interactive connections for students to submit work electronically and communicate directly with the student (or parent). This type of system allows for observation, exchange, and individualized interaction as frequently as the parties wish.

The school continues to provide more traditional avenues of communication to the various audiences of the community. Report cards are mailed quarterly. Parent conferences held annually. A monthly newsletter opens the doors to community members allowing them to observe the routines of the school day. The public is openly invited to attend school functions and participate in the pride that goes along with student activities.

Much of the routine communications and contacts take place through the guidance office. Students begin the ninth grade with orientations to high school life. The teachers voluntarily serve as mentor counselors to small groups of freshmen adapting to the change of pace ninth graders face that first year. Annual guidance and scheduling contacts are made where monitoring of transcripts, student participation and progress and career plans are kept updated. Post high school planning begins formally as junior year proceeds. Seniors begin their final year with parent update meetings and continue with scholarship and college applications.

As students get closer to graduation parents have a tendency to turn their child's academic status over to self responsibility and independent planning. It is always a challenge to keep parents actively involved in their child's education. Electronic communications has made parent involvement more easily obtained.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

The curriculum of Columbus High School, like most other public schools, is the product of decades of development and modifications demanded of it by educational institutions and social concerns. The basic three 'Rs' of tradition and history emphasize the language arts and mathematics in all American schools. Over time, other curricular areas have evolved into special subjects but still are based on reading, writing and mathematics.

It takes no long stretch of the imagination to connect any academic content area of study with one or both of the foundation disciplines of reading/writing and mathematics. And since all subject areas are built upon these two disciplines it makes good sense to emphasize a strong core and direct its extension into peripheral studies. The core standards for language arts and mathematics are the foundation for those that encompass other content areas.

Social studies has become its own content area but incorporates and relies on reading to construct its own patterns and conclusions. Understanding the expanse of the social sciences and languages certainly necessitates the interpretation of volumes of the written word. Understanding science requires the comprehension of reading and the interpretation of data, much of it mathematical in nature. Art appreciation relies on reading, visual perception and, in many cases, mathematical concepts incorporated into methods and mediums of expression. Technology certainly is expressed in its own language but reading and mathematics are still the building blocks from which it continues to expand. Use of technology has added the application of visual components to the understanding and expression of written and mathematical principles. The arts have been enhanced by technology as instrumentation, special effects, new materials and visual stimulation expand the imagination and creativity expressed in the classics as well as new age performances and products. Even the curriculums of physical education/health/nutrition are founded on reading comprehension and applications of math and science in understanding physical exertion, measurements, nutritional data and the concepts of wellness. somewhat unique component of the curriculum has evolved within our social studies and English departments. Over the past four years the teachers and students of these content areas have collaborated with local and state resources to produce a written and oral history of the impact of Native American cultures on the historical and cultural development of our community. Students have demonstrated greater interest and effort in studying the history of the area as compared to the general history of the nation. Well written documentation by the students have become a permanent part of the local museum.

At Columbus High School a mutual respect and cooperation has been constructed and strengthened through the collaboration of the personnel of all support curriculum areas with the disciplines of reading and mathematics. Columbus High School is small enough to build interdisciplinary studies that share the emphasis of reading and mathematics in preparing students for highest performance on the state wide assessments.

While reading and mathematics are the fundamental content areas upon which all curriculums are built, the combined social institutions that depend on quality education, such as business, vocational education, science and technology, etc., demand that the schools graduate individuals that have at least fundamental competencies in a broad base of subjects. The total curriculum at Columbus High School is designed and intended to graduate its students with exposure not only to the language arts, science, math and social studies requirements but also to a wide variety of electives in the arts, vocational/trades, health, and foreign languages. The ultimate goal is to prepare competent students for continued learning beyond high school.

2. Reading/English:

At every grade-level, difficult texts exist for students reading below, at, or above grade level. Columbus High School (CHS) staff noticed that struggling readers, when encountering difficult texts, often internalize their problems with texts as a problem within themselves—they feel they aren't good enough, not smart enough, not sharp enough to comprehend. Because of this, many students quit reading before they ever really get started.

In the fall of 2005, CHS implemented best practice strategies promoted by the National Writing Project in the areas of reading and writing. Following Sheridan Blau's instruction in *The Literature Workshop*, our language-arts teachers observed that when good readers encounter difficult texts, they often re-read the piece again and again (and again), needing desperately to glean some meaning from the reading and subconsciously realizing the problem is not within themselves. It is a problem with the text. The text is difficult and must be given added attention in order to comprehend it. These good readers enjoy the struggle, embrace their confusion and find their way out of it by asking questions, coming up with answers, and talking with other readers about their questions and answers.

Through reading and writing workshop practices at CHS, we have found that struggling readers can find success and independence by employing the strategies that good readers use: re-reading difficult passages, embracing their confusion, developing questions that they have in relation to that confusion, writing as a method to answer their own questions, and then sharing in a community effort to generate and answer questions together.

In regards to classroom writing, we have found that we cannot foster excellent readers if we do not foster excellent writers. In her book *Wondrous Words*, Katie Wood Ray describes a process that allows students to become masters of their own literacy through observation and experimentation. Students need the freedom and the opportunity to make independent observations in what they read. In doing so, they are able to notice particular strategies and techniques in composition, talk about what they notice with their peers and experiment in their own writing with what they've noticed. The process allows CHS students to explore a given text at a masterful depth, one at which they can begin to break down the construct of a written piece into tangible approaches to duplicate and experiment with form, content, and voice.

It is our goal at Columbus High School to produce independently literate young adults.

3. Mathematics:

The Columbus School District has developed and adopted a standards based curriculum in the content area of mathematics. Using NCTM and state standards as guidelines the district's content area teachers have written district specific standards and assessments for the mathematics curriculum. Much of this effort has been conducted under the contracted supervision of an experienced specialist. The curriculum was written with vertical alignment transitioning across district grade levels. Yearly analysis of assessment data from MAP, MonCAS, and ACT results may redefine or reinforce priorities within the curriculum. Montana has recently adopted the National Core Standards. The district's alignment efforts will continue using these as the guiding template.

Instruction in mathematics courses combines traditional lecture/demonstration introduction with small group practice, investigation of practical applications of principles, and the use of manipulates in problem solving. Emphasis is placed on individual student participation in lessons and their demonstration of understanding the principles through presentation. The district also provides opportunities for staff to participate in special program offerings at the local and state level for the purposes of developing curriculum and improving instruction.

Technologies have been introduced that both stimulate student thinking and give them practice in their capacities and applications. Graphing calculators have extended student 'vision' of the concepts while

interactive whiteboards bring digital resources to the big screen. Melding software with interactive data collection (student response recorders) allows for immediate assessment and evaluation of student performance.

Writing has been incorporated into the math program as students demonstrate and practice written expression in concept mapping, organizers, and in writing to explain as well as to compare and contrast. Higher achieving students participate in math contests where their mastery of the principles is matched up against students from other area schools.

Currently, the high school curriculum offers ability level courses in math that range from remedial reinforcement of algebra all the way through calculus. Alternative courses are available in practical math, applied math and statistics. Students are offered this wide range of courses to meet the district's three course requirement for graduation. Remediation and reinforcement opportunities are provided through access to class room teachers during the school day and also through support programs offered through special education services and Title 1 programs. Advanced Placement opportunities are an option for higher ability students and on-line courses are available for special subject study.

On-line grade book access keeps parents, students and teachers in touch regarding the current progress of the student.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

In recent years the development of two year programs and vocational/technology education has made great advances in our state. Our vocational staff has been working closely with state offices in developing and mapping career pathway options for students who are preparing for continuation in these programs. Business education, vocational agriculture and family and consumer science are the pathways that the school is developing to prepare students for continued education. Alignment of our curriculum with those of the vocational schools and two year institutions help make the transitions following high school easier, and in some cases, college credit may be accrued prior to high school graduation.

Within the business curriculum there is emphasis on computer based education programs. A full year of business essentials is required for graduation. It is usually taken freshman year and is the foundation upon which other business classes progress. In business essentials the students review keyboarding skills and progress quickly into business forms, resume building, job applications, interview practice and portfolio building. Upon completion of this course students have the option of moving on into basic business, accounting, business law, entrepreneurship and/or several presentation programs such as Photoshop, Indesign and Excel. Broad programs of business courses are available to students of many interests.

Vocational agriculture features a number of basic agriculture classes that may, by student choice, bloom into more in depth career studies. Intro to agriculture is the foundation course for this career pathway. This introductory course predicates the students' move into welding and metals fabrication, animals, agriculture business, horticulture, carpentry and natural resources. Many of these courses are the focal points of FFA competitions and conferences, as well as supervised agricultural experiences the students may be involved in outside of school. Students enrolled in these courses are preparing themselves for trade schools, colleges and business operations.

Family and consumer science vocational courses add individual consumer and trade skills to a student's transcripts. Traditional cooking and sewing classes are supplemented by interior design, child development and family living, textiles and life skills. This pathway cumulatively develops the students' personal skills and presents avenues into several career choices.

5. Instructional Methods:

The trend in American education, since before NCLB came along, has been to get students involved in more individual application of knowledge and emphasize rote learning somewhat less. Understandably, the theory is that students will learn more completely if practice (application) is included while they learn rather than aside from learning. It is well understood that different students learn material more completely when teachers vary instructional methods. While some students are book learners others are not. Textbook instruction has been de-emphasized and is gradually being replaced by hands on (practical) extensions and/or individualized monitoring of student learning. Marzano has presented researched documentation on the teaching practices that stimulate higher student achievement (understanding) of content material as compared to traditional 'teacher does the talking instruction'. Many of Marzano's best practices have become the benchmark criteria upon which NWEA's Teachscape classroom observation program was developed. The Teachscape instrument is utilized by this district to monitor and document the prevalence of best practices in the classroom. It has been the intention of the building staff to vary instruction and student participation in an effort to find the shoe that best fits their learning style. This has resulted in the students having more active responsibility in the ownership of their learning.

At Columbus High School mathematics instruction has focused more on the application of principles to real life examples and less on pencil and paper problem solving repetitions. In English classes, reading and writing for regurgitation has been replaced by individualized oral and written interpretation of literature and perception. In science courses, theory and classification have been supplemented by more hands on experiences and, more importantly, written expression of understanding. In the vocational areas, hands on experiences have always been the norm, but with rapidly changing technologies, there is an increased demand for a new age of skills that accompany those changes. Social studies courses have moved away from note taking lecture formats and toward more interactive learning activities. Similar changes in teaching/delivery methodologies across the curriculum have placed more active involvement into the students' learning processes and allowed more individual attention to be given to their learning.

6. Professional Development:

It is a priority of any school district to provide professionally competent instruction to their students. Professional development ranges in definition from teacher licensure to special certifications in any number of teaching related areas. Of greatest value and impact concerning the students is professional development that benefits their learning. At Columbus High School a primary goal is to facilitate the teachers' professional development along any pathway that will improve the learning environment and student performance of the school. Professional leave time is afforded teachers who wish to take part in development programs during the school year. Special consideration is given to opportunities that will be brought back into the school for implementation. This district has facilitated teacher participation in standardized test taking and analysis programs, the STEM (science and math) project, adolescent development trainings, standards and assessment mapping, and writing programs, to name a few. The district belongs to a consortium of schools which pools the resources of its member teachers to develop common student performance themes within the schools. At least two of our teachers have become trainers for the consortium in developing the writing curriculums of member schools. One English teacher has gained state wide notoriety for his work in the Montana Writing Project and with his efforts in Indian Education For All. Two full days annually, plus several partial and curriculum specific days are dedicated to teacher participation and collaboration on consortium common concerns. The consortium has directed the development of common efforts and concerns of its member schools in areas such as curriculum, standards, standardized testing, technology use and motivational topics presentations. The consortium has done much to unify and focus the development opportunities of teachers.

Our district has gone to great ends in providing in house development opportunities. During calendared development programs and contracted pull out collaborations the district's teachers have received training in data analysis, test taking strategies, standards and assessment writing, teaching technologies and school management software programs.

7. School Leadership:

Much of the school's success in developing competent students has to do with the collaborative and complimentary vision of the district's leadership. The district superintendent demonstrates admirable foresight and a keen familiarity with educational research, legislation, technology and software, and school finance. The superintendent has gained the support of the school board in his pursuit of producing excellence throughout the school system. The momentum and innovation generated from the administration has been funneled through equally foresighted building administrators and into the procedures and practices of teachers dedicated to best teaching.

The demands and strategies of NCLB became priorities in our district years before most others. Preparing for CRT assessments began early and was done in more depth than other schools in the area and around the state. School improvement processes were begun before any state directives were issued. Consultants were (are) contracted to guide curriculum teachers through the writing of standards and assessments. This documentation extended to the classroom through more conscious and effective teaching methodologies. The students are introduced to focused and purposeful test taking practices and strategies. Many of the CRT preparation strategies that have only recently been employed by other districts have been in place in our school for several years. Similar foresights translated into practice are evidenced in the district's technology plan and implementation, school management software programs, and promotion of best practices in teaching,

The district, as a system, is actively involved in several national, state and local organizations that share similar visions of educational direction. The origins and ideas of school improvement are born within the ranks of national organizations such as NASS, NASSP, ASCD, etc. These affiliations extend into the state as MASS, MASSP, SAM and so on. The district is an active member of a curriculum consortium that extends the vision of school leaders and organizes the implementation of improvement programs into the member schools. Teachers get similar visionary direction from the NEA, MEA, and the various curriculum affiliates. The visions of administrators and teacher organizations meld through the unifying direction and efforts of our regional consortium. This alliance has taken on the goal of facilitating school improvement as its collaborative mission.

The goal of school improvement is envisioned from administration. The implementation of improvement programs is facilitated and directed from administrative vision but realized through the efforts of the class room teachers.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 10 Test: Montana Comprehensive Assessment System

Edition/Publication Year: 2011 Edition Publisher: Measured Progress

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient and Advanced	77	79	72	74	52
Advanced	43	33	35	36	28
Number of students tested	44	54	49	58	58
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested	9	4	2	4	4
2. African American Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES:

There were < 10 students in all sub group categories. Data not available.

12MT1

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: 10 Test: Montana Comprehensive Assessment System

Edition/Publication Year: 2011 Edition Publisher: Measured Progress

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient and Advanced	92	96	96	96	91
Advanced	75	76	67	71	62
Number of students tested	44	54	48	56	58
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested	9	4	2	4	4
2. African American Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient and Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES:

Fewer than 10 students were tested from any sub group. Data not available for sub groups containing less than 10 students.

12MT1

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: Weighted Average

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month					
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient and Advanced	77	79	72	74	52
Advanced	43	33	35	36	28
Number of students tested	44	54	49	58	58
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	9	4	2	4	4
2. African American Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
NOTES:					

12MT1

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: Weighted Average

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month					
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient and Advanced	92	96	96	96	91
Advanced	75	76	67	71	62
Number of students tested	44	54	48	56	58
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	9	4	2	4	4
2. African American Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
6.					
Proficient and Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
NOTES:					

12MT1