

JL Simpson Middle School
Loudoun County Public Schools
Comprehensive Needs Assessment - Executive Summary
[LCPS School Profile](#)
[Virginia School Quality Profile](#)
[LCPS Strategic Plan 2023-2027](#)



School Improvement Team:

(Your school improvement team should consist of a variety of stakeholders within your school community including parents)

Name	Position
Tripp Di Nicola - Primary POC Laura Bolyard - Primary POC/English	Principal School-Based Instructional Coach
Jarrold Dungan / Sarah McIntosh	Assistant Principals
Melinda Maloney - Mathematics	Math Resource Teacher
Jennifer Burns - Science	Instructional Technology Facilitator
Kristen Combs - SSGS	Division Instructional Coach
Laura Chamblin	Special Education Dean
Lydia Seekford / Heidi Terrett / Dana Schrader	Special Education SALTs
Paige Costic/Kimberly Lee	English Learners SALT
Mica Thomasson	Lead Counselor
Laura Johnston / Mark Peyton	English SALTs
Jean Nibbelink	Math SALT
Becky Hronik	Science SALT
Christina White	Social Sciences & Global Studies SALT

Diana Lopez	World Languages and Cultures SALT
Lindsay Rice	Career and Tech Ed SALT
Holly Hoey-Johnson	Music SALT
Maggie Darby/Justin Grantham	Health and Physical Education SALT
Penny Barry	Art SALT
Devon Yorkshire	Librarian
Samantha Ashley / Jennifer Herrin	Equity Leads
Dana Watkins	Student Support Advisor
Haley Dials	Reading Specialist
Jennifer Maulfair	Spectrum Teacher
Brent Washburn	6th Grade Dean
Brandon Filsinger	7th Grade Dean
Jeremy Fox	8th Grade Dean

Instructional Overview
<p><i>Provide descriptive information related to the curriculum, instructional programs, professional learning and existing interventions utilizing a Response to Intervention approach to support the academic needs of students.</i></p> <p><i>Provide explicit connections to your school's instructional overview and how it supports and aligns with GOAL 1: Empowered Students of the LCPS Strategic Plan and Goal 2.1 Offer high-quality Ongoing Growth and Development available to all staff; 2.2 Develop dedicated resources to improve Professional Collaboration across schools and the division</i></p>
<p>Secondary English and Reading:</p> <p>At J.L. Simpson Middle School, English, reading, and writing instructional practices are grounded in the science of reading and utilizes evidence-based literacy practices that reflect three of the five pillars of literacy: fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, in addition to writing. Instruction across all areas of literacy is explicit and systematic and aligns with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) the LCPS Instructional Framework. The purpose of curriculum and instruction is to develop knowledgeable readers, writers, speakers, and thinkers-utilizing strategies such as Book Clubs, learning stations, critical writing, and modeling.</p> <p>Resources: All classrooms are provided with state-approved resources consistent with the expectations of the Virginia Literacy Act and VDOE recommendations. Resources include digital content such as No Red Ink, Newsela, Lexia and Schoology as well as authentic literature and informational texts.</p>

Professional Learning: Secondary teachers and reading specialists engage in continuous professional development to support the implementation of best practices for literacy instruction in classrooms and intervention settings, including participation in modules that are aligned with the **Virginia Literacy Act**. Teachers are integrating the **Fundamental 5** with an emphasis in critical writing.

Intervention and Progress Monitoring: Each student's literacy progress is monitored through multiple data points including **VALLS**, **MAP**, **SOLs**, and **Lexia** as well as formative assessments. Students who have identified areas of need are provided with differentiated classroom instruction and/or evidence-based intervention facilitated by teachers and Reading Specialist. We also have specialized reading courses based on the above data in which teachers utilize **Orton-Gilliam** and **Spire**-based resources to effect progress for each student by meeting them where they are currently and moving them forward with appropriate strategies. Students are also included in data discussions during CLT and IT meetings. Using the LCPS decision trees as guidance, tiered supports are provided to students that align with expectations outlined in the Virginia Literacy Act. MTSS plans are developed for all students receiving intervention per LCPS expectations, all of which are monitored by our JLS Reading Support Team.

Rigor: English/Language Arts teachers foster rigorous learning experiences that challenge students to think critically, communicate effectively, and engage deeply with complex texts. Guided by the Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) English/Language Arts curriculum, teachers design instruction that develops analytical reading, purposeful writing, and meaningful discussion skills across a variety of genres and media.

- Close Reading and Text Analysis: Students examine diverse literary and informational texts to uncover layers of meaning, author's craft, and thematic connections.
- **Claim-Evidence-Reasoning**-Based Writing: Learners construct clear, well-supported written responses that demonstrate higher-order thinking, synthesis, and reflection.
- Purposeful Discussion and Collaboration: Structured academic conversations encourage students to articulate ideas, evaluate perspectives, and build shared understanding, often via Socratic Seminars.
- Intentional Scaffolding and Differentiation: Teachers use formative assessment and strategic support to guide all students toward independence with grade-level standards.
- Integration of Research and Media Literacy: Students learn to gather, evaluate, and integrate information from multiple sources to inform arguments and projects.

Math: At J. L. Simpson Middle School, our approach in mathematics emphasizes fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving through research-based strategies like Peter Liljedahl's *Building Thinking Classrooms*. Teachers are actively using vertical non-permanent surfaces (VNPS) and thinking tasks to engage students in collaborative learning and deep mathematical reasoning. They also integrate number sense routines that align with the [math workshop model](#) and provide regular reflection opportunities to strengthen foundational skills and help students make meaningful connections. With a focus on the **Instructional Framework**—students work together to solve complex problems, while teachers collaborate in planning, implementing, and reflecting on their practices. Ongoing professional development in these areas ensures that both students and educators are continually growing, leading to a dynamic, student-centered learning environment that prepares students for future success. We are looking forward to promoting the workshop classroom structure, the idea that math is “figure-out-able,” and math process goals, along with continuing targeted small groups, intervention, and remediation this year.

Resources: Teachers are provided with resources contained in the **LCPS Mathematics Curriculum** site found in Schoology in addition to supports via **MathSpace**, the newly adopted basal set of instructional supports provided to all LCPS mathematics educators. Teachers are also trained in the **Bridges** program for intervention and the use of the **math workshop model** for instruction.

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Rigor: The JLS math department maintains a high level of academic rigor by engaging students in **deep conceptual understanding**, **critical thinking**, and **real-world application** of mathematical concepts. Instruction goes beyond procedural fluency, emphasizing reasoning, problem-solving, and communication of mathematical ideas.

- **Number Sense Routines that Promote Higher-Level Thinking:**
Daily number sense routines—such as Which One Doesn't Belong, Number Talks, Estimation Challenges, and Would You Rather Math—encourage students to think flexibly about numbers, justify their reasoning, and engage in mathematical discourse. These quick yet powerful routines help students develop mental math strategies, make connections across mathematical domains, and build confidence in articulating their thinking. Teachers use open-ended questions to push students to explain why strategies work and to evaluate the efficiency and accuracy of different approaches.
- **Opportunities for Extension:**
Students demonstrating readiness for enrichment have access to extension tasks that deepen understanding through complex, real-world applications and multi-step problem-solving. These opportunities might include project-based learning, advanced problem sets, or participation in math competitions/clubs.
- **Differentiated Learning Pathways:**
Recognizing that students progress at different paces, teachers offer **multiple learning pathways** to ensure all students are appropriately challenged and supported. This includes flexible grouping, targeted small-group instruction, and the use of digital tools for personalized practice and feedback. Scaffolded supports help students who need additional practice with foundational skills, while enrichment pathways allow for acceleration and depth of study.

Through these intentional structures, the math department creates a learning environment where **rigor is accessible to all students**—fostering perseverance, curiosity, and a growth mindset in mathematical thinking.

Science: At J. L. Simpson Middle School, science instruction is designed to actively engage students in the process of science using multiple modalities and using reasoning processes to ensure equitable access to the development and communication of scientific knowledge; and to participate productively in scientific practices that build scientific thinking. Our program teaches students using multiple modalities to know, use and interpret scientific explanations of the natural world; to generate and evaluate scientific evidence and explanations; to understand the nature and development of scientific knowledge; and to participate productively in scientific practices. Classes are routinely integrated to build strong networks of inquiry based experiences. Teachers continue to integrate the Fundamental 5, focusing on closing the lesson this year. All science teachers are actively engaged in teaching content area reading strategies in their classrooms. They also continue to work toward building graphing and measurement skills in support of basic math skills. The department has a new goal this year to incorporate differentiated learning paths determined based on formative data.

Social Sciences & Global Studies: At J.L. Simpson MS, the Social Science & Global Studies instruction is a curriculum designed to develop critical thinking, cultural awareness, and global citizenship in students. It equips them with essential knowledge of history, geography, economics, political systems, and cultures from around the world and within the United States. Through a responsive approach, students explore diverse perspectives, learn to analyze societal issues, and understand the connections between local and global events. Key focus areas include:

1. **Historical Foundations:** Students engage with key historical events, figures, and movements, fostering an understanding of how past events shape current global dynamics.

2. **Cultural Competence:** Emphasizing empathy and respect for diverse cultures, students explore world civilizations, traditions, and belief systems, helping them develop a global mindset.
3. **Geography and Environmental Studies:** Understanding physical and human geography is crucial, as students learn how geography impacts societies, economies, and politics. Additionally, they examine environmental issues and sustainability.
4. **Civic Engagement and Political Systems:** Students are introduced to various political structures, the concept of governance, human rights, and the role of citizens in shaping societies, fostering an understanding of global governance.
5. **Economic Literacy:** Basic economic concepts, such as trade, markets, and resource distribution, are introduced, enabling students to understand the interdependence of global economies.
6. **Global Challenges:** Students explore contemporary issues encouraging them to think critically about solutions and their role as global citizens.

This curriculum emphasizes interactive learning through authentic performance-based activities, debates, and discussions that promote active engagement and emphasizes historical thinking skills, provides opportunities to make their thinking visible, and encourages students to apply their knowledge to real-world contexts to prepare them for high school with a strong foundation. By cultivating analytical skills, cultural awareness, and a sense of responsibility, the program prepares students to navigate an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment Academic Achievement

A summary providing evidence of analysis of trends, patterns, proficiency, and growth in student academic achievement data. Provide a clear connection between outcomes and contributing factors.

Based on our critical needs assessment, we acknowledge that limited prior knowledge and low literacy and numeracy levels are significantly impacting student achievement. To center students and ensure engaging, authentic student learning experiences, our instructional strategy will include the following components:

We will design learning experiences that are intentionally created and reflective of individual student strengths, needs, experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives.

- **Master Schedule and Routine:** We are adjusting our master schedule to provide daily opportunities for students to build proficiency in core academic skills. Teachers will utilize the **Fundamental 5** and **DESIGN - ENGAGE - ASSESS** qualities of the **Instructional Framework** to instill a consistent lesson engagement routine that leverages formative assessments to inform instruction for all students and drive instructional decisions.
- **Collaborative Planning:** We will implement a collaborative lesson planning model to support teachers in developing opportunities that promote flexible learning paths with appropriate scaffolds based on individual student strengths, needs, and/or interests. This supports our goal to co-construct a welcoming and inclusive classroom community with students and families.
- **Co-Teaching:** We are strategically scheduling co-teaching partnerships between general education, special education, and English Learner educators to enhance staff collaboration and improve student learning outcomes. This practice ensures we design learning spaces that are accessible and affirming to a diversity of cultures, strengths, needs, and identities.

We are increasing rigor in Tier 1 instruction to engage students in learning experiences that focus on rigorous, authentic, student-centered learning.

- **Rigor and Application:** Teachers will be increasing rigor, particularly in civics and science, by embedding literacy tasks and math process goals across all content areas. This is a commitment to utilize a variety of instructional approaches to meet learning objectives and use intentional questioning and discussion to deepen understanding.

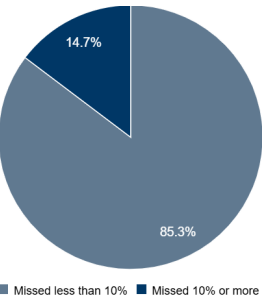
- **Intervention:** Purposeful Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions in English Language Arts and Mathematics are being implemented to accelerate growth and close achievement gaps. This allows us to utilize a variety of instructional approaches to meet the learning objectives and unique needs of students.

We will assess and monitor progress and reflect continuously to ensure all students are meeting our high expectations.

- **Data-Driven Response:** The use of formative assessments in the daily routine allows teachers to collect and consider information, data, and feedback, and respond by making adjustments or taking appropriate actions. This makes our instruction responsive to student needs based on evidence of learning.
- **Goal Setting:** Our focus on accelerating student growth requires teachers to integrate formative and summative assessments aligned with learning objectives to monitor student progress.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment Student Engagement

A summary of trends, patterns, strengths and areas for growth in student engagement data, including attendance, discipline, perceptual data, and graduation data (HS only).



Attendance:

Per the Virginia School Quality profile published in late September 2025, **14.7%** of the students at JL Simpson MS were chronically absent in the 2024 - 2025 school year.

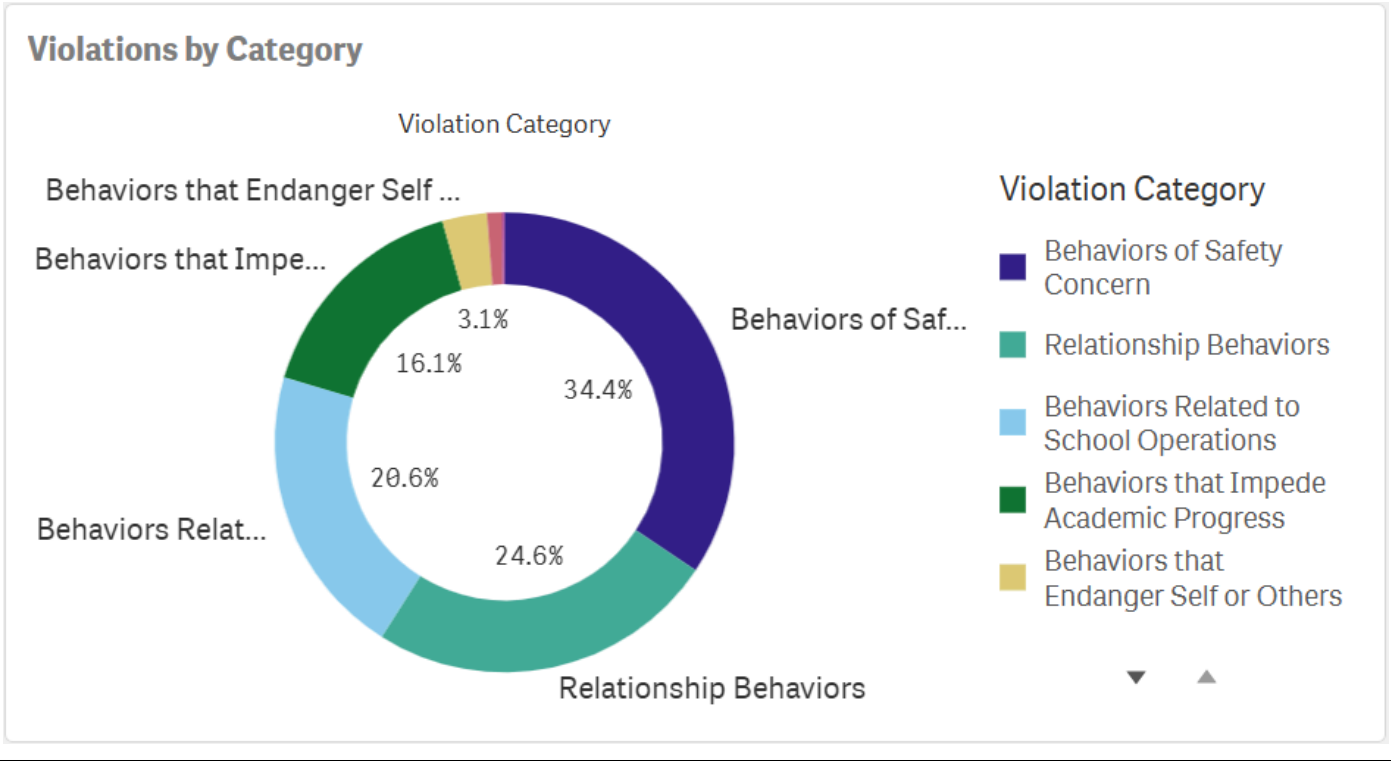
Absenteeism by Subgroup						
Subgroup	2022-2023		2023-2024		2024-2025	
	Below 10%	10% or Above	Below 10%	10% or Above	Below 10%	10% or Above
All Students	814	163	752	133	747	129

We have seen an improvement of our chronic absenteeism rate from 2022-2023 by over one percentage point in the 2023-2024 school year, with an additional 0.33% drop in the 2024-2025 school year. Our largest opportunity gaps in our chronic absenteeism rate lie in our Hispanic group (24.4%), Asian group (18.2%), Students With Disabilities (22.3%), Economically Disadvantaged (26.4%), and English Learners (26.3%).

JL Simpson MS developed a comprehensive **Mustang Attendance Matters! Team** consisting of school leadership and Unified Mental

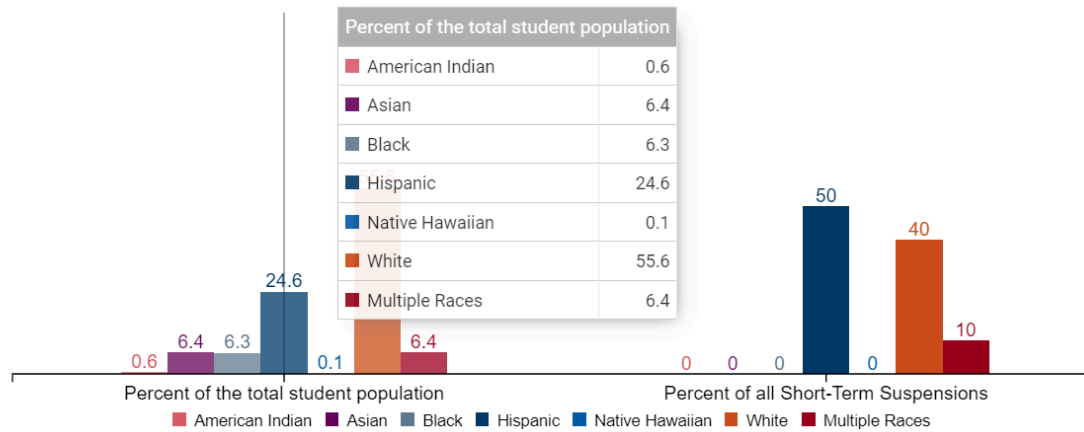
Health Team members during the 2023-2024 school year to focus on decreasing our chronic absenteeism rate through focused academic, behavioral, and social emotional MTSS strategies aligned with Policy 8140 and Regulation 8140. The **Mustang Attendance Matters! Team** was expanded and reimagined to the **JLS Student Support Team** in 2024-2025 to include our special education and English Learners Subject-Area Lead Teachers, Family Liaison, special education supervisor, student support advisors, and instructional facilitators. The **JLS Student Support Team** will continue in the 2025-2026 school year. Our aim is to continue providing appropriate MTSS strategies as designated previously, but also to incorporate efforts to engage students meaningfully in extracurricular activities and implement a personalized mentorship team to focus on providing continuous support.

Discipline:



Short-Term Suspensions

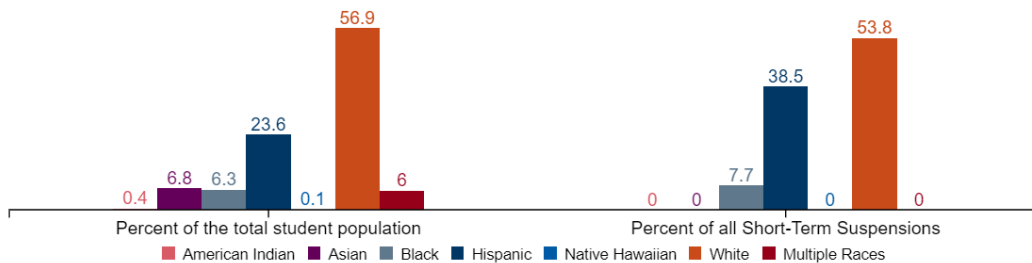
Short-Term Suspensions: 2023-2024



Overall, JL Simpson MS has reduced the number of short-term suspensions from the 2022-2023 to the 2023-2024 school year, specifically focusing on providing a multi-tiered system of interventions and support for students to reduce recidivism in student behaviors and to engage students more meaningfully in restorative practices leading to positive behavioral improvement. We acknowledge the need to focus more heavily on our Hispanic population of students, hence the creation of an Empowered Girls and Empowered Boys group, Latino Student Association, expanded club/organization offerings based on expressed student interests, and a student mentorship program, just to name a few of the methods by which we plan to continuously improve interventions, supports, and PBIS initiatives to proactively engage not only this opportunity group, but all student members of our Mustang Family.

Short-Term Suspensions

Short-Term Suspensions: 2022-2023



Perceptual Data:

Overall, there is a significant increase in nearly all areas of our perceptual data analysis from surveys acquired during the 2023-2024 school year. Staff members are feeling supported and are comfortable raising issues with administration. Students feel a sense of belonging in the school and feel safer than past years. We have been designated as a **No Place for Hate School** that cultivates student leadership, unites our school community, and engages students and staff in active learning about respecting and appreciating our differences. Clubs, organizations, and student leadership initiatives have been widely expanded to incorporate student voice in decision making at our school.

Student perceptual data indicates a continued need to build strength in our student to student relationships and to expand instructional pedagogy at JLS to create a more student-centered classroom setting to align with our mission of developing **joyful, interesting, and engaging** learning experiences in all academic disciplines. As a result, our Instructional Council and School Improvement Team are focusing heavily on incorporating the consistent implementation of the **Fundamental 5** and offering students the opportunity to provide course feedback during FLEX sessions available four days a week through a rotating schedule whereas every teacher has time to engage students in discourse about improvement strategies at both the classroom and school-wide level.

Extended Learning and Engagement Opportunities

Provide information to describe extended learning and engagement opportunities for students, families, and community including what events you have planned or are considering hosting.

Provide explicit connections to your school's extended learning and engagement opportunities and how they support and align with GOAL 4: Engaged Community of the LCPS Strategic Plan, especially GOAL 4.1 Deepen Family Engagement by offering inclusive opportunities for conversation across the division.

Extended Learning:

JL Simpson Middle School provides our students with unique opportunities for after-school clubs such as Select Choir, Intramural Sports, Japanese Club, Student Advisory Planning Team, No Place For Hate Initiatives, Empowered Girls, Latino Students Association, Principal Student Advisory Committee, Student Council Association, National Junior Honor Society, Sources of Strength, *Good morning, Mustangs!*, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, PBIS Tack Shop Advisory, and many other offerings that are also made available during our **Fun Friday** program.

The library offers opportunities for students such as library helpers, Project Lit, author visits, year-long reading challenges, and Reading Rodeo.

Simpson also sponsors many events during the school year. Some events include our Multicultural Night, Stampede Into the Community, Stampede Into Simpson, Rising 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade events, PTO-sponsored grade-level events, field trip excursions (both in-house and in the community), and many other avenues to engage students meaningfully outside of the classroom.

Family and Community Engagement Opportunities:

Family Engagement opportunities include: rising Grades 6-7-8 Curricular and Extracurricular Fair Nights, our Multicultural Night extravaganza, our Health and PE Monster Mash, PTO-sponsored bingo and trivia events, grade-level honor roll and HERD award quarterly events, Spectrum 9/11 Interviews, our annual Veterans Day Assembly for community outreach, Parents as Educational Partners (PEP) monthly meetings, as well as a plethora of other individualized occasions to which families are invited to attend to support their individual Mustangs.

The library connects with the community and families with Common Sense Media information, public library connections and events, Book Fairs, and Public Library Connections with PEP.

Climate and Culture

Provide a description of strategies that address the needs of all children in the school, but particularly the needs of those at risk of not meeting the challenging state academic standards, through activities such as counseling, social emotional learning and mental health programs, and PBIS implementation.

Make explicit connections to the LCPS Strategic Plan goals of 1.3 Prioritize Care for Students by ensuring a safe and affirming learning environment for all;

School specific narrative

At J.L. Simpson Middle School, while we celebrate how incredibly diverse our student and staff population is, we recognize that we are also a very economically diverse school community. Nearly a third of our students are identified as economically disadvantaged. For the last six years, we have held a back to school event in the community that demonstrates the greatest need for our resources. During this annual "Stampede Into the Community" event, our staff and their families prepare and serve hundreds of meals to students and their families and distribute free school supplies.

We also believe very strongly that students should feel connected to school and have at least one trusted adult advocate in the building. To that end, students are each assigned to an advisory teacher. The goal of advisory is relationships and developing a true connection with a trusted adult in the building. The lessons during this advisory time are tailored for each grade level. Additional interest-based advisory lessons are put together by members of our Student Advisory Planning Team. This group consists of students who represent different ability groups, students who speak different languages, and students who would have rare opportunities to lead.

Due to the after school constraints faced by many of our students, we choose to offer a designated time for special interest clubs once a week during regular school hours. Students initiate the formation of these clubs, after which teachers volunteer to serve as sponsors, some students recruit teachers to sponsor their clubs!

For the last five years, we have worked very hard to make sure students at Simpson feel recognized for both their behavioral and academic achievements. Each quarter we have an honor roll celebration for students who have earned all A's or A's and B's. Their parents are invited in for a recognition ceremony and then students are invited to the cafeteria following the ceremony for a treat. Past treats have included don@uts,

smoothies, muffins, and even a pancake and waffle bar. This year we are expanding the ceremony to include HERD student recipients. There are two students chosen monthly from each team who have demonstrated HERD traits of Honorable, Engaged, Respectful, and Determined.

Cultural Heritage Month Celebration: Various student groups lead out in celebrating different heritage months. Students create ideas for daily trivia, design and decorate the celebratory bulletin boards, and create engaging activities, such as Spirit Week, scavenger hunts, and competitions. These activities help students share and learn about various cultures in a fun, engaging way.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS):

At J.L. Simpson Middle School, we use **HERD** as our central acronym for **PBIS**. **HERD** stands for **Honorable, Engaged, Respectful, and Determined**. All students are taught these expectations and are provided reinforcement when displaying **HERD** behaviors. We give monthly **HERD** awards to students who exhibit **HERD** characteristics, as chosen by our classroom teachers and staff. We announce that *every Mustang student, staff, and community member* is **KNOWN, SEEN, HEARD, and LOVED** as well as our **HERD initiative components** every day on the morning announcements at 8:30 AM.

JL Simpson MS Principal Student Advisory students re-imagined our **HERD** initiative at the start of SY 2025-2026 to focus on specific expectations in **Hallways, Classrooms, Bus/Transportation, Cafeteria, and Restrooms**. This information is introduced regularly through advisory activities, sessions with deans / counselors, and individualized supports as needed. Clubs/organizations often reinforce **HERD** through many of their initiatives to support the school and community as well.

We individually recognize students with the use of the **Tack Shop**. Here, students spend **Monty Bucks**, which are earned through demonstrating **HERD** characteristics on a daily basis. Monty Bucks are provided by all school staff at J.L. Simpson Middle School and a monthly is sent to students to highlight how many bucks they have earned. Individual recognition also occurs through **Mustang Mentions** Postcards, which are sent home through the mail on a monthly basis.

As of 2025-2026, our students participate in **Advisory Activities** on a daily basis focused on the following concepts:

MINDFUL MONDAYS: Executive Functioning, Mission and Vision, PBIS, Instructional Framework Concepts → Student Empowerment

TEACHING TUESDAY: Middle Ground SEL Lessons

WINNING WEDNESDAYS: Intervention (Mathematics) + Extension Activities

THOUGHTFUL THURSDAYS: Lexia Intervention (English/LA) + Stop! Drop! And Read!

FUN FRIDAYS: PBIS / Team-Building / Incentive Program Execution

Social Emotional Learning (SEL):

At J.L. Simpson Middle School, we support and teach SEL through the Middle Ground curriculum during Advisory every Tuesday for 25 minutes.. We also use our once per week advisory time for team building and to teach organizational skills. Our school UMHT team leads Sources of Strength, IMPACT mentoring program and Empowered Girls group. We are currently developing an Empowered Boys group, which will launch later this school year.