



## School Profile

### P.1 Organizational Description

Welcome to Desert Sky Middle School (DSMS), home of the Thunderbolts! We are highly dedicated to creating a positive, purposeful and supportive climate for faculty, students and families. DSMS is part of the Deer Valley Unified School District (DVUSD) and is located in the urban area of Glendale, Arizona. DVUSD is recognized as an "A" rated district for student achievement by the state of Arizona. DVUSD is comprised of 38 schools including 3 comprehensive suburban middle schools. Our current enrollment is 695 with over 80 open enrolled students who live outside of the school boundaries but choose to attend DSMS under the open enrollment guidelines. Desert Sky is a Title 1 school and hosts a diverse student population as evidenced by an enrollment of 68% Caucasian, 23% Hispanic, 5% African-American, 2% Asian, and 2% American Indian.

As a school steeped in tradition, Desert Sky Middle School operates according to a framework of high expectations for character and academic achievement. Throughout the past 34 years, Desert Sky has received a National Blue Ribbon Award and was twice awarded an A+ School of Excellence award. Three past students have returned as teachers, and current students embrace the possibility that they have many of the same teachers as their parents! While Desert Sky has consistently maintained a B label from the Arizona Department of Education, each year students demonstrate academic growth as evidenced by a steady climb toward an A label. The AIMS scores for 2014 indicated students were only two meager growth points from achieving an A label, which continues to be a goal. Desert Sky Middle School is a stronghold in the community and remains committed to the academic and socio-emotional growth of all students.

### P.1a Organizational Environment

#### P.1a (1) Educational Program and Service Offerings

DSMS offers a comprehensive middle school curriculum for students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The staff at Desert Sky addresses individual student needs by offering a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned to the Arizona College & Career Ready Standards (ACCRS) along with a wide range of opportunities to develop the whole child- mentally, physically, socially and emotionally.

Students are divided into grade level core teams. A core team is comprised of a math, English language arts, social studies, and science teacher. This provides teachers with opportunities to communicate and collaborate laterally within the grade level. In addition, department teams collaborate on curriculum to ensure alignment, innovation, rigor, and relevance within their content area. This collaborative practice is transferred and embedded within classroom instruction.

Desert Sky Middle School embraces the use of data to drive academic and operational decisions. Teachers routinely meet by department and cores to discuss curriculum and to exchange ideas on how to implement engaging lessons, common assessments, and multi-tiered interventions. Student achievement is monitored by staff, students, and parents at DSMS. Teachers evaluate and communicate student academic progress weekly; students create

and monitor their own academic goals by analyzing and graphing their common unit and quarterly assessment data, and parents monitor their student's progress by accessing student's planners and online grades. Additionally, DSMS uses a variety of state, district, and campus common assessment data and community and parent satisfaction data to monitor and adjust the current Campus Improvement Plan (CIP).

Instructional programs include a continuum of services for students with disabilities: co-taught /special education inclusion classes, general education classes, advanced classes, and classes for high school credit. This wide variety of options allows a diverse group of students to be represented, and also fosters a sense of community in recognizing that all students can achieve at high levels and have a welcome home at DSMS.

DSMS infuses technology and progressive approaches in its content areas to ensure high student achievement. Students have multiple opportunities to interact with technology throughout the day. Our campus has a 3:1 student to device ratio for technology use. Content area teachers employ learning strategies that enable students to access digital content through iPad apps and online computer programs. These learning strategies help develop students' digital literacy and citizenship skills. Students take all common assessments on computers or tablets, and many classrooms use *Google Classrooms* to facilitate collaborative digital learning.

Core curriculum includes math, English language arts, social studies, and science. Math is designed to encourage students to think critically. Math department teachers and specialists are participants in the Arizona Math Partnership Grant sponsored by Scottsdale Community College. These faculty members are frequently visited and observed by other teachers throughout the district as models of highly engaging math classrooms. The English language arts staff promotes reading, writing, speaking and listening skills as evidenced by 84% of students in 2014 passing the AIMS reading assessment. The social studies department teaches students how to analyze historical events and how to apply their new knowledge towards evaluating current social issues. Desert Sky has a well-equipped, separate science lab for students to conduct experiments as they learn the importance of using the scientific method. Project based learning and hands on activities keep students engaged while they contemplate the subjects of earth science, chemistry, physics and biology. We also offer an intensive intervention program where specialists address students' learning gaps and provide a daily second touch of current reading and/or math curriculum. Additionally, all CORE teams offer an advanced curriculum track for highly motivated and gifted students. Advanced courses in science, mathematics, ELA, and social studies are offered. Students can take Spanish 1-2, algebra, and geometry classes for high school credit as well.

Exciting electives await the students at Desert Sky. Two elective offerings are exclusive to Desert Sky students: the wood/electrical/machine shop promotes student learning using practical skills in a mathematical-project based environment, and the Paxton Action Lab help students gain experience with aerospace, computer assisted allows for student exploration in design, media production and integrated computer skills. In addition, we offer creative publications,



physical fitness, art, and music. The music program at Desert Sky includes choir, band and jazz band, as well as opportunities for festivals and high school performances.

Before and after the school day, students are offered a myriad of extracurricular activities that promote personal growth and team building. Seasonal sports include wrestling, volleyball, basketball, cross country, baseball, softball, and track and field. Furthermore, student council hosts several dances, fundraisers. Community events include, but are not limited to, an annual food drive and family movie nights. Families in need throughout the school year receive support through events such as Bolt Closet, Phoenix Children’s Hospital Give-A-Thon, and Angel Tree. Academic extra-curricular clubs: art club, yearbook, morning video announcements, science club, and National Junior Honor Society provide students with opportunities for small group interaction with staff to promote academic skills and community support.

Our Top 20 socio-emotional program educates students and staff about how positive behavior helps us think, learn and communicate more effectively. This program is woven throughout the academic curriculum. Top 20 addresses the social and emotional needs of middle school students. Students learn life skills for collaboration, teamwork and respect for self and others by demonstrating, discussing and modeling Top-20 “STAR” qualities. Several high school teachers have noted, “The positive and productive character of students from Desert Sky set them apart from other entering freshmen in surrounding schools.”

**P. 1a (2) Vision and Mission**

Desert Sky Middle School is committed to a culture based on continuous improvement (CI) which embodies performance excellence and high expectations for students and staff. DSMS is centered on excellence with a focus on four key strategic objectives aligned to the DVUSD Strategic Plan and the campus improvement plan (CIP). DSMS key strategic objectives include:

- Deploying a guaranteed and viable curriculum
- Establish and maintain a collaborative learning environment
- Provide opportunities to involve and engage all stakeholder groups in key programs and initiatives
- Evaluate programs and services using sound research principles and multiple data sources

The mission, vision, ideals and beliefs (**Figure 1**) work harmoniously to create a focused, safe campus where students can grow academically and socially in preparation for high school. DSMS vision and mission statements are intended to emphasize the organizations dedication to supporting the academic and social needs of all students. Desert Sky has established a learning environment dedicated to the specific developmental needs of the middle level student. The collaborative nature of the organization supports our belief that all students can achieve at high levels. Additionally, by embracing a Top 20 philosophy we are able to promote social skills among students that will allow them to experience future success in a collaborative society.

**Figure 1 - Vision and Mission**

MISSION	VISION
Desert Sky Middle School will prepare all students to be active, productive and successful problems solvers in our ever changing world	Education in DSMS will provide relevant learning opportunities within a flexible and innovative environment for children and adults that will effectively ensure them the skills necessary to be life-long learners and productive citizens.
IDEALS & BELIEFS	
-We are committed to creating meaningful relationship and a community of kindness. -Teaching and learning are standards based, rigorous and relevant. -We will demonstrate transfer of learning to new situations and disciplines. -Student achievement will increase through collaborative continuous improvement.	

**P. 1a (3) Workforce Profile**

DSMS has 67 administrative, certified and classified staff characterized in **Figure 2**. All employees are Highly-Qualified (HQ) in the content they teach as mandated by state and federal law. While all certified employees hold at least a bachelor’s degree, many have received a master’s degree or above (**Figure 3**). All classified staff hold a high school diploma or GED with the exception of Title 1 paraprofessionals who hold an Associate of Arts degree or have taken a state approved exam.

**Figure 2 - Workforce Characteristics Employees**

CATEGORY	NUMBER	PERCENT
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Administrators</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Certified</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>58%</b>
<i>Teacher</i>	33	85%
<i>Counselor</i>	2	5%
<i>Nurse, Psychologist, ELL, Instructional Specialist</i>	4	10%
<b>Classified</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>37%</b>
<i>Custodial</i>	4	16%
<i>Clerical</i>	3	12%
<i>Cafeteria</i>	5	20%
<i>Monitors/ISS</i>	5	20%
<i>Paraprofessional</i>	8	32%
<b>Exempt</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2%</b>

**Figure 3 - Degrees Attained**

CATEGORY	NUMBER	PERCENT
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Bachelor</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Masters</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Doctorate</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2%</b>



DSMS is unique in its workforce composition. Not only do we have a veteran staff of experienced teachers, but several of our staff members are returning Desert Sky alumni. The faculty has a combined total of more than 600 years of teaching experience. In addition, half of the staff is male. Throughout their academic careers, individual staff members at Desert Sky have received such high honors as Arizona Middle Level Education Teachers of the Year, Deer Valley Education Foundation Teachers of the Year, DVUSD Athletic Director of the Year, and DVUSD Coaches of the Year. Likewise, faculty members have received local grant awards from business partners such as Arizona Game and Fish Department, Donor's Choose, Home Depot, NASA, and Action for Healthy Kids for classroom and campus use.

**P. 1a (4) Assets**

The Thunderbolt campus is comprised of five main academic buildings, an administrative building, a cafeteria with indoor and outdoor seating, eight acres of fields, a lunch recreation area with a basketball and volleyball court, and an athletic facility which includes a full size gym, locker rooms, and multipurpose rooms. Other areas include two computer labs, a science lab, a library/media center, an art studio, a woodshop, and a band/choir room. Classrooms are equipped with document cameras, LCD-projectors, and SMART Boards. In addition, teachers can access two mobile iPad carts for use in the classrooms. Wireless Internet is also available throughout the campus. Finally, a parent communication kiosk, equipped with a desktop computer and family/community resources, is available in the front office for parent, student, and community use.

**P.1a (5) Regulatory Requirements**

DVUSD is accountable to numerous legal and regulatory agencies, and state and federal statutes. The primary regulatory agencies are the US Department of Education (ED), the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and AdvancED accreditation. On the Federal level, DSMS complies with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the latest authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Furthermore, DVUSD and DSMS must meet standards established by the state and are accountable for ensuring students meet Arizona proficiency levels. DSMS is mandated to assess students in grades 7 and 8 annually using the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) for 8<sup>th</sup> grade science and Arizona's Measurement of Educational Readiness to Inform Teaching (AzMERIT) for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math. Curriculum mandates by the state ensure all districts align their curricula to the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards (ACCRS). All staff must meet State and Federal hiring requirements. The district was awarded AdvancED accreditation for continuous improvement in PreK-12 education. The AdvancED process helps the DSMS leadership team analyze school practices in relation to a set of research based quality standards.

**P.1b Organizational Relationships**

**P.1b. (1) Organizational Structure**

Desert Sky's administrative team is dedicated to supporting a rigorous instructional environment. The Campus Improvement Team

(CIT) embodies the leadership governance of the school. It is a purposeful community comprised of teachers, department leaders, classified staff, an instructional coach, parents, and administrators. This group creates and monitors campus improvement goals that are aligned to the district's strategic plan. Those who serve on this committee seek input from internal and external stakeholders. This information, along with student academic and socio-emotional data, drives campus improvement decisions. Information generated from the team meetings is communicated to the staff and community.

Another layer of formal leadership is comprised of department leaders. These leaders disseminate information and oversee the collaborative processes within their departments. Teachers share individualized student data with each other and determine the specific strategies to be used by all core team members in an effort to provide tiered interventions to support student success.

**P.1b. (2) Students, Other Customers, and Stakeholders**

Desert Sky Middle School's key market segment is students in grades 7-8. The ethnicity and gender of our total student population of 695 is shown in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4 - Student Population Ethnicity/Gender 2015-2016

	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		Total # of Students		Total Percent	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>White</b>	132	110	115	121	245	231	35%	33%
<b>Hispanic</b>	47	41	39	33	86	74	12%	11%
<b>Asian</b>	3	3	3	1	6	4	<1%	< 1%
<b>African American</b>	12	8	12	6	24	14	3%	2%
<b>American Indian</b>	4	1	5	1	9	2	1%	< 1%

Additionally, 18% of students attend advanced classes, 12% are enrolled in special education, and less than 1% are classified English language learners. 56% of the student population qualifies for Free and Reduced Lunch which entitles DSMS to receive Title 1 funding. This schoolwide program serves all students and is intended to generate high levels of academic achievement in core subject areas. Additionally, at least 1% of Title 1 funding is set aside for parental involvement.

As the hub of the community, our partners are invited to attend events such as future Thunderbolt night, campus open house, parent/teacher conferences, sporting events, and band/choir concerts. Student Council organizes and sponsors community and student events such as dances, leadership camps, spirit week activities, orientation activities, and food drives. Student Council and National Junior Honor Society are very active in the community, donating hundreds of dollars and volunteer hours.



Key stakeholder groups and their requirements are summarized in Figure 5.

Figure 5 - Key Stakeholder Requirements		
STAKEHOLDER	REQUIREMENTS	EXPECTATIONS
<b>Students</b>	Safe & secure environment; rigorous & engaging learning environment; 21st Century skills	Quality of education; embedded use of technology; program choice; activities; positive relationships
<b>Parents</b>	Safe & secure environment; 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills; highly qualified workforce; fiscal responsibility	Quality of education; embedded use of technology; program choice; positive relationships
<b>Employees</b>	Competitive salary & benefits; safe working environment; technology; resources.	Professional development; shared leadership; communication; ethical leadership.
<b>Governing Board</b>	Sound procedures to support policy; fiscal responsibility	Execution of policy & procedures with integrity; pro-active communication
<b>Business Partners</b>	Workforce ready; 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills	Minimal retraining; efficient student work habits & ethics
<b>Colleges and Institutions of Higher Education</b>	Workforce ready; 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills	Minimal retraining; efficient student work habits & ethics

### P.1b. (3) Suppliers and Partners

DSMS receives its student population from the following feeder schools: Greenbrier, Mountain Shadows, Mirage, Bellair, and Sunrise elementary schools within our district; as well as nearby charter schools and open enrollments.

Desert Sky actively seeks and develops partnerships with a variety of community and business organizations to achieve our mission and meet the needs of our diverse student population. The Title 1 budget allows for a part-time parent liaison who fosters relationships within the community. DSMS is also partnered with Scottsdale Community College by participating in its AMP grant to promote excellence in Arizona middle school mathematics. Some of our academic suppliers include Reading Plus, Think Through Math, and Paxton Patterson all of which support our instructional focus and student achievement. Community partners include: Freddy's Hamburgers, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Pure Heart, Christ Church of the Valley, and Aviation Communication & Surveillance Systems. Communication mechanisms for managing and maintaining relationships with suppliers, partners, and collaborators include email, surveys, school website, School Messenger calls, and the campus digital marquee.

Annual education programs such as the BLOOM program for Character development are offered to students. Specialists join the staff members to create an experience for students to grow socially and emotionally as well as academically through role playing, guest speakers, surveys and reflection.

## P.2 Organizational Situation

### P.2a Competitive Environment

#### P.2a. (1) Competitive Position

DSMS has endured declining student enrollment due in part to the opening of surrounding charter schools and the economic downturns that have changed the demographics. Many of the families of DSMS are now living with other families. The foreclosure map numbers indicate that the area around DSMS is among the highest. Due to this, the number of students that are on free/reduced-lunch has increased. Despite this, according to the AZ Department of Education, DSMS is the top ranked middle school in our district. DSMS's source of competition lies within our district's K-8 school, Highland Lakes (7-8 Renaissance focus) and local charter schools. Despite these challenges, many families return due to our culture and our core values. Furthermore, we have a waiting list of open enrollment applicants.

#### P.2a. (2) Competitive Changes

Dedicated to student achievement that is not predictable by race, ethnicity, disability, gender, English language proficiency, or socioeconomic status, DSMS offers the following:

- Two-way communication with all stakeholders
- Tutoring in all subject areas
- Focused and aligned staff development
- Integration of technology in all classrooms
- Advanced classes and classes taken for high school credit
- Differentiated English language arts and math support
- Collaborative systems supporting student achievement
- Essential learnings and aligned and common assessments
- Top 20 socio-emotional program

#### P.2a. (3) Comparative Data

Desert Sky continuously examines data for comparative benchmarking from middle schools across the district and state that are similar in enrollment and funding (Figure 6). DSMS utilizes data from the AIMS science assessment, AzMERIT (reading, writing, and mathematics), as well as district common assessments for comparisons. DSMS internal data points include district assessment scores, common assessment scores in all core content classes, and Scholastic Reading Inventory and Think Through Math benchmark data. Affective data are evaluated from the incident management system, positive behavior support system measures, and the Gallup Poll. Additionally, we ask our parents to complete Title 1 parent satisfaction surveys twice a year to elicit a more direct response on the needs of the families that choose DSMS.

Figure 6 - Comparative Data - Percent Passing				
	Desert Sky (DVUSD)	Deer Valley MS (DVUSD)	Greenway Middle (PVUSD)	Desert Foothills MS (WESD)
<b>2013-14</b>				
<b>AIMS Reading</b>	84.2%	80.6%	69%	76%
<b>AIMS Math</b>	67.8%	67.8%	42%	58%
<b>AIMS (2015) 8<sup>th</sup> Science</b>	78%	56%	N/A	N/A



## P.2b Strategic Context

DSMS intentionally and purposefully implements a campus-wide approach to continuous improvement with specific systematic and systemic processes at the district, school, and classroom levels.

The continuous focus on the school vision and implementation of the Baldrige performance criteria is critical in the alignment of work systems. The Campus Improvement Team guides the development and implementation of school and department goals aligned with identified key strategic objectives.

The strategic challenges and advantages are identified in **Figure 7**. Challenges include creating and building effective stakeholder engagement as well as meeting the social and emotional needs of each DSMS student in order to build a solid foundation for learning and achievement. Advantages include a strong, campus-wide culture of continuous improvement, programs to make connections with students, as well as using data to measure student growth, climate, and learning.

## P.2c Performance Improvement System

DSMS embodies a culture of continuous improvement at all levels of the organization. The Campus Improvement Team collaborates to monitor and adjust action steps to meet school goals. At the classroom level teachers measure student learning with strategic unit achievement goals. Students track their individual progress in data notebooks or student planners, and parents monitor student progress via PowerSchools, progress reports, report cards, and student planners. Classroom goals and individual student achievement are celebrated through a system of recognition that includes: Awards for classes who have exceeded their unit goals, honor roll, and principals list.

The DSMS Campus Improvement Team (CIT) designs a continuous improvement plan with campus-wide goals for school and student achievement. The Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) is aligned to key components of the DVUSD Strategic Plan and is a living document that is reviewed quarterly. Current data specific to each campus goal on the CIP is reviewed and additional goal strategies are added and adjusted based on quarterly goal progress. The team works with stakeholders, develops goal strategies, monitors the goal's progress and data, and also designs targeted professional development for staff when needed.

Key elements of DSMS's improvement system are the Baldrige Campus Continuous Improvement System as well as the STRONGE Evaluation Instrument. Using the Baldrige framework of continuous improvement, support staff set and monitor goals designed to improve their department systems. Administrators use CI with STRONGE to inform decisions regarding improving classroom instruction and aligning professional development. Teachers use both tools to improve their own practice by setting and monitoring individual and student learning goals. Finally, students evaluate and reflect on their own learning by recording assessment scores and tracking progress towards their individual academic goals.

The CI process is driven by student formative and summative assessment results as well as process implementation data based on the expected quality, fidelity, intensity, and consistency of aligned instructional practices geared to impact student results. Goals are chosen based on the data, the needs of students, and the identified areas for improvement.

DVUSD received AdvancED accreditation with suggested improvements, and DSMS is continuously improving based on the accreditation feedback by deploying a system of the CCI model campus wide (e.g. in departments, classrooms, and individually with students).

Figure 7 - Strategic Context		
CATEGORY	STRATEGIC CHALLENGES	STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES
<b>Programs &amp; Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting the social and emotional need of all students</li> <li>- Meeting the diverse academic needs of all students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Common assessments across all grade levels and content areas</li> <li>- Multi-tiered support system</li> <li>- Targeted professional development</li> <li>- Top 20 Program</li> </ul>
<b>Operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Program evaluation execution process</li> <li>- Documenting processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Campus improvement planning process</li> <li>- Collaborative systems that support intervention</li> <li>- Culture of continuous improvement</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stakeholder involvement in programs</li> <li>- Dedicated business partners</li> <li>- Increasing student enrollment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 695 students and 67 staff</li> <li>- Sense of community</li> <li>- Parent Liaison</li> <li>- Positive relationship with all stakeholders</li> <li>- Two way communication</li> </ul>
<b>Finances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recovery from economic deficits</li> <li>- Reduction in state funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Title 1</li> <li>- Open enrollment numbers</li> </ul>
<b>Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited budget</li> <li>- Limited student access</li> <li>- Teacher experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technology in every classroom</li> <li>- Online curriculum support aligned to intervention programs</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing a Purposeful Community when implementing new programs and initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear &amp; precise trend data measuring effectiveness of Purposeful Community</li> <li>- Aligned mentoring, training, personal and professional development</li> <li>- Collaborative culture</li> </ul>