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 Horace Mann



# Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals

## Star of Innovation Award Application Form

School Name Royalton HS/MS Grade Levels 6-12

Name of School District Royalton Public Schools ISD #485

Name of Principal Joel Swenson

Application Submitted By Joel Swenson

School Street Address 120 S. Hawthorn St.

City, Zip Royalton, MN 56373

Telephone Number 320-584-4200

MASSP Division Central

Name of Program Royalton Life Skills Lab

Please answer the following questions on a separate sheet/s of paper.

- Description of the program.
- How has it impacted your school?
- What difficulties did you encounter in its implementation?
- What issue/s might another school encounter in replicating this program?
- Do you have any data to show the impact of this program? If so, please share it with us.

Applications must be submitted to MASSP offices by March 1.

PHONE: 612-361-1510 • FAX: 612-361-6340  
MASSP • 2 Pine Tree Drive • Suite 380 • Arden Hills, MN 55112

Questions? Please contact:  
Bob Driver, Executive Director  
612-361-6159



# ROYALTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Home of the Royals*

120 Hawthorn Street, Royalton, MN 56373  
Phone (320) 584-4000  
royaltonpublicschools.org

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## 1) Description of the program

- a) During our construction project in 2015-16, Royalton Schools had a \$28 million dollar voter approved addition and improvement completed for our schools. We moved our Kindergarten and Pre-School into a new early childhood center added on to the current high school building. The addition had a large kitchen area and cafeteria. We also updated our existing HS kitchen during the building project. After a year in operation and having separate breakfast and lunch facilities in the same building, it became evident that having two lunchrooms was inefficient. It required split staff and moving food from one dining area to another. The following year, we moved all breakfasts and lunches in the building to the new cafeteria, leaving the old kitchen area empty.

We developed an idea to turn our old kitchen (which had been renovated in the project) into a Life Skills Lab. Last year, we made the decision to move forward with the idea. We hired an Agriculture teacher and developed programming for our Life Skills Lab. This year, we have Food Science, Food Production, Culinary Prep, and Life Skills after High School classes. We are also working on finding other opportunities for programming in our Life Skills Lab. We would like to develop opportunities in our Life Skills Lab to have some CNA & health care options for students in the future.

Significant investment through capital outlay has turned the kitchen into the Life Skills lab, complete with ovens, storage, student seating, and resources for bringing these Life Skills classes to life. Our strategic plan included ideas for these types of offerings being made available for our students.

Our Life Skills classes recently hosted a Veteran's Day breakfast for all veteran service members in our community. While it is still in its infancy, we are excited about how this project has started and where it could possibly go in the future.

## 2) How has it impacted your school?

- a) We lost our FACS program about 10 years ago due to budget constraints and low enrollment in those classes. While this is not a FACS program, it does contain classes that would parallel what a FACS program would look like. The Life Skills Lab and the full-time teacher have created approximately 100 seats of elective, hands-on learning opportunities that were not available to our students in past



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years. Because it is technically part of our Agriculture program, we now have three Agriculture teachers who are creating a unique, high quality Agriculture program at Royalton HS. The addition of the Life Skills Lab has allowed us to expand all of our elective class offerings in the Agriculture department. It has also taken a significant physical space in our building and made it productive again. Prior to creating the Life Skills Lab, the kitchen had turned into a large storage area.

- 3) What difficulties did you encounter in its implementation?
  - a) Finding a teacher who could come in and lead the development of a Life Skills Lab was the primary concern we had with this project. Parents and community were excited for the opportunity, but starting from scratch also included making sure students understood what these new opportunities were and finding ways to advertise these options to students was very important. Finding creative funding sources to make this a reality was a challenge that was faced over a number of school years prior to starting this project. Our Superintendent, Dr. Kristine Wehrkamp, was supportive and helped find ways to get this project off the ground.
- 4) What issues might another school encounter in replicating this program?
  - a) The opportunity was unique due to the unused space we had available to develop and build the program in. As the program grows and possibly expands in future years, the challenge will be to find qualified people to lead the programming we want to put in place. If a school has the space, does not have an existing FACS program, and wants to create hands-on learning opportunities for their students, they could re-create this program.
- 5) Data for the program:
  - a) The enrollment data for the Life Skills Lab classes are as follows:
    - i) Food Prep 1st Sem. – 18 Students (Max)
    - ii) Food Prep 2nd Sem. – 17 Students
    - iii) Food Production– 18 Students (Max)
    - iv) Life Skills After High School– 13 Students
    - v) Food Prep II– 12 Students

\*\* Because it was the first year, we developed the class titles and registered students before we hired the teacher for the program. I would expect that our numbers will max out in



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these classes, now that students know the teacher and have some familiarity with the classes that are offered.