



## **PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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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 configuration 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 (AYP) or its equivalent 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 AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be 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 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The 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.
10. 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.
11. 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

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All data are the most recent year available.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district   3   Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
  1   Middle/Junior high schools  
  1   High schools  
  0   K-12 schools  
  5   Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure:  11026

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:  Suburban
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school:   5
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	130	121	251
7	122	92	214
8	112	123	235
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
<b>Total in Applying School:</b>			700

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
2 % Asian  
4 % Black or African American  
1 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
92 % White  
1 % 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 2011-2012 school year: 4%

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

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	12
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	14
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	26
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	703
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.04
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	4

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

Total number of ELL students in the school: 2

Number of non-English languages represented: 1

Specify non-English languages:

Finnish

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 9%  
 Total number of students who qualify: 60

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: 10%  
 Total number of students served: 68

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

<u>9</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>8</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>44</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

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

	<u><b>Full-Time</b></u>	<u><b>Part-Time</b></u>
Administrator(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>33</u>	<u>0</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>
Total number	<u>55</u>	<u>10</u>

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: 21:1

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

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	%	%	%	%	%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size: \_\_\_\_\_

Enrolled in a 4-year college or university \_\_\_\_\_%

Enrolled in a community college \_\_\_\_\_%

Enrolled in vocational training \_\_\_\_\_%

Found employment \_\_\_\_\_%

Military service \_\_\_\_\_%

Other \_\_\_\_\_%

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_**0%**

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**

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The mission statement of the Aurora City School District is to ensure that “through providing a nurturing environment, with high expectations and effective programs, all students will reach their full potential and graduate prepared to become responsible, productive members of society.” Banners throughout Harmon proclaim that students are expected to “Do the Right Thing.” This mantra encompasses all the rules, codes, and beliefs of the school. By “doing the right thing,” students keep their focus on learning, respectful interpersonal interactions, and extracurricular activities; teachers focus on instruction; the administration focuses on providing an enriched environment that the middle school students require as they transition from elementary to middle to high school.

Aurora is a residential community in Portage County, Ohio, located 25 miles southeast of Cleveland and 20 miles northeast of Akron. It remained a Western Reserve farming community until the early 1960s. The demand for suburban residential development in the metropolitan Akron and Cleveland areas has spurred population increases by over 60%. Currently, the 25 square-mile city has a population of 15,500. The school district is comprised of three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. The majority of parents of Harmon Middle School students are highly educated professionals. They are consistently supportive, involved in their children’s education, and take pride in the accomplishments of the school.

Students who attend Harmon Middle School are welcomed into sixth grade by staff members who are experts in transforming the elementary student into a high-performing middle school student; they work together to finalize the year with an educational, fun and memorable, camp trip that symbolizes the students’ rite of passage to the seventh grade. Teachers of seventh graders know well that the academic load increases, yet the teachers transition the students in such a way that they are not overwhelmed and turned off to learning. The seventh grade has academic units and field trips based upon diversity and acceptance. One is the anti-bullying unit which the guidance counselors begin by presenting lessons on bullying prevention. Students in language arts classes read novels of their choice with a theme of bullying and work in literature circles to investigate the effects of bullying. Students create anti-bullying public service video announcements as a culminating activity. In a cross-curricular unit with social studies, students read *Blood Red Horse*, a novel told in alternating perspectives of the Muslims and the Crusaders. Insights gleaned from and discussions about the novel increase understanding about the stereotypes that exist today.

Our eighth grade students take a trip to Washington D.C. in the fall, which is organized and directed by the eighth grade teaching staff. The trip complements academic requirements, the students bond in the process, which helps set the positive and hard-working atmosphere for the year. Another eighth grade focus is the Mock Congress event. The students act as legislators and simulate the process involved in passing a bill, from inception to ratification.

The staff at Harmon has developed curricular and extracurricular activities that build on each child’s individual strengths and interests; there is something for everyone at Harmon. For the last five years, an average of 90% of the student body has participated in some type of after-school activity. The active involvement of our students in both the academic and social experiences at Harmon Middle School is designed to bring out the best in students. The activities give them the sense of belonging that is essential at this stage of their development.

Students excel in both the core courses and the electives. Harmon offers the opportunity to take foreign language (Spanish or French), industrial technology, art, financial literacy, and wellness. In addition, over half the students participate in the musical fine arts program: band, choir, and orchestra.

The Harmon School P.R.I.D.E. (People, Respect, Involvement, Dedication, Excellence) program rewards both the academic and social growth of our students throughout their middle school experience. We remain committed to helping students recognize their unique interests and talents and to realize their individual and collective growth as members of the middle school community.

Harmon Middle School staff recognizes that earning the Blue Ribbon Award is a prestigious honor. Students are committed to academics. Our Performance Index score has consistently been in the top .5% of all middle schools in the state of Ohio; within the last two years, we have ranked in the top 10 middle schools out of 643. The state designates five performance levels: advanced, accelerated, proficient, basic, and limited. Each performance level has a point value assigned, and calculations are applied to the percentage of students at each level; the results are then added to arrive at the Performance Index. Our faculty works daily within the beliefs of Professional Learning Communities, which has transcended to the students in a culture of learning. This is evident at the end of each grading period when 55% to 65% of the students consistently earn a 3.5 or higher grade point average. The evidence and data that have been provided lead us to believe that Harmon Middle School is worthy of receiving this honor.

## **PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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### **1. Assessment Results:**

**A.** Since Harmon Middle School is comprised of grades six, seven, and eight, the state of Ohio requires students to take the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA). All students take the reading and math portions, and then the eighth graders take the science portion as well. There are five levels of measurement within the OAA's: from lowest to highest, limited, basic, proficient, accelerated, and advanced. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) most prominently publishes the proficient statistic. At Harmon, the faculty is very familiar with and is driven by the phrase "moving students to the right." Proficient means students passed Ohio's standardized assessment; however, nobody within this educational institution rests until they have moved all of their students as far to the right as possible, which is advanced.

Harmon Middle School's scores are consistently at least one stanine above the state average. As soon as the OAA scores arrive in the middle of June, staff members dissect their students' scores, along with the scores of students they will have for the upcoming school year. Initially, they look to break down each area where students could move to the right. Students, who scored advanced and cannot move a measurement to the right, have their scores diagnosed to determine how they could still improve within the parameters of advanced scores. We do not feel that being the best should be a one-time goal, but rather an expectation from year to year.

**B.** The concept of taking pride in what one does is a major and constant topic at Harmon Middle School. This is especially true when it comes to one's grades; students here take a great deal of pride in each and every assignment, not just in their report cards. The parent of a student new to the district recently asked what her child would need to do to fit into this middle school. The principal assured her that if her son puts forth serious effort into his school work and does the right thing, he will be embraced by the faculty and the students. This culture is a significant reason why there is minimal variance in performance trends on the state tests from one year to the next. Harmon consistently performs as one of the top middle schools in the state of Ohio.

The special education subgroup garnered much attention district-wide the past year due to the difference in Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) scores between students with disabilities and their typical peers. During the past school year, 6 out of 25 students identified with disabilities did not pass the OAA; however, students in this subgroup did achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP reflects a year's growth for individual students, recognizing that while students might not have scored proficient, they made at least a year's growth in the course of the school year. Because our goal is for each student to score proficient or higher on the OAA, changes have been implemented throughout the special education department.

Among the changes implemented is the addition of a course called TSL (Targeted Skills Learning) to special education students' daily schedules. The special education interventionists now have their students for the second half of the language arts block for the TSL class. Within that class, students focus on specific skills or targeted areas of deficit. Another change is the incorporation of Read Naturally, a comprehensive fluency-based program with a comprehension component, for those students requiring this intervention. In addition, teacher assignments have been restructured to allow interventionists to become embedded in one specific content area. This enables them to meet within Professional Learning Communities (PLC) of just one area to help develop and refine lessons. The addition of iPads to the TSL class has provided students the applications and software to increase focus, foster task persistence, and improve short-term memory. Students continue to have a support period during the school day; in addition, interventionists provide assistance before or after school, and/or during students' lunch recess.

The changes have resulted in increased student interest and participation, which positively impact achievement. The district special education coordinator and the Harmon principals meet and communicate frequently with the interventionists and tutors to assess and refine the implementation of those changes. The content area teachers in the inclusion classes are vital to these discussions.

The PLC for special education is increasingly focused on sharing student data, collaborating on instruction, and improving student learning. We listen to others outside of the district and to educators here at Harmon; the widespread opinion is that the adjustments that have been made will have a significant impact on the achievement scores of students with disabilities.

## **2. Using Assessment Results:**

Harmon Middle School utilizes two types of data, statewide assessments (OAA) and curriculum-based measures (local common formative and summative assessments) to improve school achievement, student learning, teacher instruction, and to inform stakeholders of school and student achievement.

Statewide assessment data are used school wide to analyze cohorts of students entering a new grade. Grade level teams analyze trends of the cohort to gain an understanding of the students' strengths and weaknesses. This is not done on an individual student basis, but rather in the entire cohort. The team may notice that extended response scores are a relative weakness which indicates an area on which to focus. The team also looks at areas of strength and shares pedagogical strategies where a high level of achievement was attained.

Along with the statewide assessment, we run a school-wide practice OAA. This familiarizes our students with the process, the proctors, and their stamina in the context of taking the OAA. This produces valuable data at the indicator level. Unlike the state OAA results, information from the practice OAA offers data for each grade level indicator. This allows staff to provide aligned instruction to ensure student mastery of state objectives. In addition, it provides the administration and guidance counselors a detailed look at the proctoring schedule, room assignments, number of certified substitutes needed and the subgroups of students requiring accommodations. This process is truly an audit of our curriculum and instructional goals which facilitates improvement at a district, building and student level.

Powerful learning opportunities arise from our local curriculum-based common assessments. Teachers spend time weekly, often daily, collecting formative data on both an individual student and classroom level. This provides teachers with two important pieces of data. First, it provides the teacher, in real time, with information on each student's performance on a particular learning target. This allows students to receive timely intervention before the curriculum moves forward. Second, it enables students to become an integral part of the evaluation process of their own learning. Using "I can ..." statements and a method for tracking their own formative assessment data, students take ownership of what they have mastered or when they need a relearning opportunity. Teachers track this same data set to ensure all students are receiving opportunities for relearning. These practices result in higher student achievement.

Formative assessment data also permits our teachers to perform informal action research. Each content-area curriculum is aligned to our state objectives. It is also aligned internally within the grade level with regards to scope, sequence, pacing and assessments. All teachers in that content area teach the same learning targets, but are not limited in their delivery or pedagogical autonomy. Comparing classroom formative data with data from other classrooms provides teachers the opportunity to discuss best practices.

Our summative assessments do not mean learning has stopped for that unit or topic. If some students are still unsuccessful, intervention and relearning applications can be prescribed and provided. Our philosophy is that learning never ends and giving up on student success is not an option. Furthermore,

formative assessments provide teachers with valuable predictive capability of student success on summative assessments.

Using standards-based grading practices, student grades are based on student achievement. While we assess effort and behavior in a separate section of the report card, they are not factored into the student's academic grades. This gives a more accurate understanding of what each student is capable of doing. The accuracy of student achievement scores reported to stakeholders is achieved because of a curriculum that is tightly aligned externally with state standards and internally within the grade level.

Parents, students and the community are informed of students' academic achievements through a variety of means. Every parent receives a state building report card. Individual student achievement is relayed to parents through the following: Parent Internet Viewer (PIV) which allows full access to their child's grades on a daily basis; report cards issued at the end of each quarter; and parent-teacher conferences held twice a year and whenever there is a need. Students' academic success is recognized in the following manner: student/athlete-of-the-week luncheon twice per quarter; .5 breakfast for any student who raises his/her grade point average by at least a half a point; and three times each year the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) sponsors an honors luncheon for students earning a 4.0 grade point average. Additionally, students are recognized through the local newspaper, the Harmon PRIDE program, Rotary Students of the Month, a scroll board in the cafeteria displaying students' accomplishments amongst their peers, positive phone calls to parents, and a special recognition and promotion ceremony at the conclusion of each year.

### **3. Sharing Lessons Learned:**

We share lessons learned at faculty meetings in-house, especially at best practices discussions during professional learning community (PLC) meetings. Staff also participates in professional meetings outside the building within the district, with other districts, or at the state level.

Our eighth grade science score was the highest in the state in 2011 based on the percentage of scores proficient and above. As a result of that success, we were contacted by several districts to learn what we were doing. The eighth grade science team and administrators met with the science teachers from a local district and shared best practice strategies, tools, activities, and lessons we had developed over the years. Those included specific learning targets, review activities, and follow-up quizzes to prove mastery.

Staff was trained in Mark Forget's MAX Teaching techniques: research-based methods that engage students with activities that teach reading strategies in all content areas. Some teachers who attended that professional development have become trainers of other teachers and provide refreshers to staff.

Several language arts teachers collaborated with Kent State University and teachers from neighboring school districts to plan the Language Arts Forum. Our teachers presented the problem-based author study unit wherein students research an author, present to peers and then to a panel of adults as a means to choose novels to be purchased for the media center. Language arts teachers participate in discussions about formative instructional practices. In keeping with best practices, they continue to have book discussions on texts such as *Notice and Note* and *The Teacher as Assessment Leader*.

The PE/health staff has presented at the state level on the state standards. Teachers have gone to other local schools to help in the implementation of those standards. Several other schools have visited our program to observe how to conduct the new assessments in this area.

The social studies teachers have acted as facilitators and mentors for teaching American History at the Summit County Resource Center. In addition, one of our staff was a grant recipient to the International Red Cross' program on Exploring Humanitarian Law where he shared the American experience with people from all over the world.

Staff members make frequent presentations at our faculty meetings. Everything –from the newest technology to special education training to understanding executive functioning –has been shared on some 35 different subjects by 19 different staff.

#### **4. Engaging Families and Communities:**

Parents and guardians are an integral part of student success. Communication is conducted through a true “open door” policy. Along with traditional parent-teacher conferences, we convene conferences for the student, parents, teachers, and administrators to develop a learning plan when the need arises. Orientations for new students and parents familiarize them with the school. Open Houses are conducted the first week of school to introduce parents to their child’s teachers and the curriculum. Informational meetings are held prior to off-campus activities, such as sixth grade camp and the Washington D. C. trip, to address parent inquiries.

Staff email addresses and classroom phone numbers are published, and parental communication is encouraged. The Parent Internet Viewer (PIV) allows immediate access to all student grades. Teachers input messages to parents on the PIV through Quick Comments, a feature showing teacher comments on specific assignments for individual students. The Homework Hotline allows access to assignments updated weekly by teachers; this benefits absent students and those needing additional information. Many teachers post their daily lessons on webpages, allowing absent students to return better prepared for their classes.

Each spring, we honor grandparents at a Grandparent Tea. Beyond that, each student in the gifted language arts class interviews a grandparent and compiles that information into a biography. Tech-Tuesday, a teacher-initiated weekly program at our media center, pairs students skilled in electronic media with senior citizens to familiarize them with new technology.

Parents participate fully in the workings of the school through the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and Parent Communication Forum (PCF). Parents run the biannual book fair, organize and distribute school supplies, and purchase novels for student use. They hold luncheons to honor students with a 4.0 average and students and athletes of the week. Parents run Destination Imagination, Girls on Track, and Robotics, French, and Lego clubs. They support the arts through booster groups for orchestra, choir, and band. Parents display student art for public viewing during school functions. The Harmon yearbook is produced entirely by parent volunteers. These parents make posters of students for hallways. Parents also run the various activities during the seventh grade challenge day.

Parent participation directly impacts our curriculum. Parents speak on Career Day. Veterans are interviewed as primary sources in social studies classes. In the last two years, social studies teachers have invited over 150 local veterans from different wars to honor their sacrifices in a moving ceremony before an awed student audience.

# PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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## 1. Curriculum:

Each common core class (reading/English language arts, math, science, social studies) is directly aligned to Ohio state standards. The district consistently updates curriculum to maintain such alignment with state standards. Incorporated into daily lessons are the five pillars of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills: competency, collaboration, communication, critical and creative thinking. We empower students with the skills necessary for college and career readiness.

We provide enriched courses in mathematics and reading/English language arts. Students can earn as many as three mathematics high school credits. Qualified language arts students have the opportunity to take gifted and honors courses. High-achieving eighth grade science students may opt to take advanced curricula that qualify them for the high school honors science program. To help our students stay ahead of the curve, social studies staff works one-on-one with the lead coordinator for the state who is responsible for developing new standards for the social studies curriculum in Ohio.

All specials, those essential non-core classes, follow current Ohio state standards. They support academics by emphasizing written responses and following language arts writing rubrics in assessing student responses. Teachers of non-core subjects help students apply and develop reading skills in understanding content area text.

Students in all three grade levels participate in health and physical education classes. These classes stress students' understanding of their bodies, the importance of physical activity, and the resources available to support mental, emotional, and social health. Students learn dance, yoga, Frisbee, golf, and other life-long activities. Recess provides additional activity time. Student fitness is assessed via FitnessGram, an online software program. Data is reported to parents quarterly and used by students to create personal fitness goals. Student data is tracked through elementary, middle and high school. Health standards are articulated across grade levels. Sixth grade nutrition focuses on the fundamentals of nutrition; seventh grade focuses on personal nutrition, while eighth grade carries on deeper conversations on the quality of food: organic versus inorganic and fresh versus canned. Aurora police officers – through a community outreach program – help conduct classes on drug and alcohol abuse in health classes.

Technology is a sixth grade elective. After mastering the basics, sixth graders create instructional videos and tutorials on various aspects of using technology which they post on the student-created YouTube channel. Technology is integrated into all subject areas across all grade levels. Internet safety is emphasized.

Students who pass the seventh and eighth grade Spanish or French courses earn one high school credit. Sixth graders are exposed to Spanish for one semester. Seventh graders are introduced to cultural elements of each country. Classes offer authentic experiences by recreating the celebration of Bastille Day and Mardi Gras; they explore *Día de los Muertos*, the Day of the Dead, wherein students create *ofrendas*, memorials, in keeping with tradition. Eighth graders engage in community volunteer activities and write about their experiences utilizing Spanish grammatical conventions.

Students in industrial technology classes use problem-solving and problem-based learning applications to develop and produce projects. Seventh graders explore the design process using technology. They design and create crash-test cars, complete with safety features that prevent damage to an egg while reaching speeds of 30 mph on a decline ramp before crashing into a brick barrier. Eighth grade students build wooden trebuchets that catapult marshmallows 25 feet to hit a target. Another aspect of the class is financial literacy: basic banking, budgeting, taxes, and cash versus credit.

All students participating in vocal and instrumental classes meet for daily instruction to develop necessary performance skills. Art students receive a solid foundation in producing, reflecting on, and understanding this visual medium. This foundation leads to successful art productions at the high school level. Our specials are directly connected to the overall curriculum and are essential components in the development of the whole child at the middle school level.

## **2. Reading/English:**

The Harmon Middle School English Language Arts Department (ELA) works to provide a rigorous and consistent literacy instruction program across the sixth, seventh and eighth grade levels. The ELA staff is currently working to incorporate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into the curriculum. Therefore, a combination of CCLS and the Ohio State Standards define the instructional goals for students in addition to the Aurora City Schools Mission Statement, to ensure that all students reach their full potential.

Students work to make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Using a balanced mix of instructional methods including constructivist, teacher-led and student-led approaches to learning, the students work on their comprehension, vocabulary, communication, research and study skills. In the sixth grade, research includes note-taking, organizing notes, and an introduction to citing sources embedded within a multi-genre research project. A focus in the seventh grade, is learning to utilize software such as NoodleTools to take notes, organize the ideas in their notes, create outlines, and compose a Works Cited page as components of a research paper collaboratively using Googledocs, a cloud-based software. During the eighth grade there is a heightened focus on evaluating the reliability and validity of sources in addition to increasing the overall effectiveness of their piece of writing. This scaffolding of research was put in place as a result of on-going articulation among middle and high school English teachers. This is representative of how the indicators are articulated across grade levels to strengthen student learning. Each grade level uses a combination of common novels and choice texts. The common novels provide a reference point for teachers to teach basic concepts such as the theme. Students and teachers can then reference those experiences and understandings as a basis for doing so in their choice novels. A multitude of genres within novels, short stories, text books and problem-based learning scenarios are provided to help students work towards applying reading strategies to increasingly complex texts while helping students develop and maintain an appreciation of reading.

English instruction works to ensure that our students are effective communicators. Projects are given across genres that consider purpose and audience. Six plus one writing traits are emphasized so that students work to consider ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation in their communication. Presentations of ideas may take the form of essays, oral communication, or video productions.

The middle school program builds on the skills acquired at the elementary level. Sentence structure is one example. Sixth grade students use their prior knowledge of simple sentences to write a cohesive paragraph using compound and complex sentences; seventh graders write multiple cohesive paragraphs on a topic using increasingly varied sentence structures. Eighth graders compose more sophisticated essays as a precursor to the writing requirements at the high school. Formative assessments are provided regularly to help identify students who need additional support. When it is evident that a student is lacking these necessary skills, intervention is provided. ELA intervention is provided either within the regular class period or outside the classroom. Outside the classroom opportunities occur before school, after school, or during a lunch recreation time. Intervention methods include but are not limited to Study Island, one-on-one re-teaching of skill or small group re-teaching of skill. Students are given the opportunity to redo or retake assessments after intervention is provided.

Harmon Middle School provides accelerated classes for students who have been identified as being gifted in language arts. These classes provide an accelerated curriculum that allows students to be pushed to reach levels that could not be as easily provided in the regular education classroom.

### **3. Mathematics:**

The clearly defined vision of Harmon Middle School's mathematics program is that students will transition from concrete to abstract problem solvers as they become algebraic thinkers. Through a constructivist approach to learning, students solve multi-step problems by efficiently utilizing a variety of strategies, thus developing deeper understanding and constructing meaning that makes sense to them, rather than just working with an algorithm. Teachers facilitate discussion by asking leading questions and identifying misconceptions as students work collaboratively to arrive at solutions. Students use this approach when they research bridge designs and construct a model bridge with toothpicks and glue that meets measurement restrictions and supports maximum load.

Students share processes and solutions with peers and adults to justify the accuracy of their findings. The core curriculum connects to real-world situations, providing students with deeper understanding of the relevance of mathematics. This year, because of the United Nations millennium goal to eradicate world hunger, students engaged in a project. They gathered statistical data on poverty in the United States and other nations and investigated organizations. The students presented facts and statistics about organizations and then voted on one to which they will donate money. They raised one thousand dollars this year for Heifer Foundation by having a movie night, auctioning gift baskets, and selling silicone wristbands. This is only one example when students develop the skill of working with peers and learning to understand and accept differing ideas.

The middle school program builds on the skills acquired at the elementary level. An example is the sixth grade program that builds on understanding of fractions, decimals, and percents. While students develop understanding of those concepts in isolation in fifth grade, the understanding of the interrelationships among them is explored in sixth grade. In seventh and eighth grades, this understanding is then applied to ratios, proportions, and other number relationships.

Formative assessments are given on a regular basis to identify students who need intervention. These students receive intervention both within and outside the class. An additional class period is provided to a fluid roster of students needing relearning opportunities as well as those who seek help.

The mathematics program at Harmon Middle School stays true to the Aurora City Schools mission by encouraging all students to reach their potential through an enriching mathematics environment. Harmon Middle School provides accelerated classes for identified mathematically-gifted students. During sixth grade, these students complete the sixth, seventh and eighth grade state curricula. As seventh and eighth graders, these students take high school courses.

### **4. Additional Curriculum Area:**

Harmon Middle School's Science Department continually works to provide students with a comprehensive, inquiry-based science program aligned with the Ohio State Science Standards, our local curriculum, and the school's mission statement. This rigorous program includes both hands-on inquiry activities and instruction on the scientific process. Science teachers work together in lesson design and assessment development during a common planning time. Three years ago, two new science labs were added to our middle school; all science classes are now taught in a fully-equipped lab. Students create and demonstrate chemical changes, investigate and test minerals, examine soil samples, and hone their observation skills, allowing students to experience science exactly as it is meant to be experienced: hands-on. Technology and computer-based activities such as online simulations on breeding chickens to demonstrate Mendelian genetics; student-response systems for immediate feedback to assess the need for re-teaching or clarification; and motion detectors that reveal the correlation between motion and a display on a distance-time graph are used. These are only some of the many hands-on activities that keep the students engaged. Embedded in our pedagogy is the use of formative assessment data to design and modify instruction, as well as identify students who require intervention. Identified students receive targeted intervention during our science intervention period.

The Ohio Science Eighth Grade Achievement Assessment includes curricula from the sixth, seventh and eighth grades; articulation across those grade levels is a priority. Alignment with state curriculum and on-going revision of learning targets increase student achievement. For example, eighth graders did not have the background knowledge of the properties of matter which resulted in limited understanding of density. Sixth grade teachers then enriched their curriculum to increase knowledge on basic properties of matter which students referenced in the eighth grade, thus mitigating the gap. As a result of this scaffolding, students are predisposed to acquire newer and more complex knowledge.

The continuing success of Harmon science students each year on state assessments provides further evidence that the science program offers a rich learning environment. Students not only thrive, but acquire skills such as critical thinking, scientific inquiry, reasoning, and problem-solving for use both in and beyond the classroom. The students' awakening leads to an awareness of the scientific workings of the world and to the pursuit of science-related careers for some.

## **5. Instructional Methods:**

At Harmon, we provide a continuum of services and accommodations for all students. Classroom teachers differentiate instruction based on students' academic needs as well as learning style. Tiered lessons, student choice of books in units in reading, varied questioning strategies, group investigation and individual learning contracts support differentiation. Teachers meet regularly as curricular and grade level teams, through Professional Learning Communities, to develop lessons, evaluate student needs and discuss instructional strategies.

Accelerated courses in language arts and math are in place for the subgroup of students who have been identified as gifted. In the non-accelerated classrooms, teachers make available challenge problems and rubrics that allow extension opportunities. In preparing classroom lessons, instruction includes addressing the auditory, visual and kinesthetic learners.

Students with special needs are in guided support periods and have either small group instruction or special education services provided in an inclusion setting. Targeted Skills Learning (TSL) is an approach used to close the gap in any area of weakness. Study packets are designed to accommodate the amount of content students need to study so they are able to master key concepts. When a student struggles with memory and/or comprehension, assessments may be modified to include less material or to target only essential concepts. Assessments may be written, oral or computer-based.

During recreation time, an Academic Resource Center (ARC) is provided by regular education teachers who are assigned to provide small group intervention in the areas of math, language arts and science to all students. Special needs students are given the opportunity to attend "lunch bunch" during which time concepts are reviewed and re-taught.

Use of technology includes the availability of SMART Boards in every classroom which are utilized during class time and lessons can be recorded for review at home. Frontloading is made possible through videotaped lessons accessed through teachers' websites/wiki pages. iPad applications support reinforcement and authentic lessons. In addition, Harmon Middle School students and teachers have access to five computer labs, two portable laptop carts, and one portable iPad cart. All teachers, along with each student within the multi-handicapped classroom, have been provided with iPads.

Strategies are put into place to address the specific needs of the subgroup of students who qualify for 504 accommodations. This could include preferential seating, copies of classroom notes, recue and refocus, enlarged print, assessing student knowledge orally, and adjusting work load.

## **6. Professional Development:**

The school and district professional development approach is directly related to the district and building goals. We have the opportunity to do a formal professional development day twice during the school year as well as providing for individual growth opportunities in the summer and, when appropriate, during the school year. All staff attends these opportunities.

During the past seven years, our focus has been related to the continued development of the Professional Learning Communities, Assessment Literacy, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, technology and Value-Added designation. Common planning time affords teachers within grade levels and across content areas the opportunity to discuss and explore ideas related to the above concepts in order to incorporate them into teaching and student learning.

In November, the staff focused on the development of our Student Learning Objectives (SLO) in preparation for the new state teacher evaluation tool. In the past seven years, our staff has attended seminars by Robert Marzano, Anthony Muhammad, Doug Reeves and Richard DuFour. Information gleaned from these experts was shared through Professional Learning Communities to promote best practices.

We have trained in the MAX Teaching method to gain additional skills in developing and presenting lesson activities. Our staff has attended sessions taught by our special education director on accommodations and modifications, executive functions and use of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. We have learned how to develop more effective and accurate IEPs and 504s, focusing on the specific needs of the individual student.

The *Rules of Notice* has been researched and utilized to help students develop strategies for a better understanding of the material being read. Teachers have increased understanding about assessment through discussions of the literature read on best practices and the use of formative and summative assessments to direct their teaching and student learning. Teachers are continuing to develop methods to adapt this knowledge to the classroom.

Considerable time has been invested in incorporating the use of technology that enhances our teaching and allows students to embrace that same technology responsibly. Staff members have attended the Connected Journey Class, an in-house learning opportunity taught by district technology personnel that focuses on iPad usage, for personal and professional discovery.

After attending professional development opportunities, the staff members share their experiences and knowledge learned with colleagues. Professional development is one of the significant connectors to our belief in collaboration and learning.

## **7. School Leadership:**

There are four main components of leadership at Harmon Middle School: the principal and assistant principal, the guidance department, the department heads, and teachers and staff. It is a team concept, with across-the-board shared responsibility guided by the district and building vision statement and goals. Leadership is based on the belief that administration will support and care about our entire staff, so the staff's focus can be on the care of students. Anyone can step forward to propose an idea or solution to a problem. Leadership comes from multiple directions. Administrators do not assume to have all the answers or the knowledge to solve every concern. Our shared leadership necessitates addressing issues as they arise and allows for appropriate professional exchange to correct those issues. The element of trust is an integral component of this shared leadership.

We are a building fully engaged in the belief of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) process. Student learning is our focus; we are committed to a collaborative process. Our results are based on data, not intentions. We have weekly meetings to discuss what we are doing or might do to help guide students

toward success. Administrators are part of and not just an “add-on” to the discussion. As a result of these meetings, we have developed an academic environment that provides for daily intervention before and after the regular school day, and during all lunch periods. In addition, an academic Saturday School is another avenue for students to learn, get caught up with work, review unclear concepts, and receive additional support from a certified staff member.

Administrators and staff have continuing conversations regarding student academic performance and achievement. Everyone in the building understands her or his responsibility toward learning. If leadership can be best defined as getting people to work successfully toward a common goal, which in our case is helping students become better learners, we truly are educational leaders.

# PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics                      Grade: 6 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment  
Edition/Publication Year: Yearly Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	97	96	93	97	98
Accelerated and Advanced	85	83	73	80	81
Number of students tested	205	224	239	244	259
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	2	2	3	6
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	1	1	1	2
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	96	100	89	79	92
Accelerated and Advanced	82	69	60	53	67
Number of students tested	22	16	35	19	12
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	76	80	60	68	78
Accelerated and Advanced	48	40	24	50	50
Number of students tested	25	15	25	22	18
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. White, Non-Hispanic</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	97	96	93	97	98
Accelerated and Advanced	86	83	74	80	82
Number of students tested	193	208	223	231	242
<b>NOTES:</b>					
Alternative Assessment Data 2007-2008: Students came to Harmon Middle School from the fifth grade with IEPs supporting the need for alternative assessment.					

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading                      Grade: 6 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: Yearly Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	98	95	97	97	96
Accelerated and Advanced	72	64	63	72	61
Number of students tested	205	225	240	245	259
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	2	2	3	6
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	1	1	1	2
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	100	94	97	79	92
Accelerated and Advanced	64	31	40	32	42
Number of students tested	22	16	35	19	12
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	88	53	80	73	56
Accelerated and Advanced	16	20	12	27	33
Number of students tested	25	15	25	22	18
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. White, Non-Hispanic</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	97	95	97	97	96
Accelerated and Advanced	72	63	62	72	63
Number of students tested	193	209	224	232	242
<b>NOTES:</b>					
Alternative Assessment 2007-2008: Students came to Harmon Middle School from the fifth grade with IEPs supporting the need for alternative assessment.					

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics                      Grade: 7 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: Yearly Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	95	94	96	98	97
Accelerated and Advanced	62	63	78	72	72
Number of students tested	233	251	242	263	249
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	2	3	7	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	3	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	83	84	89	82	100
Accelerated and Advanced	28	49	44	59	65
Number of students tested	18	37	18	17	17
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced		91		100	
Accelerated and Advanced		55		30	
Number of students tested		11		10	
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	69	59	76	84	82
Accelerated and Advanced	31	19	29	42	32
Number of students tested	16	27	21	19	22
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. White, Non-Hispanic</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	95	94	96	98	98
Accelerated and Advanced	62	63	78	73	72
Number of students tested	216	232	229	246	236
<b>NOTES:</b>					
Alternative Assessment Data 2008-2009: Students came to Harmon Middle School from the fifth grade with IEPs supporting the need for alternative assessment.					

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 7 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: Yearly Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	96	96	98	97	97
Accelerated and Advanced	68	74	78	66	66
Number of students tested	234	251	242	262	250
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	2	3	7	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	3	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	89	95	89	88	88
Accelerated and Advanced	56	51	39	41	53
Number of students tested	18	37	18	17	17
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced		91		100	
Accelerated and Advanced		55		30	
Number of students tested		11		10	
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	69	74	81	74	91
Accelerated and Advanced	25	26	19	53	41
Number of students tested	16	27	21	19	22
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. White, Non-Hispanic</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	96	96	98	96	98
Accelerated and Advanced	69	75	78	67	67
Number of students tested	217	232	229	245	237
<b>NOTES:</b>					
Alternative Assessment Data 2008-2009: Students came to Harmon Middle School from the fifth grade with IEPs supporting the need for alternative assessment.					

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics                      Grade: 8 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: Yearly Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	96	97	95	96	96
Accelerated and Advanced	56	74	65	58	68
Number of students tested	250	248	269	247	237
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	4	6	0	5
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	2	2	0	2
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	94	83	78	95	94
Accelerated and Advanced	45	42	48	55	59
Number of students tested	31	24	23	20	17
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	92			80	80
Accelerated and Advanced	42			30	60
Number of students tested	12			10	10
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	76	65	67	76	91
Accelerated and Advanced	14	35	33	24	27
Number of students tested	21	20	21	21	22
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. White, Non-Hispanic</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	97	97	96	97	97
Accelerated and Advanced	56	74	67	60	67
Number of students tested	228	234	254	232	222
<b>NOTES:</b>					
Alternative Assessment Data 2009-2010: Students came to Harmon Middle School from the fifth grade with IEPs supporting the need for alternative assessment.					

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading                      Grade: 8 Test: Ohio Achievement Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: Yearly Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	98	99	98	93	97
Accelerated and Advanced	84	83	80	61	75
Number of students tested	249	247	268	247	236
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	4	6	0	5
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	2	2	0	2
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	100	100	83	70	100
Accelerated and Advanced	68	63	44	30	53
Number of students tested	31	24	23	20	17
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	100			60	100
Accelerated and Advanced	67			30	60
Number of students tested	12			10	10
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	86	90	81	62	77
Accelerated and Advanced	43	40	43	19	36
Number of students tested	21	20	21	21	22
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced					
Accelerated and Advanced					
Number of students tested					
<b>6. White, Non-Hispanic</b>					
Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced	98	98	98	94	96
Accelerated and Advanced	84	83	82	62	76
Number of students tested	227	233	253	232	221
<b>NOTES:</b>					
Alternative Assessment Data 2009-2010: Students came to Harmon Middle School from the fifth grade with IEPs supporting the need for alternative assessment.					