

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Scott E Hattenberg  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Solon Middle School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6835 Som Center Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Solon State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 44139-4207

County Cuyahoga County

Telephone (440) 349-3848 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://www.solonschools.org E-mail Tamarastrom@solonboe.org

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Fred Bolden E-mail fredbolden@solonboe.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Solon City Tel. (440) 248-1600

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mrs. Julie Glavin  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
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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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 TOTAL

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the 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	0	0	0
7	188	170	358
8	149	192	341
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	337	362	699

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 22 % Asian
  - 17 % Black or African American
  - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 53 % White
  - 6 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report 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.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 7%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	27
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	47
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	699
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Korean, Panjabi, Gujarati, French, Russian, Ukranian, Marathi, Arabic

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
12 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %

Total number students who qualify: 79

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %

69 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>6</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>15</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>38</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>4</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	29
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	20
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 24:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2019.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

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

Yes X      No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.      2010

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

At Solon Middle School, we work to build passion for learning, perseverance, and character in every student, every day.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Tucked in the southeast corner of suburban Cuyahoga County, the City of Solon and Village of Glenwillow – the two communities that make up the Solon City School district – are known for excellent schools, beautiful parks and recreation areas, and a wide array of businesses and services that make the area a vibrant place to live and work.

Solon was founded as a rural farming community in 1820 and neighboring Glenwillow was established as a company town for the Austin Powder company in 1893. Today, the suburban environment encompassing the Solon City School district honors the rich traditions of a family-oriented community and the innovations that come with an extensive corporate and industrial base that includes technology, manufacturing, retail and health care.

Families who choose to live within the Solon school district are seeking a comprehensive educational program complemented by extensive extracurricular opportunities in the arts, athletics and community service for their children. Programmatically, the Solon Schools focus on the whole student, and the three A's – academics, arts and athletics – all share equal emphasis. The district's mission of commitment to excellence and meeting the needs of every child, every day ensures that the educational program and co-curricular activities available throughout the Solon Schools meet the community's high standards.

The heart of the Solon Schools' mission is ensuring all students attain the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing, ethical citizens in the global community. Through the district's strong partnership with city government, area businesses and parent volunteers and booster groups, Solon students' connections and educational opportunities are enriched by a strong foundation and tools for success.

Under that umbrella, Solon Middle School challenges all students, regardless of their academic level, with differentiated classroom instruction. All students individually track their progress so they can progress toward meeting annual yearly progress goals. The school offers multiple levels of academic coursework to provide each student with the appropriate level of rigor and academic challenge. Advanced students are able to take high school level courses such as algebra and honors geometry as well as pursue additional challenges through the state's College Credit Plus program. Students can also extend their reading and writing with the personal learning challenge language arts class or take the advanced science class in the eighth grade, which requires participation in the school's inquiry-based winter science fair. Most students also select one of the school's world language offerings, including Spanish, French and Mandarin Chinese. For students who need more intensive support, Solon Middle School provides double-period academic support classes and guided study hall. Additionally, students participate in electives in STEM, computer and industrial technology, family and consumer science, fine and performing arts, and health and physical education. The breadth of offerings helps students prepare to meet their goals as they begin to transition toward high school and look at future plans for 4-year college, the workforce, or service in the military or safety forces.

Solon Middle School also fosters participation in a wide variety of clubs, sports and extra-curricular activities to encourage students to explore and excel in other areas outside of the academic classroom. One such program is the "Start With Hello" program from Sandy Hook Promise foundation. "Start With Hello" layers over all school activities that can be used to teach students necessary skills aimed at creating a culture of inclusion in their school and the community around them. This program helps build students' confidence and focuses on their social-emotional well-being. Work in mindfulness is also critical for students to find balance in an ever-changing and challenging world. Staff helps to promote the important techniques of pressing pause and "getting your mind right" to achieve the outcome they desire in schoolwork and relationships with peers. Similarly, a schoolwide initiative to increase attention on growth mindset and executive function helps with skill building for students in organization and promoting overall student success and well-being.

Solon Middle School last earned the National Blue Ribbon School Award in 2010. This award is a source of enormous pride in the school and district community as an independent reflection of the quality of the

school's educational program. Although professional learning communities, common assessments and data analysis practices were integral in the school earning the 2010 Blue Ribbon, the current collaborative culture at Solon Middle School is more robust and refined. Collaboration and interdependence among the entire Solon Middle School team is making more inroads and finding more successes in challenging students, closing gaps and implementing intervention strategies than 10 years ago. Importantly, that focus is incorporating broader and more real-time application of 21st century skills such as inquiry-based problem-solving, communication and critical-thinking to better position students for the future.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

The overarching instructional philosophy in Solon Middle School, like all Solon Schools, is fidelity to standards-based learning and commitment to ensuring all students can and will learn. The Solon curriculum is aligned to the state’s rigorous academic content standards while simultaneously embracing and implementing research-based best teaching practices in the classroom.

Three words are having a powerful impact on student learning and achievement at Solon Middle School: Today’s learning target. Research shows that just like adults, children are more motivated and task-oriented if they understand what is expected of them. This is why teachers explicitly share the learning target or goal for the day before each lesson begins, post it in the room and reference it throughout the lesson. It may sound simple, but it represents a significant paradigm shift to a shared focus on accountability and ensuring student understanding. Teachers use the learning targets to provide a roadmap for the day’s concepts and expectations and design opportunities embedded in the classroom instruction to collect real-time evidence aimed at determining if students are actually learning. They analyze that data on the spot to make decisions about what they need to teach next and exactly what feedback each student needs to move learning to the next level.

Teachers have common planning time with their content area professional learning communities each day. Once a week, the time is devoted to a formal meeting with content teachers, the content interventionist and the administrator as members of the team. During this time, the team discusses curriculum, teaching strategies and pacing guides as well as develops common formative and summative assessments and teaching materials. Two meetings per month are longer meetings focused on discussing data from assessments and developing student interventions for those who did not meet the achievement or value-added benchmark (our Pyramid process).

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

The instructional approach for reading and writing through language arts at Solon Middle School is an adaptation of Nancie Atwell’s reading and writing comprehensive workshop. This approach allows teachers to give students time and choice in their independent reading and writing. Students track their daily reading progress using Google Sheets and reflect on their independent reading progress at the end of the quarter. Students set weekly reading goals and quarterly goals for total pages and books read. They also choose individual goals for reading, such as building reading stamina, reading more challenging books, and reading multiple genres.

Based on the research, we strive to include choice when it comes to reading to motivate student exploration. This means that our independent reading is differentiated for each student, with students choosing “just right” books that interest them. Teachers assist in monitoring reading choices and helping students choose books. They also encourage students to move into higher-level books as the school year progresses. Individual conferencing is an integral part of our intervention and helps us to connect with readers and monitor their understanding of their books.

Teachers spend time unpacking the state standards into “learning to” and “looking for” statements. This makes the standards easier to understand and access for the students. The teachers study and use released state test material to align core standards and types of questions we will use in formative assessments. We craft mini lessons based on the reading and writing standards and provide students with explicit writing instruction, which includes studying mentor texts. Our approach to writing instruction is based on the work of Nancie Atwell and Lucy Calkins. We use state rubrics and mentor texts to guide our writing instruction and create student-friendly rubrics based on state standards for writing. Teachers craft a pacing guide around core standards to include informational and literary texts as well as writing.

Each quarter combines a number of formative assessments and then a summative assessment at the end of the unit study. All assessments are created by teachers in Edulastic to mirror the electronic format of Ohio's state tests. These formative assessments drive the intervention, corrective instruction and reassessments to prepare for the summative assessment. We analyze assessment data to determine strategic instruction and continued practice of standards as needed. Teachers also ensure that students have practice with technology-based reading and instruction, utilizing Google Classroom and Edulastic daily.

### **1c. Mathematics**

The Solon High School math curriculum is aligned to Ohio academic learning standards and is based on College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM), a student-centered, problem-based curriculum. CPM is the preferred learning structure for Solon Middle School math because it allows for deeper understanding of standards through peer interaction and conceptual learning. CPM's philosophies, which are research-based practices, show that students who learn in this environment are more successful in math courses as well as with life-skills because of the practice working and collaborating in teams as they learn and consider math concepts.

In all math classes, including algebra, honors geometry and grade-level seventh and eighth grade math, students work in small groups for focused mathematical instruction to allow for a greater understanding of concepts. Students utilize hands-on manipulative materials such as Algebra Tiles to gain a conceptual meaning of concepts. Students also use digital resources such as: e-books, Google, Khan Academy to support their learning. Teachers circulate the classroom to monitor, guide and intervene in the study group discussions as necessary to ensure conversations remain relevant and accurate, help clarify any confusion, and challenge students to deeper levels of understanding and exploration.

Throughout math lessons, teachers use technology such as personal responders and online programs to gain immediate information about student understanding of topics. Teachers then sort students into different groups to provide differentiated instruction for students that need support or enrichment.

In math, teachers use both formative and summative assessment data to analyze and improve student achievement. Students take common assessments that model end-of-year state assessments and each question is closely tied to a single mathematics standard. Summative assessments are analyzed in data meetings with all grade-level teachers. During this item analysis, teachers develop corrective instruction plans to ensure students learn any concepts they previously did not understand. Students take group assessments in math to synthesize their learning and prepare for the common assessment.

Google Classroom is also utilized to check on student understanding in real time and students are assigned varied, targeted assignments based on their current level of understanding. Students are required to correct their assessments using a corrective instruction document to prove that the concepts that were not mastered in time for the assessment are now the focus of their learning. They are then reassessed to see if the concept was ultimately learned.

The Solon Middle School response intervention program is a pyramid process with specific levels to address students who are struggling. All students who receive below 60 percent on a common assessment are required to meet with their subject area teacher for extra intervention and support to close their learning gap. Upon receiving the intervention, students then take another assessment to determine if they have obtained the knowledge needed to move forward.

### **1d. Science**

Solon Middle School's science curriculum aligns to Ohio's academic learning standards in the sciences. Science teachers use research-based instructional strategies within scientific inquiry-based lessons to foster scientific learning among students. Working individually and in small lab teams, students develop descriptions, models explanations and make predictions. Science content is presented through engagement of the topic (hook), explored through discovery, navigated with teacher-led mini-lessons, and expanded

through extension or intervention as determined by daily formative assessment checks. Technology is seamlessly infused in every aspect of daily instruction utilizing personal Chromebooks.

Beyond the core scientific principles, concepts and methodologies, students gain understanding of scientific interrelationships and real-world application. Inquiry and experiential learning in science includes opportunities for engagement using manipulatives, models, dissection and hands-on exploration. These are embedded in everyday lessons through small group and individual activities that allow teachers to provide the right level of rigor and reteach or launch extension activities as needed. As part of the regular instructional process, teachers use formative assessments to check on student learning. Individual adjustments to instruction based on formative assessment results are incorporated within the learning environment in real time.

Lesson plans are modified daily in response to an analysis of student responses to ensure mastery of content. Examples of formative assessments utilized are entrance slips, exit slips, Google Forms and questionnaires, drawings, self-assessments, turn-and-talk, and technology creations such as concept-based Tweets. Summative assessment data, derived from online assessment tools with technology-enhanced features, allows teachers to individually and collaboratively analyze and assess student understanding and mastery. If misunderstandings are identified as evidenced by student performance data, intervention strategies are implemented both individually and in the whole group. Like all Solon Middle School courses, the science team uses common assessments and analyze results collaboratively to ensure all students are mastering the science content and skills.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

Aligned to Ohio academic learning standards, social studies and history classes at Solon Middle School include ancient world history for seventh grade and U.S. history for eighth grade. Major components of social studies and history classes are making connections and application that enable students to make sense of increasingly complex events and interactions in today's global society using historical references and lessons to make relevant comparisons. The scope of student learning in history and social studies also includes the political, social and economic impact of cultures and the enduring impact of studied cultures and time periods on the modern world.

Using a broad range of resources such as textbooks, online interactive videos, historical documents, speeches, editorial cartoons and current news media, classroom learning of content focuses on discussions, comparing and contrasting, cause and effect, and analyzing the lessons of history and what can be gleaned from a historical context. Debates, research and other projects help students to look at history through a variety of lenses to understand different perspectives as well as to reflect on the importance of global awareness and a more informed citizenry. Cross-curricular connections are also made between history classes and other content areas to make history and civic engagement references more impactful. Even within these engaging classroom lessons, teachers weave in daily formative assessments to gauge student learning and progress. End-of-unit common assessments and data analysis provide for intervention aimed at gap closing and enrichment to enhance student learning.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

#### **1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Solon Middle School offers seventh and eighth grade students a wide variety of required and elective courses. Our goal is to teach the whole child, which incorporates all of the arts. A glance at the schedules of seventh grade students reveals 95 percent incorporating experiences in all forms of fine and unified arts classes a survey of all options offered. For eighth grade, students select from these courses as semester-long experiences.

World language is a required course, offering students high school credit and the opportunity to complete

level one of a five-year world language program that continues through Advanced Placement at the high school. The first level course is divided over the seventh and eighth grade school years and meets five days a week for the full school year. The world language curriculum incorporates culture, history and many of the essential language acquisition skills that mirror language arts. In addition, students learn other essential skills such as public speaking, cooperative learning, interpersonal speaking skills and resilience as it pertains to the interpretive skills necessary when learning another language.

All seventh graders take physical education for 12 weeks during the school year. The course is divided into two six-week rotations each semester. All eighth grade students also take physical education for 12 weeks, alternated with 24 weeks of a health and wellness class.

Music is a required course for seventh grade students and an elective for eighth graders at Solon Middle School. Students choose to take band, choir or orchestra daily throughout the school year. About 82 percent of our student body participates in music, with many students opting to participate in both instrumental and choral groups. In addition to our graded music classes, 43 percent of our music students participate in one or more of our select ensembles, which meet before the school day. These include a variety of choral groups and grade-level jazz bands.

Studio and digital arts are offered daily for 24 weeks as part of the seventh-grade curriculum for all students. These classes are on a six-week rotation with physical education. Visual art is a semester-long elective in eighth grade, with 50 percent of students participating. In these classes, students are exposed to 2-dimensional, 3-dimensional and digital work as they enhance the process of learning through decision-making, collaboration, perseverance and appreciation of diversity.

Additional technology and sustainable living interests are met for 90 percent of Solon Middle School students in seventh grade through six-week courses in industrial technology and family and consumer sciences. These courses are offered in eighth grade as semester electives. Over the course of an academic year, approximately 75 percent of students enroll in the hands-on learning lab environment of family and consumer science, helping them develop independence in essential life skills such as food preparation, meal planning, nutrition, clothing care, laundry, sewing and budgeting. The emphasis of this course is on wellness, mindfulness and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities.

In seventh grade, industrial technology students learn basic hands-on woodworking and electrical skills to foster daily problem-solving for use in everyday life. Approximately 50 percent of seventh grader students subsequently choose to take the more in-depth semester-long industrial technology course in eighth grade. The semester class expands on the technological concepts with an emphasis on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math). All of the projects within this course are based on critical-thinking and problem-solving to help prepare for future real-world experiences.

Engineering is built into a six-week STEM introductory course for seventh grade students based on mechanical STEM processes. The extended course for eighth grade students focuses on medical STEM themes. Eighth grade students may also choose to access STEM with a more scientific approach by taking the medical investigations class, in which they learn about DNA, anatomy/dissection and many scientific principles found in the medical field.

Through exploration in seventh grade and more dedicated studies in eighth grade, students have opportunities to discover and examine the foundations of varied career paths, providing more clarity for their educational track as they approach high school.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

Solon Middle School has an extensive and systematic program in place to ensure that all students are meeting academic standards. The Pyramid of Strategies is a collaborative effort among administrators, teachers, families and, of course, students. Communication and input with families and students are crucial

to identifying the level of assistance needed as well as which specific strategies may help close learning gaps for individual students. Helping the student with learning gaps to develop a growth mindset instills confidence that the student can learn and continue to make academic progress.

For students with learning gaps, the teacher implements individualized intervention and corrective instruction to meet specific student needs. Subsequently, the teacher will reassess specific skills to determine the student actually met the learning goals after intervention.

The pyramid includes multiple tiers of intervention to continue to support student needs through best instructional practices. These intensify as student gaps persist or increase. Among the strategies used are classroom-based interventions and corrective instruction, additional interventions and strategies developed with input from more members of the students' team, including teachers, parents, students, and support staff or therapist if necessary. The strategies are developed using a solution-focused approach with measurable data goals. These can include language arts or math support classes, guided study halls to help students with executive function skills deficits, makeup homework for full credit to support learning, before or after school help sessions, and check-backs with teachers to ensure learning and progress toward goals continues.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

An extensive and systematic program is in place at Solon Middle School to not only ensure that all students are meeting academic standards, but for as many students as possible that they are exceeding them as well. Providing sufficient academic rigor and ensuring students at the highest end of the achievement spectrum are also being sufficiently challenged are similarly approached in a focused and targeted manner.

Written Education Plans are developed for all students identified as gifted. Challenging course offerings, including the personal learning challenge language arts class, advanced science class for eighth grade students (which includes participation in the school's inquiry-based science fair) as well as high school level math classes in algebra and honors geometry help provide more challenge and rigor for students achieving above their grade level. Within the classroom, targeted instruction, high-specificity rubrics and formative assessment assure high-performing students are extended and exceeding expectations. Through differentiated assignments and expectations, gifted and other top-achieving students apply higher level critical thinking and analysis within their everyday work.

Some Solon Middle School students attend classes at the high school to best match the course level they need to provide sufficient challenge. Similarly, Ohio's College Credit Plus program allows for enrollment beginning in grade seven and several Solon Middle School students take advantage of the opportunity for additional challenges and the ability to earn college credit during the school year and especially over summer break.

Student participation in competitive extra-curricular activities at Solon Middle School provides additional academic enrichment. For example, students engage in high-level interscholastic math, science, history and language work through the school's award-winning Science Olympiad, Future Problem Solvers, Math Counts, Speech & Debate and Academic Challenge teams.

### **3c. Special education**

The foundational philosophy of Solon Middle School's inclusion model is excellent first instruction in the classroom with additional supports, interventions and enrichment layered over the regular education as needed to help students meet and exceed expectations. Small group support classes are taught by general and special education teachers in math and language arts to reinforce content and fill skill gaps. Classes are also co-taught with interventionists to provide real-time support for students within the regular education classroom. Interventionists serve as content specialists (working primarily in math or language arts) so they can specialize and understand the content and expectations well and help foster understanding in real time for students on IEPs. As necessary, the middle school administrative and counseling team builds intervention periods into the schedule for students with special needs who require additional support beyond the regular education classroom.

The team creates individualized and differentiated goals for students' IEPs that reflect on classroom progress data. Through the school's Pyramid of Strategies and Response to Intervention process, the team implements systematic and tiered intervention for students. Using formative and common assessment data, the team identifies areas of struggle, develops individual data goals and implements corrective instruction activities to help students learn content and skills that move them toward meeting their IEP goals. For some students, this includes targeted enrichment as well. Assessments are modified for those students who have specific, individualized needs outlined on their IEPs.

Interventionists are integral members of all content area professional learning community teams to help assess student needs and provide insight for additional strategies. Through this interdisciplinary team lens, appropriate interventions and strategies can more readily be put in place.

**3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

Solon Middle School is a diverse learning community. This includes English Language Learners who speak Korean, Panjabi, Gujarati, French, Russian, Ukranian, Marathi and Arabic. Solon's ELL program is an immersion and inclusion program. The goal for ELL students at Solon Middle School is to meet the anticipated achievement and growth benchmarks while simultaneously making strides in their overall mastery of English, through speaking, writing and understanding.

The Solon Middle School team utilizes the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment to identify students who qualify for ELL services and to determine the level of needs for individual ELL support. An ELL support period is scheduled for English language learners who need more intensive help mastering the content knowledge and skills of the curriculum. For students who have more gaps in learning, classroom teachers (together with the ELL teacher as necessary) work individually or with small student groups to hone in on where their learning is breaking down and reteach to address the gap.

Students participate in ELL small group instruction and receive academic support. Students receive more targeted language arts support in addition to the small group ELL support. The key is focused and goal-directed collaboration for students with their ELL and language arts teachers. This support extends to other content areas, such as science, social studies and math as necessary to support students with understanding.

**3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered**

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

At Solon Middle School, “The Comet Way” provides a broad framework for student engagement. Middle school is a bridge to high school and our student programming is focused on providing students with a broad array of opportunities that help them to get involved in the school and follow their emerging passions. The goal is to target the whole student and nurture their development as well-rounded adolescents.

To start each school year, Solon Middle School stages a Club Fair during the lunch periods to give students an easy way to see all of the school’s extra-curricular offerings and meet club officers. This is a strong impetus for student participation. In addition to community service clubs like Student Council or special interest groups like Ski or Literary or Art clubs, Solon Middle School also offers academic extra-curriculars teams such Chess, Future Problem Solvers, Science Olympiad, and Speech and Debate, all of which have seen state and national-award winning teams.

Promoting inclusivity is at the center of the Solon Middle School student culture and all activities. Throughout the year, the school implements student-led programming from Sandy Hook Promise, both the “Start with Hello” program in the fall to promote kindness and anti-bullying messages to students, to the “See Something, Say Something” program in spring to reinforce the messaging of kindness, anti-bullying, inclusion and violence prevention. The students also plan monthly activities through their SAVE violence prevention club.

In conjunction with national Red Ribbon Week, the school promotes healthy choices among students through a Mix-It-Up Spirit Week. Daily activities underscore inclusivity, good decision-making and getting to know other students who are not in their typical friend or peer group. In addition to growth mindset, the school employs the techniques set forth in the R Factor for mindfulness and to use a concrete model for helping students with self-regulating their emotions, behavior and attitude.

Student recognition is also important at Solon Middle School. Each academic team selects a student of the month based on teacher nominations of those who are meeting behavioral expectations and good school citizenship. Students are recognized by staff members for their passion for learning, perseverance and character. All-school pep rallies each quarter celebrate all students by focusing not only athletics but also on student clubs and the arts.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

The core of the Solon Schools’ mission is a diverse collaborative learning community of students, families, staff and community members that inspires students to achieve personal excellence. The educational experiences of students at Solon Middle School are enhanced through partnerships with four major parent groups – PTA, Music Parents, Athletic Boosters and Academic Boosters. These groups work collaboratively with the school and the community to provide important resources of volunteer time and financial support for student programming as well as student and staff recognition and appreciation.

Involving families and connecting them with the information they need to be full partners in helping ensure their child’s success increases their stake in the school community. The strong connections also foster adults who are informed about school issues within the community at-large. The district’s Strategic Planning process provides continuing direction for sharing innovations in curriculum development and implementation as well as quality programming for students in education, technology, the arts, extra-curricular activities and athletics. Within that framework, Solon Middle School develops innovative ways to broaden and strengthen communication with families, students, staff, community members and other key stakeholders. The over-riding objective is information sharing that reinforces important themes: Inspiring excellence through a high-quality educational program for all students; diverse programmatic offerings; and the evolution of education to a standards-based and collaborative learning environment that prepares students with 21st century skills and content knowledge. Varied communication vehicles are used including

targeted emails, social media postings, newsletters, hands-on orientation experiences and educational meetings (which are taped and streamed via the district's Solon Education TV at setv.viebit.com). All family orientation and information sessions are offered in the evening and all are videotaped and posted for parent convenience and future reference. The counseling and student facilitation department provides extensive social-emotional support for students and families and maintains a web page and Google Classroom with easily accessible resources. Solon Middle School students are also active community volunteers. They conduct several charitable drives, some with the support of the school's PTA, throughout the year to provide food and money to area pantries, homeless shelters, schools in need as well as organizations conducting health care research. The school devotes an entire day to "Making it Matter in May" through which students participate in a variety of volunteer projects in the community.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Creating a supportive professional culture in the Solon City Schools and Solon Middle School is a key component of ensuring student achievement at the highest levels. This is achieved through professional collaborative learning communities at the district level, across buildings and within Solon Middle School. In our school, meetings are open dialogue exchanges. Teachers share student achievement data openly with each other and discuss teaching strategies to help improve outcomes for their students. This interdependence helps them to rely on their colleagues and build their professional toolboxes. Administrators participate as learning community team members, not to evaluate teachers' data, but instead to offer suggestions or ask probing questions to spur innovative ideas within the group with the goal of moving students forward. Strategies for re-teaching and re-assessing students who have not yet mastered the content are more robust and creative given the rich professional dialogue and problem solving.

Instruction at Solon Middle School is positively impacted because teachers are able to develop more effective and targeted strategies for students who need extra time to learn the concepts or to add enrichment for students who demonstrate mastery of the content. It is important that teachers act on data to determine which students need remediation or enrichment. Additionally, administrators, counselors and school psychologists are able to coach teachers for students with specific learning needs.

Our teachers are valued and supported because we believe they are the experts in their field, and we build into the professional culture time in their schedules for these professional learning community meetings to share teaching strategies with one another. We also use our PLC meeting time to coach teachers and share ideas for teaching strategies and specific work with individual students. Ultimately, because administrators do not evaluate teachers at these meetings, teachers feel empowered to be honest about student data and dig deeper to successfully address student challenges and barriers to learning.

### **4. School Leadership:**

Solon Middle School's leadership philosophy is built on collaboration and shared leadership, with the goal to empower all stakeholders in the school. Our building leadership team, which includes the principal, assistant principal, two school counselors, school psychologist, technology resource teacher, and student assistance facilitator, strives to set the pace of expectations for everyone's behavior in our culture playbook, "The Comet Way." Learning how to respond to events, possessing a growth mindset, utilizing mindfulness strategies, and creating an inclusive environment are what we model for our faculty, staff, students and parents. These behaviors foster a positive culture in which everyone is accountable and engaged in meaningful work with our students.

We strive to incorporate the following standards of "The Comet Way" in our structure: Commit to the Work, the Power of Us and Passion for Learning. By "committing to the work," we give relentless effort, strategically and intentionally working interdependently for all to grow, achieve and succeed. We are committed to high standards and do whatever it takes for our students to be successful. This includes looking at data closely with our teachers and coaching them to develop goals and strategies that work for each individual student. We work collaboratively to meet the needs of our students, both academically and social-emotionally. This shared responsibility is important as we truly believe in "the power of us," through which the building leadership team collaborates with our department chairs and our professional learning

communities as partners in our shared vision regarding student success. We work together to offer results-oriented solutions for academic achievement and growth. As we collaborate for the sake of student success, we simultaneously exhibit a “passion for learning,” which includes developing and implementing research-based best practices. Our PLCs are devoted to this, evidenced by our structure, as we have eliminated staff meetings so that we have ample time to meet in our departments to enhance these best practices. Each administrator is part of the PLC team and attends each meeting, while school counselors and the school psychologist attend each data meetings in order to coach teachers regarding goals and strategies for corrective instruction. We expect each other to be open to this coaching and to embrace opportunities for learning and growth as these data meetings take place, as we always strive to learn what works for each individual student.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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A key practice Solon Middle School utilizes that has allowed for consistent success regardless of challenges that exist from year to year is Solon City Schools' Pyramid of Strategies. The Pyramid of Strategies is our systematic response as educators if students are not learning or demonstrating appropriate growth. The Pyramid starts in the general education classroom with the expectation that all teachers are clear on what students need to learn, how we will know if they learn it and how we respond if they are not learning. Data is reviewed and individualized goals are created for students who are not achieving. Data is also analyzed for students who are not achieving at expected levels based on their state of Ohio assessment scores (value added data).

If interventions created in response to this initial assessment data does result in success, students will move to the next level in the Pyramid, which includes more individualized goal development and intervention planning. Parents and students then participate in a meeting with teachers to problem-solve what the student, parents and educational staff can do differently to help the student be successful. Time is spent problem-solving, not admiring the problem. Following this problem-solving meeting, teachers collect data and carefully monitor student progress with increased parent and school communication. The team reconvenes after 4-6 weeks to determine the plan's effectiveness and if needed, implement additional strategies. If students are still not demonstrating success, the Pyramid team increases the intensity of the intervention, while continuing to communicate and involve parents. The Pyramid of Strategies allows us to systematically monitor the progress of all students and develop individualized academic goals and interventions to promote improvement. This collaborative process requires consistent and frequent communication between families and educators, so that all members of the team are working together and providing necessary input. Decisions are made based on student data, which allows for the creation of effective and strategic academic goals and interventions. All of these factors with the structure of the Pyramid of Strategies contribute to the academic success of all students at Solon Middle School.