

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Altoona Intermediate School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1903 Bartlett Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Altoona State WI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 54720-1723

County WI

Telephone (715) 838-2213 Fax (715) 839-6099

Web site/URL https://www.altoona.k12.wi.us/ E-mail asteffen@altoona.k12.wi.us

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* Ms. Heidi Eliopoulos E-mail heliopoulos@altoona.k12.wi.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name School District of Altoona Tel. (715) 839-6033

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 Mr. Rick Risler
(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

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

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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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 | 61 | 52 | 113 |
| 5 | 70 | 67 | 137 |
| 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 or higher | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Students | 131 | 119 | 250 |

*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
 - 2.9 % Asian
 - 2.4 % Black or African American
 - 4.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 81.2 % White
 - 9 % 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: 9%

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.

| Steps For Determining Mobility Rate | Answer |
|--|---------------|
| (1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year | 13 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year | 10 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 23 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018 | 261 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.09 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 9 |

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

Spanish, Hmong, and Korean

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

5 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 46 %

Total number students who qualify: 114

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %

49 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>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>12</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>18</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>12</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4

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:

| | Number of Staff |
|--|------------------------|
| Administrators | 1 |
| Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 11 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 10 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 1 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 2 |

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 23:1

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

| Required Information | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 | 2014-2015 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance | 96% | 96% | 96% | 96% | 95% |
| 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.

| Post-Secondary Status | |
|---|----|
| 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 No

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

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

Altoona Intermediate School is an innovative, progressive learning community in which all students are encouraged, supported, and held to high academic expectations in preparation for their future.

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

Altoona Intermediate School is located in Altoona, a small suburban community in west central Wisconsin. Nestled against Lake Altoona, our small community of about 7,000 people is the third fastest growing city in Wisconsin. It lies along the eastern edge of Eau Claire, population of approximately 67,000, and has the feel of a small town with larger city opportunities. At twenty-two square miles, the School District of Altoona is small geographically, but with rapid city and housing development, enrollment steadily increases and is currently over 1,700 students in grades 4K-12. Our school district attracts students from surrounding districts, and we have an open enrollment population of 293 with a net gain ratio of 2:1. We have four schools within our district comprised of a lower elementary, an upper elementary, a middle school, and a high school.

Our upper elementary school, Altoona Intermediate School, was created in 2013-14 and is made up of grades four and five. It began as a multi-age, project-based school and in the first two years was not meeting state expectations. In 2015-16, our school began a journey of transformation and now significantly exceeds state expectations in overall achievement and is recognized for our excellence in closing achievement gaps, which we are passionate about. While we are not as racially diverse as some districts, with just over 19% of our student body being non-white students, 20% of our student population is comprised of students with disabilities, and our largest subgroup is students from low socioeconomic households. This subgroup makes up 46% of our total student population, however this percentage does not accurately reflect our student demographics because there are many families that do not participate in the free and reduced-priced lunch program.

First and foremost the Altoona Intermediate School community is a community of learners that exemplifies growth mindset. Staff are passionate about their own learning, collaboration, and researching best practices in teaching in order to differentiate for all students. The school fully embraces the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and has restructured the school day to allow collaborative staff prep time of seventy-five minutes daily. Collaborative PLC teams are comprised of staff that support a multi-tiered system of supports for academic, behavioral, and/or social-emotional areas in order to meet the needs of the whole child. PLCs, which are comprised of classroom teachers, interventionists, and special education teachers, are the vehicle used to practice Response to Intervention. Student needs are continuously analyzed and staff study/research best practices, implement these practices, and observe and give feedback to colleagues as part of the continuous improvement cycle. This occurs on a daily basis through all layers of instruction including the Universal/Tier I instruction block, the Double Dose/Tier II twenty minute instruction block, and the Tier III thirty minute instruction block.

Our universal instruction is aligned to the Wisconsin State Standards, and in the four core subject areas, we have unpacked the standards and analyzed them using Webb's Depth of Knowledge and Bloom's Taxonomy. Based on our analysis, in some subject areas, we have adopted curricular programs, and in others, we have created our own curriculum. Regardless of who developed the curricula, we continuously analyze student learning and make changes to both to our curriculum and our evidence based, culturally responsive practices based on student outcomes. This cycle occurs for each unit of instruction throughout the year. Target and priority standards have been identified for all units of instruction and have been broken down into daily learning targets and success criteria to be used by both staff and students to help identify lesson objectives and progress toward these goals. We have additionally created another layer of curriculum in both ELA and Math, called "Double Dose," which supports students not initially meeting instruction outcomes. Finally, we have created interventions and enrichment extensions that are available to all students regardless of label, in each unit of instruction for ELA and math, and these interventions and extensions are provided both in the Universal/Tier I instruction block and in our thirty minute, Tier III instruction block.

Altoona Intermediate School has embraced and fully implemented the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model as part of our multi-tiered system of support. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the behavior and social emotional wellbeing and growth of our students is monitored continuously. We set school goals, students monitor their collective progress, and we celebrate with each goal met. This has affected our student culture positively as students with 0-1 write-up within a month has been above 90%

each month since September of 2018. We also created a resource area, called the "Think Tank," which is staffed throughout the day and serves as a place where students can go to take a break and/or to process if they are not behaviorally or emotionally ready to learn. Since the creation of this resource, our building has seen a significant reduction in the use of seclusion and restraint and the overall classroom environment has been more positive. In recognition of these accomplishments and these efforts, our district was awarded a 2019 First Place Magna Award by the National School Board Association for breaking down barriers for underserved students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

In the Altoona Intermediate School, our curricular philosophy and approach first requires staff to have a deep understanding of the Wisconsin State Standards. Staff participate in a study of their subject level standards, unpack the standards, and discuss the depth students will attain according to Blooms Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge. Once this common understanding is attained, we have a guaranteed curriculum for our students. We then look at various curricula and analyze the alignment to our state's standards as well as the depth attained within these programs. In some cases, such as math, we have found a curriculum that aligns to both the standards and the depth of knowledge attained, and therefore have adopted a program. In other subject areas, we have not found a curriculum that aligns as well as we would like and have created our own. English Language Arts is an example of a subject area that we have created our own curriculum.

Regardless of format, whether an adopted curriculum or our own created curricula, our district recognizes the importance of curriculum and has set days aside in the calendar year for all staff and teams to work on curriculum. PLCs meet weekly to unpack standards, create or identify common assessments, and create daily learning targets and success criteria for the students to enhance student ownership of learning. All curricula are presented in a gradual release model, and student learning is analyzed several times within each unit of instruction. Curriculum changes in a continuous improvement cycle based on student learning results and is always evolving.

We strongly believe in the partnership between home and school and have put together a "Home School Communication Plan" that encompasses more than Parent Teacher Conferences and report cards. This keeps parents and guardians continuously informed on what their children are learning and of their academic performance throughout the year. Finally, we believe in the power of "yet." Altoona Intermediate School is a safe place to learn. If a student has not mastered a skill, we adhere to the idea that they have not learned it "yet" and give multiple opportunities for mastery.

1b. Reading/English language arts

Our Reading/English language arts (ELA) curriculum is aligned to the Wisconsin State Standards and aligns to the state recommended 120 minutes blocked into the schedule daily. Using a gradual release and balanced literacy model, our ELA block is broken into a Language Workshop, Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, individual and/or small group conferring block, and independent work time. With help from our Curriculum Director and Principal, staff work together in teams to develop curriculum using the Understanding By Design (UBD) model (also known as Backward Design). Staff regularly participate in a study of state standards and have come to a consensus on the essential standards that will be assessed throughout the year. Next units have been created from the yearlong plan and common assessments, both summative and formative, are created within the unit. Standards are unpacked and further broken down into daily learning targets and success criteria that are posted for both students and staff. This ensures that our curriculum is guaranteed across classrooms. Assessments vary in nature from projects and products to performance-based tasks. Finally, resources, such as strategies and reading materials, are created or pulled from multiple sources and formats to align to the student learning outcomes. Curriculum is ever evolving as PLCs meet to analyze student learning within each unit of instruction, and changes may be made to pacing, resources, and assessments based on these outcomes.

Our curriculum goes through a continuous improvement cycle for each unit of instruction through the PLC process. Through professional development and study of John Hattie's Visible Learning, we have broken down the beginning, middle, and end of the lesson to enhance student ownership in the learning process. Staff have further developed an additional layer of curriculum, called "Double Dose," which aligns to the universal curriculum/standards and is used by classroom teachers, interventionists, and special education

teachers during the ELA block to add an additional layer of support within our Tier I. Staff confer with students using a Research, Compliment, and Teach cycle to give students feedback on performance toward goals throughout each unit. With each of the above mentioned systems changes, we have noted improvement in student learning outcomes in terms of overall achievement as well as in closing the gaps.

1c. Mathematics

In 2015-16, a team of K-12 staff participated in a math core program review, and based on their analysis of standards as well as the depth of mathematical thinking, the Altoona Intermediate School adopted Investigations as our core curriculum. Investigations aligns with the Common Core and is a student centered, inquiry-based program that requires active learning, discovery and collaboration. Students engaged in "math talk" and turn and talks. There is a large focus on flexible math thinking and justification of reasoning. There is also a strong home/school component with online access for parents.

After adoption of the program, all staff went through professional development and a three year plan was created with yearly goals set to measure progress. In the past three years, with the help of our math coach, professional development has been ongoing and yearly goals have centered on creation of procedural and analytical learning targets, an assessment framework, math fluency, and math learning game protocols. Staff also participated in two Number Talks book studies and went into colleagues' classrooms to give feedback as a way to learn and build capacity.

As with our ELA curriculum, an additional layer of universal curriculum, "Double Dose," was created and aligns to and supports the grade level standards. We have also adopted IXL, an online curriculum that allows students to work on various skills at their own pace and instructional level. Through our PLCs, we analyze student learning continuously throughout each unit and adjustments are made to the curriculum in regard to pace and assessment. We have team-taught and supported classrooms and provide pre-teaching and re-teaching to groups of students based on need. Finally, PLCs have created daily common formative checks that drive instruction for the following lesson. Our overall achievement as well as our closing the gaps data have continually increased in math because of these practices.

1d. Science

One year ago, we adopted Mystery Science for grades K-5. Mystery Science is a program based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). These standards are cross-curricular and encompass the domains of science including life science, earth science, space science, engineering, and physical science. Mystery Science is an inquiry and experimentation-based program. Lessons spark interest and are highly engaging. They are launched with online videos that give background and pose questions to provoke curiosity. Collaboration with peers is required and students learn and apply the scientific method as they develop hypothesis, engage in experiments, collect data, and report their findings. This is also known as the 5E instructional framework in which students Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, and Evaluate within science lessons. English Language Arts is woven through the lesson as students read non-fiction text and have opportunities to produce writing and there is a strong STEM tie as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math is integrated throughout. Teachers use common assessments throughout each unit to measure academic progress and FOSS Science is used as a supplement for some units in order to dig deeper into subject matter.

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

As with English Language Arts (ELA), social studies is a subject area in which staff have created their own curriculum and social studies is integrated heavily into ELA as many topics that students read and write about center around topics within Wisconsin's Social Studies State Standards. This subject area is currently undergoing curricular revisions and rewriting as Wisconsin just came out with new state standards. Last year, a K-12 team was part of a core program review to ensure that our vertical scope and sequence aligns to the new standards and topics. Based on these results, some units of instruction have moved to other grade levels, some units have a different emphasis, and some new units are being created. Units being developed are also being developed using the inquiry model that is linked to the National Social Studies Standards and

C3 framework that incorporates College, Career, and Civic life.

Now that the vertical framework is in place and the essential standards and topics have been identified across grades and within each grade level, this year's focus has been on building curriculum with the goal of full implementation next year. Altoona Intermediate School staff have been working together in teams to develop curriculum using the Understanding By Design (UBD) model. Common assessments, both summative and formative, are being created, and standards are being unpacked and further broken down into daily learning targets and success criteria. Assessments vary in nature from projects and products to performance-based tasks and we are currently in the process of analyzing our resources to ensure that complex fiction and nonfiction texts are provided and students use primary and secondary sources to achieve desired learning outcomes with the goal of students being informed citizens active in their community. Next year, once we are in full implementation, we will analyze student learning and make changes to curriculum based on results.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Arts (Art and Music):

Every week, students participate in 70 minutes each of art and music. In art class, students build their academic vocabulary, develop fundamental art skills, use various art tools, and explore two and three-dimensional mediums such as paint, clay, sculpture, and technology to design and create projects. Our art and classroom teachers have worked collaboratively on curriculum and numerous art units have components integrated within final ELA products and projects.

In music class, students learn essential foundational skills, music vocabulary, and multiple pieces of composition. They then showcase their yearlong learning through a performance for their families and the community. During this final performance, they not only showcase their learning of multiple musical pieces, performances are also choreographed and students perform dance pieces to show what they have learned about rhythm and beat. Multiple pieces incorporate instruments such as drums and other percussion instruments, the recorder, and the ukulele.

Physical Education and Health:

Three times per week for 30 minutes, students participate in physical education/health. In addition to learning about teamwork and good sportsmanship, there are indoor and outdoor units and activities, and students practice the fundamental skills for various games and sports. Students also develop fine and gross motor skills and learn about staying healthy and making healthy choices. Our physical education and music teachers collaborate and many of the choreographed dances are learned and practiced in phys ed in preparation for the final, end-of-year performance. In addition to our regularly scheduled physical education, we also offer an adaptive course for students who need special accommodations and modifications.

Foreign Language:

Fourth and fifth grade students learn Spanish every week for 30 minutes per week. Spanish is taught to all students starting in our district starting in kindergarten and we have course offerings available to students through high school, including AP coursework in which students can earn college or dual credit. A K-12 scope and sequence has been established and students progress through speaking, listening and writing skills as part of this language acquisition. Students are assessed and progress through the various language levels from Novice-Low, Mid, and High to Intermediate-Low, Mid, and High. In addition to language acquisition, students explore various Spanish-speaking countries and the cultures. With Spanish being the second most spoken language in the US, with our ever-increasing global society, and with our ability to communicate

across the world, we value our districts' commitment to offering foreign language to students in all grades.

Technology/Library/Media:

In addition to having library every other week, students in our school have Business Education and Technical Education for 30 minutes each on a weekly basis. In Business Education, students learn keyboarding skills as well as basic information processing, digital citizenship and internet safety. Our classroom and business education teachers collaborate on various units to ensure generalization of skills learned in both settings. Our school has a Fab Lab and was the recipient of two state grants. Students design and create products with laser engravers, 3D printers, banner makers, vinyl cutters, injection molders, vacuum molders, and embroidery machines. Students also work with welding simulators, learn CAD, and learn to code. Some of the skills learned in tech. ed. are integrated into the four core curriculum subjects. One example of integration is with our Cue robots which were purchased for tech. ed. and every general education classroom. Students learn the basics of coding Cue in Tech. Ed. and applied these skills in the math coordinates and measurements units to move Cue along a coordinate plane. Altoona Intermediate School also has a Technology Integration Specialist who helps teachers weave technology into units of study throughout the year. Green screens, podcasts, infomercials, Minecraft, and digital portfolios are some of the media used by students to showcase their learning in their end products and projects.

Character Building:

Our Guidance program is integrated through all three levels of our Positive Behavior Intervention Supports system. Students receive guidance for 30 minutes every other week and the focus on the whole child is supported universally as classroom, interventionist, and special education teachers teach lessons from the Second Steps curriculum. This program provides lessons focused on social-emotional learning and creating safe, respectful, and supportive learning environments so that students are ready to learn. This social-emotional learning curriculum integrates bullying prevention and child protection units to support students, to create a positive school climate and to improve academics. Various mentorship programs are additionally available at both the universal and small group levels.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Every day that children come to Altoona Intermediate School, their learning is being measured in a variety of ways. Classroom, grade level, and school wide assessments inform decisions and drive instruction. Our philosophy of learning is that it is fluid and therefore we are cautious about labeling students as performing below or above grade level. A student who may typically perform below grade level, may also perform above grade level in some areas or on certain skills and vice versa. This may mean that at one point a child may have met the standards and is given extension opportunities and at another point may be involved in a reteach for a particular concept not mastered.

We monitor student achievement at the state and local level through analysis of the Wisconsin State Forward Exam, administered one time per year, and FastBridge, our district benchmark assessment which measures ELA and Math achievement, three times per year. Students not meeting benchmark expectations are progress monitored with FastBridge on a weekly or biweekly basis dependent on student outcomes. Students performing below grade level on the FastBridge assessment receive additional instruction daily during our Prevention-Intervention-Enrichment (PIE) 30-minute block. This instruction consists of two components, including remediation of skills not previously mastered and strategies to aid generalization of these skills to the general education classroom and universal curriculum.

While this 30-minute intervention block is important, the most vital shift we made for students not meeting benchmark expectations was within the universal instruction and expectations. Any student not meeting standards meets with his/her classroom teacher daily, individually or in a small group, and we believe all students are first and foremost the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Students not meeting instructional outcomes may also receive an additional 20-minute layer of daily support, called "Double

Dose," provided during the independent work block with our interventionists and/or special education teachers. Double Dose lesson plans are designed around the universal curriculum and standards.

In all units of ELA and Math, common formative and summative assessments have been developed and teachers enter their classroom achievement data into our data warehouse, EduClimber. After assessments are given and data entered, teachers meet in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to analyze student learning. If universal data shows that under 80% of students have achieved instructional outcomes, staff create a universal reteach plan that may address pacing, resources, strategies and/or the assessment and then reassess and meet again to determine if at least 80% mastery has been attained. Once 80% or more have mastered learning outcomes, a Reteach, Reassess, Revisit Plan (3R Plan) is created. These plans are created student by student, skill by skill, and are documented in EduClimber. Plans are implemented, teams meet again to look at the reassessment data, and an additional plan is created if necessary. Using this approach, students have three layers of support within the universal instruction and all students are expected to master all grade level standards. Once we focused heavily on our Tier 1/Universal Instruction and practices, we noted that students performing below expectation had higher than average student growth rates and started to close gaps.

3b. Students performing above grade level

In the past, we had a Gifted and Talented teacher who provided resources for classroom teachers and/or pulled students for a designated period of time per week. Several years ago, the Advanced Learner Team was created and a new model of service evolved as a result. Our school believes all students should have learning extensions if they have mastered outcomes; therefore all students are monitored through formative assessments, skill by skill. When students have met learning outcomes, whether this is typical of their performance or not, they are provided extensions. This is based on achievement versus label. We also believe extensions should be provided throughout the day versus a designated number of minutes per week and extensions that challenge learners and push students to dig deeper within the curriculum have been created for every unit of instruction in ELA and math. Our system is fluid and when teachers meet in PLCs to analyze student learning outcomes, Advanced Learner Team representatives guide teams through planning for students who have already mastered outcomes.

3c. Special education

Approximately 20% of our total student population is made up of students with disabilities. All systems described above under "Students performing below grade level" and "Students performing above grade level" are the systems students receiving special education are part of as well. Supports are provided based on need, skill by skill, versus label. One primary difference is that students receiving special education have an additional teacher assigned as their case manager, may have additional goals, may have additional instruction time, and has an IEP team that meets to monitor and adjust instruction based on student outcomes.

What sets the Altoona Intermediate School apart from many other schools is our philosophy of special education and our team approach. When we say "our" students, we mean it. This is why we have been so successful in closing gaps. With the exception of a very small percentage (approximately 1%), students who receive special education services get their primary instruction first and foremost with their classroom teacher, in the classroom setting, and are expected to learn grade level standards. Layers of support, described above, are added based on academic progress and these students are monitored like all other students. General classroom and special education teachers are part of the PLC team and various models of co-teaching are used in our school.

Another primary difference in support may be additional behavior interventions; however, many students not receiving special education are also provided these. Additional behavior supports could include social skills instruction, mentoring, Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), and use of our calming resource room (Think Tank).

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

Students who are English Language Learners are monitored and move fluidly through our systems as described above. As is the case with our students who may perform below grade level and our students who receive special education, our ELLs not meeting grade level expectations have shown higher than average growth rates resulting in closing the gaps. We attribute this to the additional layers of support within the Universal Curriculum and Instruction, including Double Dose, PLCs and 3R Plans, and to the additional layer of support during our intervention, PIE, block. The primary difference with this group of students compared to many others in our student body is that they have a case manager who works collaboratively with classroom, interventionist, and/or special education teachers. Case managers provide ideas regarding scaffolding, differentiation, and building background. In the case of some students, they help pull together resources in the child's native language. Our ELL students also participate in Wisconsin's ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) test which establishes each student's language acquisition level. Case managers also provide or arrange for translation and interpreters to ensure that language is not a barrier in home/school communication.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At Altoona Intermediate School we believe that building relationships with students is crucial and live by the motto that "it's not about academics or social-emotional-behavioral wellbeing, it's about academics and social-emotional-behavioral wellbeing". One way we engage students is through voice and choice. Many units allow student choice of end product/project. Students pitch ideas to teachers, and "hooks" have been developed at the beginning of each unit in order to foster interest and spark curiosity. Daily learning targets and success criteria are clearly defined and students discuss/reflect on these individually, with peers, or with their teacher. After studying John Hattie's research on best teaching practices, the beginning and end of lessons have been structured to ensure students know, talk about, and reflect on the learning targets and success criteria.

Students set and track progress toward goals and this has resulted in greater student ownership of learning and a higher ratio of student to teacher talk. If teachers forget to state or display the lesson's learning target and success criteria, students ask for them. Students in each classroom have participated in a video interview, and staff reflect on the interviews and make changes in delivery to ensure that student ownership of learning. This has had a direct positive impact on achievement of learning outcomes. Integrated units of instruction and use of technology, such as Cue robots, podcasts, and green screens, has also increased student motivation and engagement.

We have many systems in place to create an environment that is safe and respectful. Our school has fully implemented the Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS) at all three tiers. Our PBIS Tier I team has carefully studied our three year behavioral data trends and have created a yearlong plan, broken up by month, in which several skills are taught and reinforced regularly while leaving room for other behaviors needing instruction or support. Our school-wide behavior matrix teaches students what it means to be safe, respectful, and responsible in our school. All students receive lessons from the Second Steps curriculum which focuses on social emotional learning. Monthly school wide goals are set, students monitor progress toward this goal daily, and all participate in a school wide celebration when goals are achieved. We provide a multitude of additional supports as well. Our Think Tank, which is fully staffed throughout the day, is a place where students can go to take a break and/or to process situations if they are not behaviorally or emotionally ready to learn. As mentioned previously, since the creation of this resource, our building has seen a significant reduction in the use of seclusion and restraint, the overall classroom environment has been more positive, and our district received a 2019 First Place Magna Award by the National School Board Association in recognition of this. We use Check In-Check Out and pair students with adult or older student mentors. We provide Social Academic Instruction Groups (SAIG), Bounce Back therapy groups, and School Based Mental Health (SBMH).

By establishing these proactive strategies through all tiers, we are able to engage and motivate students and to create an overall positive environment and culture that is focused on the needs of the whole child.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

This year, we are implementing a new Home/School Communication Plan. This plan is given to all parents at the beginning of the school year and is referenced throughout. It outlines all forms of communication whether electronic, face-to-face, or via report cards and details what assessments are given to students to track academic progress throughout the year. In addition to report cards and Parent Teacher Conferences, all parents receive notification of key topics of study when new units are launched in the four core subject areas as well as notification of student progress on each unit's summative assessment. Parents have reported appreciation of this approach and report feeling being well informed. In addition to this plan, all teachers ask parents their preferred method of communication and a multitude of formats are used including phone calls, Remind App, Google Classroom, email, and notes home. Both our school and our district have newsletters, and the district newsletter is mailed to all in the community.

Our school is very active in the community. We have many events that bring family and community members into our school including Open House, Family Learning Nights, the school play, and the end of year concert performance. The community is invited to student showcases of learning for our Colonial Fair, Heritage Fair, Comic Con, and Shark Tank units. We partner with our local Citizens Community Federal bank, which our students help run within our school. Our students staff all safety patrol positions to help our police and crossing guards during morning and end of day drop off and pick up. Junior Achievement representatives visit all classrooms and provide lessons on business, entrepreneurship, and economics, and we partner with the University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire to bring in student teachers and to run Bluegold Beginnings after school program and the Academic Intervention Clinic (AIC) during our PIE intervention block. We partner with the Chippewa Valley Museum, The Ice Age Center, Beaver Creek Reserve, the local library, the local fire department, the Altoona Historical Society, and several local nursing homes. Students participate in field trips through all of these partnerships. Finally, we partner with our Summer Reading Program and contribute to our district Care Closet, which is open several times per month. Our Care Closet provides no cost shopping for families in our community and includes items such as clothes and personal hygiene products. These events and partnerships allow our school to have a very active role in the community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Our school was created in 2013-14, and culture was an area in which we initially struggled. In 2015-16, our school committed to a journey of transformation. We took a step back and focused solely on collaboration and collaborative practice using the book Learning By Doing to guide the process. This resulted in a renewed focus on students and in the process we became a community of learners who grow together.

Since 2015-16, our staff has read many professional articles and engaged in numerous book studies including Visible Learning, Creating a Coaching Culture, Taking Conversations from Difficult to Doable, Number Talks, Serravallo's Reading Strategies and Writing Strategies, and Serravallo's Reading Conferences. Our school sets school wide student learning outcomes and professional learning goals, and our yearlong staff meeting plan, consisting of the Read, Plan, Do, Affirm cycle, enables us to develop professionally and to monitor progress toward goals.

Each year, we focus on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and dig deeper into this practice. Staff openly share achievement data and work together if the data needs improvement. Staff also video their lessons and/or observe in each other's classrooms and give feedback. While this could create feelings of vulnerability, these practices are a testament to the safe and supportive culture that has been fostered in our school.

Our systems are well organized, continuously evaluated, and improved. This has led to our school running smoothly which in turn created a positive culture and student success. Staff participate yearly in a survey centered on climate and culture. Results of the survey are shared, feedback is gathered from all staff regarding to areas of strength in order to keep these practices going as well as areas for improvement so that may continue to growth. We have invested in our staff by giving time to work collaboratively to develop curriculum. Mini-observations and walkthroughs provide feedback on strengths as well as areas for growth. Our philosophy of professional development is that the best PD is embedded, ongoing, and evaluated. Our district has invested in Real Living, and Employee Assistance Program and school leaders adhere to the motto "family first" in order to support staff.

4. School Leadership:

Instructional leadership is a valued part of our school's culture. Leaders live by the motto "family first, fail forward, and build off of each other's strengths." Family is important and our leaders value and recognize the importance of maintaining a healthy family and work balance. Professional development is often led by leaders who invest in staff by helping to build capacity, fostering a positive culture, and fostering a mindset of lifelong learning. Goal setting is collaborative and focused to ensure that workload is viable. There have been times throughout the year when our leadership has encouraged us to take items "off of their plates" if they do not first focus on their big picture goals. Leadership has cultivated a safe culture and the belief in

the power of "yet" for both students and staff. "I can't" has become "I can't yet," and staff are encouraged to try new ideas, even if they initially fail.

Leaders are part of all teams, and leadership is distributive as all staff have a role in the many teams utilized to ensure that systems run smoothly and are continuously improved. Goals and roles on all teams, including our Positive Behavior Intervention Systems, Advanced Learner, Professional Learning Communities, Pupil Service, Interventionist, and Leadership teams, are clearly defined. We also have a math coach, school psychologist, and curriculum coordinator who take the lead within some of our systems. Our principal conducts walkthroughs, mini observations, and student interviews to ensure the use of best practices and a student centered focus. Teachers are provided feedback, goals are set, and goals are progress monitored.

Teachers are encouraged to video lessons and observe in each other's classrooms in order to grow. Our principal also covers classrooms, models best practice with students, and provides instructional coaching. Leaders encourage common collaborative work time and additional days are provided for staff to work on curriculum. Adults in our school recognize that we are all in a relationship, and that to have healthy relationships, we invest in each other. While we know it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a village to create a great school.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

While there are many systems that we have added or changed through the years which have led to great success for our students, we recognize that none of this would be possible without building a positive school culture. We truly became a transformational school when our staff committed to continuous improvement, became a culture of learners, and fostered a growth mindset. Once this was in place, the concept of "change" was no longer daunting.

Everything else fell into place. We created highly effective Professional Learning Communities that continuously improve and dig deeper into the process with each year. We have created and continually improved not only universal curriculum, but additional layers of curriculum, such as our Double Dose and extensions, which are woven throughout each unit. We have developed close supportive relationships and learn and grow together. Staff are not afraid to try new ideas or practices and not afraid to fail as we understand that failure is an important step in the learning journey and sometimes we learn more from our failures.

Our staff is a staff of voracious learners who are willing to try anything and our principal likes to joke that she does not have to "light fires" within staff. On occasion, she needs to encourage staff to take a little off their plates to ensure that workload is viable and staff have a healthy family and work balance. We invest in each other and this investment has paid off in the form of celebrated student success.