

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 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 Mrs. Cariann Mineard

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

Official School Name Orchard Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6800 SOM Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Solon State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 44139-4208

County Cuyahoga County

Telephone (440) 349-6215

Fax (440) 349-8054

Web site/URL <https://www.solonschools.org>

E-mail [fredbolden@solonboe.org](mailto:fredbolden@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](mailto:fredbolden@solonboe.org)

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Solon City Schools

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. Leanne Moses

(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, leave blank.*

## **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 2023 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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**Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.**

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

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 in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	0
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
5	339
6	394
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	733

\*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
  - 25 % Asian
  - 15 % Black or African American
  - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 50 % White
  - 7 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 4%

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	25
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	695
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Telugu, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 14 %

Total number students who qualify: 102

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 10 %  
Total number of students served 75

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>7</u> Autism	<u>7</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>34</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>2</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>2</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 8 %  
Total number of students served: 56

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 11

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	30
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	23
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

12. 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 25:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	95%	98%	98%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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. 2013

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Our diverse learning community will ensure all students attain the knowledge and skills to thrive and become empathetic, ethical, contributing citizens in an evolving global society through collaboration and unwavering commitment to empower every student, every day, to achieve personal excellence.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.solonschools.org/cms/lib/OH01814653/Centricity/Domain/9/Orchard%20Middle%20School%20Student%20Handbook%2022.23.pdf>

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Orchard Middle School is one of seven schools within the Solon City School district, located in southeast suburban Cuyahoga County and serving students and families in the City of Solon and the Village of Glenwillow. 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 vibrant suburban environment encompassing the Solon City School district honors the rich traditions of a diverse, family-oriented community, while supporting a thriving industrial and corporate base that includes manufacturing, technology, health care and retail.

Orchard Middle School's motto is "Stronger Together." This theme underscores the interconnectedness of the entire Orchard Middle School family and embodies the collective commitment to meeting the needs of all students to assure that they are able to succeed, learn and grow in a safe, nurturing and supportive environment.

Through the belief in Stronger Together, everyone at Orchard Middle School works within a results-oriented professional learning community that is built on trust and a culture of collaboration and commitment to do whatever it takes to ensure learning for all. This is especially important as Orchard is a 5th and 6th middle school and scaffolds student supports to provide a bridge between elementary school and upper middle and high school.

The school team creates ongoing learning opportunities for students to develop independence and life-long executive functioning skills, particularly foundational skills such as response inhibition, working memory, emotional control, flexibility, sustained attention and task initiation. The goal is for students to develop skills related to teamwork, leadership, decision-making, critical thinking, adaptability, and organization and planning. This is accomplished through routine practice and integration into the students' daily activities. Classrooms all feature visual timers, anchor charts, daily schedules and other reminders prominently displayed as convenient cues. Students have dedicated time each day to check their agenda books and conduct "one-minute reviews from yesterday" as well as focused time to go over the learning targets for the day, make connections to their previous learning and their lives outside of the classroom, and reflect on their day.

Orchard Middle School builds proactive social and emotional support structures into the school day for students to decrease stress and anxiety and build resilience and mindfulness. Through the R Factor disciplines, Growth Mindset dispositions and Mindfulness practices, students learn to embrace challenges, learn from their mistakes, persevere in the face of adversity, show compassion, practice gratitude, engage in self-regulation, "press pause" to slow down impulses and respond with intention for a more positive and empathetic outcome. The education, guidance and support students experience through this skill building are key to their overall growth, development and well-being.

Orchard's Stronger Together culture provides a foundation for how students view themselves within their school community. Throughout the day, teachers and other staff emphasize the importance of respect, understanding and peer connections. The school's leadership council provides an outlet for students to develop leadership skills while making a difference in the world around them. The school conducts a variety of student-led philanthropic events, including food, toy and blanket drives. A new walking club enables students to engage socially while focusing on wellness during their daily recess time.

Orchard earned a National Blue Ribbon School Award in 2013. Receiving recognition as Blue Ribbon School is a mark of sincere pride in the school community as well as the broader Solon and Glenwillow communities as an external endorsement of the success and quality of Orchard's overall educational program. The collaborative environment, professional learning communities, common assessments and data analysis practices that were key to the school earning the Blue Ribbon School Award in 2013 are still at the center of daily instructional practices, but the current collaborative culture is more robust and focused to attain the highest possible effect on student growth and achievement. The collaboration, trust and interdependence among the entire Orchard staff fosters more successes for challenging students, closing



gaps and implementing more differentiated and effective intervention strategies than 10 years ago. Additionally, the collaborative culture is embedding more targeted and real-time applications of 21st century skills such as inquiry-based problem solving, communication and critical-thinking to create deeper understanding for students and better positioning them for the future.

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

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

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The curriculum at Orchard Middle School and the Solon City School Schools is aligned with all of Ohio's Learning Standards, including the core curricular areas of English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Using a researched-based reading and writing workshop model, Orchard students participate in several types of reading instruction: large group, small group guided reading led by the teacher and independent reading. Students acquire a vast vocabulary and become independent readers and effective communicators who are able to make sense of written language in this language-rich structure. Through word study and writing workshops, students are engaged in differentiated and personalized learning at the appropriate level of academic rigor.

Using all of the components of comprehensive literacy – read a-louds, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading – teachers design instruction based on students' needs in relation to mastering the skills and benchmarks in the Ohio English/Language Arts Learning Standards. Teachers use a diagnostic approach to literacy, which is based on assessment of students' strengths and weaknesses. To identify these strengths and weaknesses in individual students, teachers implement classroom-based, individually administered formative assessments assessing fluency, processing and decoding, use of strategies, and comprehension. Teachers use the data from these regular checks on learning to provide timely, descriptive and actionable feedback to students, hone in on more exact student needs and choose appropriate text levels to propel student learning. Teachers design align instructional activities and select appropriate resources to meet those targeted student needs. They also develop common assessments to measure student competencies in meeting the learning targets.

Students work collaboratively on team tasks to “show what they know” on the state standards throughout the school year. Orchard believes that students learn best in an environment where they are collaborating with one another and using a broad range of comprehension strategies to deepen their understanding of the text.

An important way teachers build student accountability and responsibility for their own learning is through “accountable talk.” This ensures that students are working together to better comprehend and understand the text they are reading. This includes active listening by all members in the classroom literacy community, while building on the contribution of others. Accountable talk also promotes logical thinking, reasoning and the ability to explain.

As a building team, Orchard fosters students' interest in independent reading by providing choice and time for students to explore different genres. During the daily comprehensive literacy block, students spend time learning phonics, spelling and vocabulary. This knowledge of how words work helps students with their decoding and encoding skills. They also gain an understanding of the importance of supporting their thinking with text evidence. Students learn to cite textual evidence to support their thoughts and ideas both verbally and in writing. As they gain knowledge in these areas, they are better able to comprehend text at deeper levels and write more comprehensive essays, replete with examples, connections and analysis, about the text they have read.

#### **1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Math at Orchard Middle School requires students to develop the conceptual understanding of mathematical processes. That Orchard team works from the premise that mathematics is best learned in an environment that encourages students to share and communicate their thinking so that they may learn from one another and deepen their understanding. Students often work with a partner or in groups. They know that their teachers will routinely ask them to solve a problem using more than one strategy. Placing a priority on developing a supportive math classroom culture has helped Orchard students feel comfortable sharing their solutions and better able to focus on learning from each other as well as their teacher.

Math content is aligned to the Ohio Academic Learning Standards. Lessons are designed and planned collaboratively by the math team and involve many hands-on, concrete lessons that help provide the instruction and application necessary for learning new concepts. Orchard math classrooms are stocked with a variety of math manipulatives and students have easy access to these tools. Learning math with engaging, hands-on materials helps all students develop deep, conceptual understanding that scaffolds them to abstract learning at their own pace.

Students participate in 80 minutes of math instruction each day. This includes 20 minutes for additional practice, problem solving and extension activities. The other 60 minutes are used for teacher-directed lessons, which consist of a combination of whole group, small group, partner and individual work each and every day.

The strength of Orchard's math curriculum rests in the continual emphasis on students viewing themselves as mathematicians and understanding that math exists all around them in their daily lives. Throughout each lesson, teachers connect the daily learning target with real-life examples. In addition, students spend time communicating their thoughts and answers with their peers and discussing alternate ways to solve the problems they are considering.

To make the learning targets as understandable as possible, the Orchard team has rewritten the standards in student friendly language that references their mastery and their understanding by using phrases such as "I am learning to..." and "I am learning this because..." Students must be clear about the learning target to be fully engaged in the learning and assessment process. The teachers focus on identifying success criteria by implementing the twin goals of what students need to learn (the learning target) and what students need to do to gain the understanding or master the skill (the instructional activity).

Math teachers check on student learning and progress each day using formative assessments. They discuss the data within their professional learning community and then use the data to adjust their plans to assist every student in reaching the grade level standards and extending those who have met the standards. Those students who need additional time to help reach the grade level standards, may receive additional help and support from the classroom teacher or intervention during the activity period at the end of the day.

### **1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Orchard's science curriculum aligns to Ohio's academic learning sciences, including earth, physical and life sciences. Students access their science learning through collaboration, exploration and problem solving. In science, students engage in hands-on, inquiry-based activities that provide them with opportunities to work together and wrestle with science concepts and problems. They develop and test hypotheses, analyze data, draw conclusions and write about their findings.

Content is presented through engagement of the topic, explored through discovery, navigated with teacher-led mini-lessons, and expanded through extension or intervention based on student need. Students work individually as well as in small teams, which affords them additional practice across an additional content area to apply their verbal and written communication skills. Technology supports students' science learning through research and other related skills. As science lab partners, students are also able to work on team learning, relationship building and interpersonal social skills. Teachers assess student learning through a variety of real-time formative assessments as well as end-of-unit summative assessments to ensure all students are mastering the science content and skills.

### **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The Orchard grade 5 and 6 social studies curriculum, aligned to state standards, provides students with the knowledge and skills to learn history in a real-world context with an emphasis on the core foundational topics of history, citizenship, geography, economics and government. Students make connections from what they read and learn to their own experiences, both locally and globally. Students use higher-level thinking skills such as timelines, cause and effect, and analysis to assess historical events and the factors that led to or

shaped those events.

Importantly, students also learn about the varying influences that may cause communities, countries, governments and citizens to act in certain ways or make specific decisions about how they live. Specifically, students learn that factors such as economics and geography have significant influence on how people live and how they interact with other populations within their own communities and globally.

Like science, content literacy and reading and writing skills aligned to Ohio's learning standards in English/Language Arts are embedded in social studies learning for Orchard students. Using MAX teaching strategies, such as two-column notes, preview strategies and anticipation guides, teachers help students to analyze, interact with and comprehend the social studies text. Teachers continually assess student learning formatively to gauge their understanding and progress. At the conclusion of each unit, students take a summative common assessment to more fully measure their understanding and mastery of the social studies content and skills.

**1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:**

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

**2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

In addition to the core content areas of math, literacy, social studies and science, Orchard provides students with an extensive music program consisting of both instrumental and vocal music. All grade 5 and 6 students at Orchard take 200 minutes of instrumental or vocal music each month. Students have the opportunity to participate in choir during 5th and 6th grade. More than 200 Orchard students opt for the choir elective. Students in choir perform two concerts during the school year. In addition, students who are members of their grade-level choir may audition for the more selective choral group, the Orchard Ensemble. Students who are selected for Ensemble, practice before school three mornings a week and perform in many concerts throughout the year. The Orchard Ensemble is honored to perform the National Anthem each spring at a Cleveland Guardians MLB baseball game at Progressive Field.

Students in grade 5 and 6 may alternately choose to learn a band instrument and participate in the school's 5th and 6th grade bands. In the fall, the music team introduces all of the possible band instruments to students. Based on their interest, students select an instrument and then participate in small group lessons throughout the week. During the daily activity period, all the band members, depending on their grade level and the activity period schedule, meet and practice together. The band performs several instrumental concerts throughout the year, including a community event that is held outdoors at the conclusion of the year as an "old-fashioned" band concert and ice cream social.

Many 5th and 6th grade students opt for Orchard's third music options, the strings program. Students may choose to play the cello, bass, viola or violin. Students participate in small group lessons throughout the week and perform in many concerts throughout our school year.

All students are taught to read music and for instrumental music students, how to care and play their instruments properly.

Depending on the students' needs and interest, they may choose to participate in a combination of art, choir and band, choir and strings, strings and band or a combination of all three areas. Visual arts is offered to all

students as one of the three regular specials classes incorporated into students' schedules. Orchard Middle School is committed to developing the well-rounded student and music and the arts are an important component of that goal.

## **2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

Physical education, which includes health, is one of the three regular rotating specials classes all Orchard students participate in each day. Through physical education, students learn and practice a broad array of skills to develop their fine and gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination as well as their ability to combine skills during drill work and game play. Students' fitness levels are monitored throughout the year and like academic classes, they engage in short- and long-term goal setting. Students work on fundamental fitness exercises, such as jumping jacks, squat jumps, sit ups, push ups and proper running form, which are then integrated as warm ups and cool downs during class. Students are encouraged to achieve their personal best while also setting realistic goals for improvement.

Other fitness units are geared toward developing a healthy lifestyle. Orchard also includes active play recess for all students. Reinforcing the goal of an active lifestyle, while providing students with a dedicated time each day for social interaction combined with physical activity outdoors is important for students' overall well-being.

## **2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)**

## **2d. Technology/library/media**

Orchard teachers work to integrate technology across the content areas and create a blended learning environment that balances digital and traditional learning. For example, students use both paper/pencil and technology to navigate their learning. Appropriate use of technology tools is critical for today's students in mastering 21st century skills that best prepare them for long-term success in college and the workforce.

Technology is a powerful tool but it can pose potential dangers for pre-teen students who are not mature or old enough to fully think through the consequences of their actions online. And although much of this activity takes place outside of the school, it is important to provide students with the knowledge they need to use technology responsibly. Digital citizenship lessons help Orchard 5th and 6th grade students better understand and manage their time online. The students learn about "digital drama" and the impact social media/texting/messaging apps can have on others if they fail to set reasonable boundaries or do not consider the potential consequences of their actions. As educators, the Orchard team is committed to helping students more fully comprehend the digital footprint they create online, their responsibility in posting on social media, and how their reputation can be impacted by what they post and what others post about them.

## **2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share**

Born out of the isolation many students were feeling during the pandemic, Orchard's Homeroom Huddle provides a dedicated time each day for students and staff to huddle together to foster peer relationships. During the daily Homeroom Huddle, classroom teachers lead students in lessons that are based on Ohio's Social-Emotional Learning Standards. The lessons enable students to build on their tools and skill sets for appropriately handling challenging events or interactions as well as expressing empathy and gratitude. The Huddle provides a supportive time for students to get to know their classmates better and discover common interests. Early in the year, students complete a gratitude jar activity during Homeroom Huddle, adding as many ideas as they want to represent the things in their lives they are grateful for - including friends, family, food and other necessities, their extra-curricular activities, nature (wildlife, plants, the ocean, beach, etc.), school, their pets, a home, books, their teachers, good health, and sports. Each homeroom posts their gratitude jars on hallway walls as a daily reminder of all the things their school community values.

## **3. Academic Supports**

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

For students who are struggling to meet the grade level standards or who have an identified learning gap, the classroom teacher meets with a literacy coach and together, the teacher and coach, analyze the student-specific formative and summative assessment data as part of Orchard's systematic intervention process to create a targeted intervention plan. As a team, the teachers work to determine the root cause of the student's struggles and create an action plan with targeted strategies to help the student close the achievement gap. The interdisciplinary support team, which includes families and the student, work collaboratively to implement targeted interventions and strategies to build student competence, confidence and, ultimately, successful learning.

Students who are struggling receive additional time with their classroom teacher for focused instruction to work on the components of the individualized action plan and receive feedback through daily checks on learning to help them gain understanding, build their skills and ensure they are making progress. The teacher and coach meet monthly to analyze the student's data and determine next steps based on which strategies are working and what additional support each student may need.

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

Providing rigor and ensuring students at the highest end of the achievement spectrum are being sufficiently challenged are addressed in similar ways. Written Education Plans are constructed for all students identified as gifted. Within the classroom, targeted instruction and assessment assures highperforming students are challenged 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. Students have regular opportunities to extend and deepen their thinking with more complex and comprehensive activities during the daily No New Instruction time.

### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Interventionists monitor student IEP goals throughout the school year with focused progress checks occurring at least every four weeks. If a student is not demonstrating adequate progress, intervention plans are developed and implemented as part of the school's support structure. Communication and collaboration is necessary to be sure there is clarity of student needs and articulation of what strategies are effective. Equally necessary is the work the team does in aligning the goals and objectives among all of the providers and teachers. In addition to the specific data goals identified for each student, corrective instruction activities are also created to help close gaps.

The team continually monitors students' progress and spends extended time at quarterly meetings discussing that progress, looking at data and brainstorming additional data-informed interventions and accommodations that could be put in place to improve student performance.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

English Language Learning at Orchard Middle School is an immersion program. The continuum of need is wide as Orchard serves students who speak little to no English as well as students who are building their language competency and have good literal understanding, but need support with figurative language and the nuances of English as they speak, listen and read throughout their day.

English Language Learners spend the majority of their day in their general education classroom interacting with peers and accessing their grade-level curriculum. The ELL teacher collaborates with the classroom teacher and identifies opportunities for direct instruction, small conversation groups and push-in support within the general education classroom. The ELL teacher also creates content adaptations and works on vocabulary and the essential language for a particular topic to increase student understanding. It is important to scaffold the students' learning in both English language acquisition and content knowledge. For example, in literacy, the teachers will focus on the big idea with an adjusted text level so that students are reading in English at a level that is right for them while they simultaneously work on the content knowledge at their

appropriate grade level.

The students also learn from the peers as they engage in recess play, classroom collaboration and lunchtime conversation.

**3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

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

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

Orchard Middle School supports a safe, secure and positive learning environment. The school believes that positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviors is important to the culture and environment of the school. Students begin every day with the Orchard Pledge, which is positive affirmations to start their day off with an open attitude and mindset: “I will be positive and polite, I will be prompt and prepared. I will produce high-quality work. I will persist and never give up. I will be mindful each day.”

Supporting students for making positive choices throughout the day and the school year is embedded in the school community with engaging activities and rewards. For example, at the end of each quarter, students with fewer than six parent signatures in their agenda book, including signatures for academic and behavior reasons, are invited to a fun quarterly reward event sponsored by the Orchard PTA. Activities include inflatables, a DJ, games and treats.

Catching students in the act of doing something positive is the intent of the school’s Good Apple Program. Students can earn Good Apple tickets for meeting and exceeding school expectations and at the discretion of any teacher in the building. These Good Apples can be earned in all zones throughout the school, including on the bus, common areas, classrooms, the cafeteria and on the playground. The Good Apple tickets are then all placed into a “lottery,” through which students can win weekly rewards from the office, as well as, chances to win prizes at the end-of-the-year assembly.

Another positive reinforcement using the Orchard apple theme is the Good Apple Award. Students are recognized with a Good Apple Award on a quarterly basis for making good choices and for being outstanding role models to others. Students receive a yard sign with the school’s Good Apple logo they can proudly display at home. Additionally, students can earn Positive Referrals when they go above and beyond to make Orchard a great place to be and learn. With these referrals, students earn the reward of their names being read on the announcements, a positive phone call home and they become eligible for an end-of-the-month drawing for Solon Spirit Wear.

Students also receive recognition for ongoing challenges such as positive and cooperative behaviors during lunch and recess and reading challenges. Students who participated in the school’s winter break reading challenge earned an ice cream sundae bar.

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

Orchard Middle School is an interconnected and interdependent community. Family involvement and support are foundational to creating a student-centered environment focused on the whole child. The school’s Parent Teacher Association works collaboratively throughout the year to provide engaging and participatory events to enrich students’ connections to their learning, to the school and to one another.

Orchard families, and by extension, the PTA is a foundational component of our school collaborative community. Family engagement to support high standards and nurture empathetic, ethical contributing citizens is at the heart of what makes Orchard successful and special.

Students at Orchard Middle School are able to achieve significant academic achievement and growth each year due in large part to the ongoing partnerships and collaboration with parents and organizations in the community at-large. At Orchard, the school team believes that engaged families are critical for student success and development. For example, when students at our school require academic intervention in time or instructional support, our administrative and teaching team meets with parents or guardians and the student through our Pyramid of Strategies process to check progress, set goals and outline detailed action steps the teacher, parent and student will take to meet the agreed-upon intervention goals are met. Family member input and commitment to our Pyramid process is expected and necessary.



The Orchard PTA and its active volunteers 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. Family members volunteer their time to provide meaningful touchpoint events, programming and activities, such as Apollo Bald Eagle exploration hands-on science program, assemblies, visiting authors, winter Fun Night, Quarterly Reward parties, Scholastic Book Fairs, incentives for a new Walking Club and more. A re-energized Orchard PTA Facebook page engages parents via social media and regular email updates provide additional ways for ongoing dialogue and a menu of options to provide families with up-to-date communication on upcoming events. Connecting families with pertinent information to be involved and engaged partners bolsters their stake in the Orchard community. These strong connections also help to provide parents with the information they need to become more informed about school issues and share them out in the community at-large.

Orchard works in partnership with various local organizations, such as Solon Benevolent Fund to provide needed support for families who may be struggling financially and need assistance to participate in school programs such as the Orchard 6th Grade Outdoor Education.

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

The Solon City Schools and Orchard Middle School consider professional development a critical component of ensuring student achievement. To underscore this importance, the district has made considerable investments of time and resources to further the education of staff members through professional development. The return on this investment significantly impacts the bottom line of student achievement and the Orchard Middle School staff embraces the research findings that demonstrate improvements in student learning can only occur in the presence of continual, job-embedded teacher learning.

To ensure that each student achieves at high levels, Solon teachers use a structure known as the Professional Learning Community, which requires collaboratively developed and widely shared mission, vision, values and goals. This structure promotes shared responsibility and accountability. Teachers no longer work in isolation. Using their own professional expertise, they are purposefully and actively engaged in collaborative and reflective dialogue with other colleagues to determine best practices designed to ensure that all students learn.

Orchard Middle School teachers play an active role in their professional learning communities and are continually working together with a very purposeful focus on student work. Teachers meet weekly with their content area teams to plan instruction, develop common assessments, analyze student work, analyze assessment data and develop a strategic plan to address weaknesses in student learning or teacher instruction. We support one another by sharing strategies and materials to improve student learning and to accomplish goals that would be impossible if the professional were working alone. To improve learning for all, the PLC teams learn from each other and focus on results. Conversations and actions are guided by four basic questions: What do we want students to know? How will we know they have mastered the skills and content we want them to learn? What will we do when they don't learn? What will we do when students are achieving and need additional challenges?

Through job-embedded professional development opportunities, staff members have been collaborating within their school-based teams and in consultation with nationally recognized experts to hone their capacity to help students build their skills related to executive function, emotional regulation, response inhibition, stress management, self care, conflict resolution and building resilience. These opportunities are provided within the district, many during the school day and teachers receive academic credit and/or a curriculum rate as compensation.

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

Orchard Middle School's leadership team embraces the philosophy of meeting the needs of every child each and every day. The leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principal, school psychologist, pyramid and guidance coordinator, literacy teacher leader, math teacher leader, content area teacher leader and technology teacher leader. To create the Professional Learning Community and safe environment the

school needs, Orchard Middle School's vision comes to life over the summer. The leadership team meets prior to the school year to review the prior year's data and set a yearly SMART goal to increase student achievement. The action plans for these goals are collaboratively created with the teachers and monitored monthly throughout the school year.

The leadership team meets weekly to analyze data and support each other in order to improve student achievement. The team discusses individual student, staff and parent issues, reviews current instructional practices, participates in its own professional learning and creates action plans for coaching and supporting all Orchard teachers in their learning and work with students. In addition, the leadership team furthers its own professional learning, explores current research-based best educational practices, and develops plans to put these practices into action.

Monthly, a small subset of the school leadership team meets with the classroom teachers to monitor the students who are not meeting grade level standards in reading and math. The team also discusses students who might need some additional help in supporting students with peer relationships or executive functioning. Together with the classroom teacher and the interventionist, the school leadership team works to create action plans that will help ensure that the students will make gap-closing progress in order to meet grade level standards.

To create a system of accountability for student achievement, Orchard administrators engage in many observations, including both formal and informal classroom walk-throughs, to ensure that practices are implemented and the expected results are evident.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Addressing the social-emotional needs of students has always been a core value in the Solon Schools as a stated belief at the foundation of the district's Strategic Plan. Throughout the district and at Orchard Middle School in particular work continues to build the Solon Comets CommUNITY. During the daily Homeroom Huddle at Orchard, students engage in activities that help build connections with their peers, as well as provide strategies for improving their responses to challenging or frustrating situations and foster kindness, empathy and understanding.

Through professional development opportunities, staff members have been collaborating within their school-based teams and in consultation with nationally recognized experts to hone their capacity to help students build their skills related to executive function, emotional regulation, response inhibition, stress management, self care, conflict resolution and building resilience.

Orchard staff members implement the Zones of Regulation, a systematic and visual cognitive-behavioral approach for helping students identify their feelings and gain increasing control over their emotions and reactions. Students engage in activities to help them better understand their emotions through the Zones of Regulation framework. They learn to identify their emotions as blue, green, yellow and red and accept that all four zones are "just fine!" It is their increasing ability to self regulate their emotions and feelings that is important to their success. They discuss in class how this plays out in real time with examples such as "If you receive a disappointing score, how do you feel when someone else celebrates their high score?"

To meet the needs of all students, the majority of Orchard staff members have participated in a district-developed course on maximizing student engagement. The focus of the course is ready for rigor through responsive teaching achieved through learning to build rapport with students and fostering effective and meaningful learning alliances. Together with a cohort of other Solon staff, Orchard teachers, counselors and administrators learn to develop and implement strategies to help struggling learners be more successful, to get students more authentically engaged in class and to build learning partnerships built on trust that support students as they take increasing ownership of their own learning. As responsive educators, they actively foster their community of learners and their learning environment by creating an environment that feels safe for dependent learners to take risks. They also make space for student voice and agency through an environment that communicates caring support and belonging in ways that the students are able to recognize. These skills are integral to working with families as well.

Providing support for student needs beyond academics, especially for students who are struggling, continues to be an important focus of the Orchard school community.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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Just like any successful high-performing team, Orchard Middle School has implemented the Orchard Playbook to clearly articulate and pull together all of the elements necessary to best ensure student success and positive development. The Orchard Playbook puts it all together for students and provides a framework for helping students feel a sense of belonging within the school. It reinforces that students are part of a homeroom, a three-classroom team, a school and the overall We Are SC community.

Students receive a hard copy playbook every quarter filled with activities they work on in their classrooms with teachers and peers. Each day of the week has a different repeating core theme and the activities students engage in reflect on the day's theme. The daily themes are Meaningful Monday Meeting, Timeout Tuesday, What's Up Wednesday, Thoughtful Thursday and Freshen Up Friday. On Monday, students work to connect and focus on the importance of relationships. They map out the week in their agenda books, write in test dates, friends' birthdays appointments, club meetings, practices and other important events. On Tuesdays, they "press pause" and learn to take a "time out" by practicing mindfulness strategies, such as belly and figure 8 breathing, and determine which ones work best for them. Wednesdays see the students focusing on getting informed and updated through the weekly announcements and having discussions about what is going on in school. Thursdays are a time for reflecting as students explore how they may become the best version of themselves. And finally on Fridays, they regroup with opportunities to organize, clean their desks, refresh their workspaces and check on their agendas before the weekend.

Problem-solving, philanthropic and team-building activities the students engage in reflect monthly themes in the playbook, including Community and Culture, Respect, Self Awareness and Regulation, Gratitude, Empathy and Sympathy, Reputation, Compassion, Healthy Relationships, Resilience and Legacy/Goal Setting.

The Orchard Playbook provides students with concrete experiences and a vehicle for discussing important issues that meet them where they are and ensure they are getting the guided support they need to navigate interpersonal interactions in positive and healthy ways. The Orchard Playbook ties directly to the school's motto of Stronger Together and is making a significant impact on Orchard students every day.