

U.S. Department of Education
2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Scott M. Giegerich

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

Official School Name Portland Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 95 High Street

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

City Portland State CT Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 06480-1656

County Middlesex County State School Code Number* 1135111

Telephone 860-342-1880 Fax 860-342-3934

Web site/URL http://www.portlandctschools.org/portland-middle-school.html E-mail sgiegerich@portlandct.us

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Sally Doyen E-mail: sdoyen@portlandct.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Portland School District Tel. 860-342-6790

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Christopher Phelps
(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 that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

Include this page in the school’s application as page 2.

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, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made its Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) or Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state’s AMOs or AYP requirements in the 2013-2014 school year and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2008 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, or 2013.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

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

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. 8 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
4. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	63	68	131
8	51	62	113
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
Total Students	114	130	244

5. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 83 % 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.)

6. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2012 - 2013 year: 2%

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, 2012 until the end of the school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2012 until the end of the 2012-2013 school year	4
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	6
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1	244
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.025
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

7. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
2 Total number ELL
 Number of non-English languages represented: 2
 Specify non-English languages: chinese, spanish
8. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 20 %
 Total number students who qualify: 50

If this method is not an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

9. Students receiving special education services: $\frac{8}{20}$ %
20 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 categories.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 2 Autism | 0 Orthopedic Impairment |
| 0 Deafness | 6 Other Health Impaired |
| 0 Deaf-Blindness | 10 Specific Learning Disability |
| 1 Emotional Disturbance | 1 Speech or Language Impairment |
| 0 Hearing Impairment | 0 Traumatic Brain Injury |
| 0 Mental Retardation | 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| 0 Multiple Disabilities | 0 Developmentally Delayed |

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	10
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals	4
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools)**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2013

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 X

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Portland Middle School is a small, caring educational institution. Our vision is shaped by the collaborative efforts of parents, students, staff and community members. In short, we strive to meet the needs of all students; we challenge them to excel in the classroom, in their interpersonal interactions, and in their civic service opportunities. Additionally, we empower our students to become involved in our school.

Academically, we work to provide a host of opportunities where students are challenged to think critically and to creatively solve problems. Students, staff and parents interact with technology almost daily. Our technological resources are abundant, yet never enough in the highly sophisticated world of 21st century demands. However, we make good use of the resources available and are constantly seeking to find new and innovative ways to make the technology helpful, seamless and manageable. Furthermore, our students are exposed to and expected to communicate in a variety of ways. School-wide rubrics drive our academic expectations. Oral, written, visual, artistic and technical modes of expression are interwoven into the many classes our students take each academic quarter.

Not too long ago, Portland housed four distinctly different schools: Valley View Elementary School (PreK-Grade 2), Gildersleeve Elementary School (Grades 3, 4 and 5), the “old” Middle School (grades 6, 7 and 8) and Portland High School (Grades 9-12). In 2004, Portland completed a major building project which reconfigured the schools, ultimately moving the 7th and 8th graders out of the old middle school and into a brand new, state of the art building which was added onto the existing yet, reconstituted and reconstructed high school. Thus, the rebirth of Portland Middle School! In a short period of time, Portland Middle School has blossomed into a premier institution of learning due to our highly focused, professional and caring teachers, our motivated and curious students, our families who want the very best for their children and our community which supports our endeavors tirelessly. As all schools work to establish a culture and climate where students feel safe and secure, we take pride in knowing that appropriate and calculated risk taking is encouraged in every classroom. The student council, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), our three teams of teachers and our community partners work collaboratively each year to sponsor charitable give-back experiences, fun and engaging student activities and a variety of educational outings.

The dedicated teams of teachers at Portland Middle School meet daily. This provides an opportunity to plan and integrate interdisciplinary activities, which engage our students’ minds, as well as their hearts in many cases. Students raise money and awareness for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, our adopted orphan Sebastien in Haiti, our local soup kitchen and other annually selected charities based on student input and choice. Our small school provides big and diverse opportunities for everyone. Unique to Portland Middle School is our Entrepreneurs Program: a course that integrates the Family and Consumer Science students and our Manufacturing/Technology Education students. These students select, design, manufacture, market and sell Portland’s Own Products (POP)! Our biannual POP Expo brings family members, community supporters and repeat-buyers from previous years into our school where the talents of our students are on display as they vend their products. The end result is that their profits are redistributed to a worthy charitable cause each semester.

While we have been recognized by CONNCAN and the Connecticut State Department of Education for our outstanding academic achievement as measured by the scores earned on the Connecticut Mastery Test, we are equally proud of the whole-child approach we foster at Portland Middle School. Every student is scheduled for both French and Spanish in their first year at PMS, and is able to participate in band and/or chorus in both seventh and eighth grade. All students are scheduled for art, technology education, family and consumer science, health and physical education. 7% of our students are accommodated by Individual Educational Plans, yet each student is integrated into the mainstream for the majority of his/her day. Our heterogeneously grouped classes accommodate every learning style because our teachers differentiate instruction. Through creative use of our limited resources, we provide additional daily in-school opportunities for students through the use of a literacy lab, a math lab, and an ACES course that focuses on executive functioning skills. After school opportunities include interscholastic sports, a school play, art club, ski club, yearbook club, and academic support for homework assistance.

In summary, Portland Middle School is a small, caring institution of learning where every child is valued. Our teachers know and care about what they teach. Our teachers know and care about who they teach. Through the many established partnerships with our families, our students and our community, we are proud to inspire thoughtful, creative, conscientious and zealous learners!

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

a.) In Connecticut, one of the main measures used to track progress and/or achievement is the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). The CMT has been administered annually in early March and has undergone a variety of changes since its introduction in 1986. Presently in its fourth generation, the CMT will soon be replaced by the Smarter Balanced Assessment. As our noteworthy recognition is based primarily on the CMT data, it is important to note that the CMT has five levels: below basic, basic, proficient, goal and advanced. No Child Left Behind expected that 100% of students earn the level of PROFICIENT. In addition to the CMT, Portland Middle School has administered the Degrees of Reading Power test twice yearly and recently added Renaissance Learning's STAR tests for Reading (English Language Arts) and Math. Each of the aforementioned assessments has nationally normed, cut scores that are documented and used to identify students who may need additional support. The STAR test allows each district to customize their cut scores. Portland Middle School and the Portland School District have chosen to raise the bar and expect students to meet a higher cut score than described in the documentation provided by Renaissance Learning. Any student who does not achieve at the Proficient level is considered for additional targeted support. In addition to the Connecticut Mastery Test, the Degrees of Reading Power and our universal assessment STAR, we require writing prompts from all students, which are holistically scored by our staff. This data is tracked and shared. Follow-up teaching is designed after each prompt. In summary, Portland Middle School uses the statewide testing system, universal assessments and in-house assessments to set high, achievable goals for all students. Our results are tracked, shared and used to design support and/or enrichment.

B.) Portland Middle School has used a variety of data to analyze, report, and ultimately develop action with the goal that ALL of our students achieve at their highest capacity. We review and analyze the data through a few different lenses. The staff is given access to the data provided by the state (ctreports.com) as well as the data derived from in-school prompts, twice a year DRP testing, and our universal assessment from Renaissance Learning, STAR. All of this data is shared and discussed at team meetings, goal setting conferences, articulation meetings, faculty meetings, Board of Education meetings, PTO meetings and administrative council. The numbers are looked at horizontally and vertically. At the beginning of every school year, data from the previous five years is provided to staff which detail our achievement accomplishments from the state-wide benchmark assessment: the Connecticut Mastery Test. Data is reviewed for each grade level from the previous five years (ie: For our 7th grade, we look at Grade 7 achievement in 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010 and 2009. Next we look at the Class of 2018 results for 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010 and 2009). We analyze our performance and where we stand based on our state-wide designated District Reference Group; we establish realistic, high, and achievable goals.

A review of the math data for the past five years shows that in 2008-2009, 68% of the class of 2017 met goal. That percentage has grown steadily to show that an impressive 91% of this same class achieved the state goal in 2013! Reading results for the class of 2017 show a parallel pattern. Five years ago, this class had 74% achieving at the goal level which has climbed to reach 90% in 2013. Both grades levels at Portland Middle School show great gains over time. The class of 2018 (7th grade students in 2012-2013) had 70% of the class achieve at the Goal level for mathematics in 2008-2009. This same cohort rose to 90% achieving at Goal in mathematics in 2013. Reading scores for the class of 2018 indicate that 62% achieved goal in 2008-2009. This class now has 95% achieving at the Goal level in reading on the 2013 CMT.

As a small school, only one sub-group (free and/or reduced) comprises at least ten percent of our population; this sub-group achieved at high percentages. However, we review and analyze results for every student as outlined above. As such, any student achieving below our expectation is assigned to one or more of at least four in-school options: Literacy Lab, Math Lab, ACES and/or traditional Special Education instruction. First and foremost, all of our teachers differentiate as part of our tier one expectations!

The Literacy Lab is designed to target an intervention in the area of Reading. Our specialist uses Read Naturally (Read Live) to work on an individual plan for each targeted student. The same is done with our

Math Lab. The Math specialist works with Renaissance Learning's STAR Math program to individualize instruction. Periodic assessments are administered. ACES is a homemade program designed 20 years ago. ACES provides a small, caring and focused environment to help students in any or all areas of their academics. The lead teacher consults with classroom teachers. The result is constant oversight which leads to improved student achievement. Special Education teachers spend at least 80% of their time in classrooms as co-teachers. One period per day is set aside for specific interventions with identified students. All four programs occur during the school day and do not take the place of the regularly scheduled English Language Arts or Math class.

2. Using Assessment Results:

When you purchase a Ferrari, you expect it to be great! You expect that it has gone through a rigorous series of tests to ensure that the end product is of the utmost in quality and performance. The same can be expected when we look at our Ferrari's in the public school system. We expect that our "Ferrari's," students, have passed through a thorough, comprehensive process that serves to fine-tune all of the parts so that the end result is a high performing student. At Portland Middle School (PMS), we look at a variety of assessments through a few lenses to determine if we are teaching what students need to know and to determine if our students are performing at their own optimal level.

Furthermore, we share whole-school data with families, the Board of Education and our community each year at the September Board of Education meeting, during our semi-annual parent teacher conferences, on report cards and via our on-line grading portal.

All of our students participate in the annual statewide benchmark assessment, the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). In addition, we administer the Degrees of Reading Power assessment annually, as well as Renaissance Learning's STAR assessments in reading and mathematics three times per year. Writing prompts, in-class performance, and grades are considered as well. Longitudinally, we track students' performance and progress. Annually, we determine if our curriculum leads to improved student achievement. School-wide action is proposed after this annual analysis. For example, "adding supporting details" in writing has been extensively discussed and all of our teachers have demanded more from students in this focus area. "Making Reader-Text Connections" has consistently been an area in need of improvement, not only at PMS, but in the entire state. As such, we have specifically shared teaching strategies to enhance our students' performances in this area. 51% were at goal in 2009, and 75% at goal in 2013.

If there is ever a concern about a student and his/her performance, we initiate a process that includes a comprehensive analysis to determine how we may intervene, assist, or support.

Our teams meet daily. Parents are invited to help us understand more about any student we teach. The Early Intervention Team follows up on concerns that we have learned about. This team examines the data we have available to identify areas in need, and organize the appropriate support. First and foremost, we expect our teachers to differentiate based on the strengths of the student. Concurrently, we provide the necessary targeted intervention and/or support. From the collaborative efforts of our multidisciplinary team, a plan is shared with the teaching team, the parents, the student and our intervention specialists.

It should be noted that we add to the student's daily schedule as opposed to subtracting. Instead of pulling a student out of the mainstream reading or math class, we add the Literacy Lab or Math Lab to the student's daily schedule.

Our intervention process includes continued analysis, follow-up discussion, and further assessments. As a result, students may be "exited" from our Literacy Lab or Math Lab once demonstrating they have achieved the necessary skills. The ongoing process established leads to improved student achievement.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

Every year, staff and administration attend meetings and workshops. Furthermore, all staff participate in their professional organizations, as well as professional development designed at the district level. In addition, the structure of the Portland Middle School daily schedule provides a daily meeting for each of our three teams of teachers. We take advantage of these opportunities to share “best practices” that we have learned in order to design or improve instruction. For example, our teams discuss and share effective strategies evidenced by student achievement. Staff meetings have been utilized to highlight successful interventions and/or practices. Specifically, a previous practice was to mandate monthly writing prompts. Our staff has been trained to holistically score writing prompts. Since the purpose was to improve writing, some writing teachers expressed a desire to oversee the scoring and to modify the process. Consequently, monthly prompts were eliminated. Instead, purposeful quarterly prompts were administered and scored by the entire staff and reassessed by the Language Arts teachers, who then identified areas for targeted instruction. More than 90% of our students met the state level for Proficiency and 87% earned the more rigorous distinction for Goal!

Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies (CARS) and Janet Allen define easily integrated strategies to improve reading comprehension. We have posted these strategies throughout our building. We expect students to identify strategies that were utilized in order to improve their comprehension. Likewise, math teachers have presented examples that can be integrated into other subject areas with the goal that students have multiple opportunities to solve mathematical equations.

Our school cares about every child and aims to connect with at-risk children. In 2008, we identified students who were in need of extra attention and care. Each staff member adopted one to two at-risk students. Once established, this approach was shared with the regional administrators at their quarterly meeting. This approach has had a long-lasting impact on our culture and climate. It is evident that every child counts!

4. Engaging Families and Community:

Dr. Joyce Epstein has written extensively about the value of school and family partnerships. At Portland Middle School, we embrace her philosophy and have created a culture where families are comfortable participants at our school. Communication is an essential tool to engage families. To that end, our school communicates in a variety of ways. Additionally, an open door policy fosters an environment that invites and includes parents as often as possible in the planning, execution and support of the many initiatives we are charged to undertake.

One of the primary tools used at Portland Middle School is the daily email sent from the principal to every family that includes a brief message, the daily homework assignments, a link to the grade portal and the following character quote, “Measure yourself against a standard of excellence.” Recently, the principal challenged all of our families to review reading strategies at home. A hyper-link to 20 common core reading strategies was included in the daily email home. Parents were asked to have their child explain a strategy and report back to the principal for a ticket into a lottery. The middle school web-site provides easy access to grades, homework, forms, honor roll and news. A counter indicates that about half of our families visit the site daily.

The Parent Teacher Organization meets monthly. The agenda provides positive interactions between staff and families to share news and longitudinal data, to collaborate regarding support opportunities, and to plan the necessary fundraising.

Our field trips offer opportunities for parents to spend time with our students as we invite them to participate as chaperons. The annual end of the year 8th grade dance is organized, chaperoned and sponsored by the parents. The music boosters are active and present in the building and at every music event.

The Youth Action Council is run by the town Youth Services department. This group of young adolescents helps to raise awareness about issues, organize charitable activities and collections, and takes an active role as we seek speakers on topics such as bullying, internet safety and making acceptance acceptable!

In addition to Open House in early September, we host two parent-teacher report card conferences each year. The teams of teachers meet daily. They regularly invite parents to meet. The purpose is to learn more about their child. Our two-way communication encourages parents to call and arrange meetings at mutually convenient times. Furthermore, we make parent communication a priority when we may have a concern. Email and phone communication are primary resources in this process. However, it is not uncommon to send a "Good News" postcard home.

We believe that our strong school-family-community partnership contributes significantly to our noteworthy student achievement.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

At Portland Middle School, students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of programs designed for students to learn, to think critically and solve problems creatively. Students take courses in mathematics, science, social studies, English Language Arts, Family and Consumer Science, Technology Education, Entrepreneurship, art, music, health, physical education, French and Spanish. The curriculum in all courses is driven by 21st century learning expectations as well as by the school's core values and beliefs. Another integral part of our curriculum is the library media program. The library provides a variety of resources that support academic learning requirements in all subject areas. Our certified teacher-librarian collaborates with classroom teachers on implementing curricular themes and technology literacy skills, and instructs students in this area throughout the year. The library staff promotes reading appreciation and critical thinking through book clubs, book talks, awards programs and other special programming.

In the last few years, we have undertaken the task of aligning our curriculum with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) not just in English Language Arts and mathematics, but school-wide as teachers are developing interdisciplinary units that align with CCSS. In the science department, students in 7th grade focus on Life Science and students in 8th grade learn about Physical Science. Both courses integrate hands-on learning activities with emphasis on scientific inquiry, using scientific reasoning, and recognizing the complex interactions between science, technology and society.

In social studies, students study Ancient Civilizations in 7th grade with a focus on various countries or regions from different continents. Students learn about the geography, selected periods of history, and contemporary cultures of these countries. In 8th grade, students study U.S. History with a focus on the principles of the U.S. constitution along with events, arguments, and movements of the 19th century and their impact today. In both courses, students analyze an array of primary and secondary source materials.

Students in world language courses develop oral and written proficiency in French or Spanish by interpreting authentic written texts and spoken language, engaging in active conversation with peers and creating messages about themselves in oral and written contexts. Through their study of the language, students also learn about the cultures of French and Spanish-speaking peoples.

In art classes, students learn to identify significant works and recognize the aesthetic qualities of visual art from different historical periods and cultures. They also practice various visual art techniques and processes while employing the processes of creating and responding to their work as they progress. Thus, students appreciate the importance of the arts expressing and illuminating human experiences.

College and career readiness is underscored throughout the school's curriculum. As part of their English Language Arts curriculum, students explore their individual strengths, weaknesses and learning styles. Students also set goals for themselves which lead into discussions with the school counselor about what careers may be well-suited to each student and what educational opportunities he/she will need to pursue to attain a career in that field. This information is recorded in Student Success Plans that follow students to high school. Students meet with the school counselor four times a year to address skills needed in the three domains of student development: academic, career and personal/social. These domains are also addressed in monthly advisory sessions. Each student is assigned to a small group with a staff mentor. Within these groups we discuss themes such as organization strategies, study skills, bullying, practicing random acts of kindness and exploring career interests.

Career readiness forms the basis for our Entrepreneurship course in which students develop skills necessary to be productive in the workplace. Students develop sensible and useful products that they sell at the Portland's Own Products sale. Thus, they develop a business plan, use marketing skills and plan for the distribution of their products. After the sale, students plan for the distribution of profits to one or more charitable causes.

Portland Middle School's curriculum offers students a challenging, yet supportive environment in which all students have the opportunity to thrive. We work as a team to ensure students receive the same message of care, support and high expectations throughout the school.

2. Reading/English:

Portland Middle School has a talented team of English Language Arts teachers who meet regularly with their colleagues from the high school. Most recently, significant time has been devoted to aligning our curriculum to the Common Core State Standards. As a result, students in the seventh and eighth grade are now reading texts that are much more rigorous and complex. Mark Twain's, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* has been introduced to the 7th grade curriculum, while the 8th grade has adopted Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Additionally, the 8th grade added Laurie Halse Anderson's historical fiction novel, *Chains*, to provide a richer and more complex text and to parallel the unit with events and figures from the Revolutionary War. More than 90% of our students in both grades met the 2013 state reading goal.

Additionally, Janet Allen's *Plugged-In to Non-Fiction* resources have been a staple at Portland Middle School for the past four years. Both non-fiction and fiction reading strategies are posted in classrooms and have been shared with the entire teaching staff. Students are expected to cite reading strategies in self-assessments during class, while the principal also encouraged and challenged families to review these strategies at home.

Moreover, we track the reading comprehension and fluency progress of every student. Teachers have crafted student learning outcomes and/or objectives measurable by our benchmark assessments, Renaissance Learning's STAR program and students' Connecticut Mastery Test results. Consequently, students who do not meet our proficiency level are considered for additional support.

While differentiated instruction is our primary instructional method to provide enrichment and/or support, we have created a Literacy Lab for additional targeted support. The Literacy Lab uses a variety of scientifically researched programs designed to increase student achievement. *Read Naturally* and Renaissance Learning's STAR Reading Enterprise are two of our programs. In lieu of being pulled out of the mainstream English Language Arts class, students have this course added to their schedule daily or every other day. Each student is assessed regularly and the results are shared with parents, the teaching team and the administrator. Flexible grouping and scheduling ensures that students are challenged at their level for an appropriate period of time. As goals are met, students are dismissed.

Portland Middle School has a history of strong achievement in English Language Arts. We are proud of the daily efforts of our students and staff.

3. Mathematics:

Portland Middle School is proud of its strong math team who place a priority on meeting the needs of all students. We seek to apply new and evolving technology, engage students in learning and improve teachers' efficiency. Our primary endeavor is to increase student achievement.

After much research and discussion two years ago, we adopted the 2013 Glencoe Math: Your Common Core Edition. The curriculum integrates the big ideas of Algebra, conceptual understandings of the real world, applicable hands on experiences, data collection and technology. Undoubtedly, establishing strong study and organizational skills are foundations for success in high school and beyond. Our curriculum and instructional materials make this transition easy. Each unit is designed with an essential question which keeps students focused on the big idea of the unit. The new series highlights critical areas that prepare students to become problem solvers of the 21st Century and inspires them to explore careers within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Heterogeneous classes are offered with one advanced option in each grade. The accelerated class in 7th grade is a Pre-Algebra course, while the 8th grade offers a high school honors Algebra I class.

Differentiated instruction is vital to our approach. In addition, we emphasize non-fiction writing, problem solving, technology, hands-on activities and creative use of manipulatives to make the curriculum accessible to all students.

To identify students working above or below grade level, we use Renaissance Learning's STAR assessment (administered three times a year), input from the previous year's teacher and the state benchmark assessment, the Connecticut Mastery Test.

Students identified as in need of support are assigned to a Math Lab. The specialist works on areas of concern and skills that need improvement. Teachers are available before, during and after school for extra help. We also offer a homework club, which meets after school and provides more support. Furthermore, tests, quizzes and homework assignments are modified according to the following criterion: approaching grade content level, on level, and beyond level, so all children will achieve success in math. Students who are working well above grade level are challenged with accelerated coursework.

The curriculum, our text book series, the math team and our support system have yielded amazing results over time. In the most recent statewide testing, 99% of our students met the NCLB standard of Proficient. Portland has established a program, an approach and partnership to ensure annual achievement.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

Portland Middle School offers a dynamic Social Studies program with curricula focused not only on historical content, but also on the development of historical analysis and critical thinking skills. Teachers in both 7th and 8th grade seek to establish strong past-present connections for the students and frequently integrate technology into lessons through "web quests," artifact analysis activities and "virtual field trips" to history museums around the world, including the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. and the British Museum and National Maritime Museum in London. Students explore historical events from a variety of different perspectives, and teachers challenge them to articulate their ideas using oral, written, artistic and even musical forms of expression. Social Studies students are offered enrichment opportunities to explore their interests in history and the social sciences outside of the classroom, and several 7th grade students are currently in the process of creating a project to be entered into the 2014 Connecticut History Day contest. Over the past several months, these students have analyzed a vast array of primary and secondary sources and have designed an informational website exploring the changing role of the caste system in India in the 21st century.

The 7th grade social studies curriculum focuses on Ancient World History with an emphasis on five early civilizations, including Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, China, Greece, and Rome. Aligning with Portland Middle School's focus on the development of 21st century learning skills, this class challenges students to develop an understanding of how the achievements and developments of early societies are reflected in modern-day American society. The 8th grade social studies curriculum explores United States history, beginning with an examination of early colonization and settlement in the mid-16th century and continuing through the development of the industrial United States in the late 19th century.

The 7th and 8th grade curricula are designed to scaffold students' historical content knowledge and critical analysis skills and to prepare students for the required Portland High School Global Studies (9th grade) and United States history courses (10th grade).

5. Instructional Methods:

Richard and Rebecca Dufour, two leaders in educational equity and reform, wrote a book titled, "Whatever It Takes, how professional learning communities respond when kids don't learn". The book title exemplifies the approach to instructional methods we employ at Portland Middle School. Through a systematic process, the staff at Portland Middle School reviews and analyzes data pertaining to every student annually. In addition, many teachers administer an interest inventory to learn even more about each student. The knowledge gained from this process coupled with the daily opportunity to meet in grade level

teams, provides our teachers with ample information to craft lessons and activities to engage all of our students in a variety of ways.

One size does not fit all! To meet the needs of every student, staff members deliver lessons that are designed to integrate technology, the smart board, manipulatives, purposeful groupings, flexible groupings, hands-on activities and choice. To help focus each student every day, the learning objective is displayed prominently in every classroom every class period. Each student is held to high, yet achievable standards.

100% of our students are scheduled for mainstream courses. The special education teachers and our reading and math specialists collaborate regularly with the regular education teachers. This partnership helps each practitioner to design engaging, yet challenging activities for all students. In addition, our homemade ACES program provides targeted students with additional support, oversight, and care!

Students are often offered choices with regard to the product that is expected when a project is assigned. Teachers craft multiple versions of the same test to allow for a more individualized experience that helps the teacher to know what the student is able to do and demonstrate. For example, one version may have multiple choice opportunities instead of open-ended responses. Another version may provide a word bank. Students may be permitted to take the test in an alternate setting with additional time. These common practices help to engage students while we constantly try to raise the level of challenge for every student.

In both reading and mathematics, we use an array of computer programs like BrainPop, Read Naturally, Renaissance Learning's STAR program, and the textbook's on-line applications to provide targeted lessons or activities for each student based on his/her performance and ability.

The objective of our approach to instructional methods is to provide an engaging atmosphere where every student is valued, challenged and successful.

6. Professional Development:

In writing, they say that the first draft is just that, a first draft. It is imperative to go back and edit, revise, improve, refine, redesign and produce the next draft. This cycle is repeated until a version is considered acceptable. However, the true author is never content nor has completed his/her work. In any school, the same approach is healthy and necessary. It is incumbent upon the educator, the system and the school to continually develop for the primary purpose of improving teaching and learning. At Portland Middle School, we embrace the DuFour's philosophy, "Whatever it takes!" Our teams act as professional learning communities and their unending quest to find a way to reach every student is enviable.

The teams meet daily, the district wide professional development team meets quarterly, the state shares "best practices", our RESC's (Regional Educational Service Centers) offer opportunities, and our local board of education expects that we are up to date with mandates and practices that have proven to be successful. This structure allows for a methodical way to intertwine Professional Development opportunities with the federal and state mandates that we must introduce.

The Common Core, differentiated instruction, and many other major initiatives have been addressed in a timely manner as a result of the aforementioned structure established in Portland. Our teachers have gone on to become trainers in the train-the-trainer model. Our teachers have learned to administer universal assessments and to target follow-up teaching strategies. Time is provided during team meetings, at staff meetings and at in-district professional development activities. Furthermore, our staff is encouraged and funded to seek out-of-district professional development activities. It is not uncommon to have a staff member return from a day at professional development and share the highlights with the team. Our monthly staff meetings provide opportunities to educate all of us. As a result, an approach to teach reading strategies or to solve mathematical equations can be implemented by all staff rather than the discipline involved. Individualization and/or differentiation is at the core of all of our efforts.

The recent scrutiny related to teacher evaluation has led Portland to review its practices extensively. We have adopted the Danielson Model and are using Teachscape. Each month, evidence collected from the four domains is shared at staff meetings and via email. Additionally, staff is provided time each month to review student learning outcomes and related goals, as well as to share exemplary teaching strategies that have been successful in the classroom. At each staff meeting this year, teachers presented skits, prezis, documents, and/or practices that relate to each domain and each component.

Professional learning communities are vital to the ongoing improvement in education everywhere. Our small school hosts three big teams that collaborate daily. The strength of our professional learning community is that it can modify and/or adjust in almost real time. The collective endeavors of the staff promote the theory that our work is never done, but moving in the right direction day after day!

7. School Leadership

Leadership at Portland Middle School can be summed up by the word: empowerment. Students, staff and the community of parents are empowered to suggest, act, and do that which is needed to maintain an institution of excellence. We strive to be creative, maximize learning opportunities, and generate enthusiasm to learn and achieve.

The three teacher teams in place are each facilitated by a team leader and meet regularly. Members are aware that their input is welcome. Therefore, discussions include cross-curricular opportunities, modifications to the daily schedule as needed and management of our advisory groups. Also, these teams administer grade-level assessments and design field trips and experiences that benefit our learners.

The school counselor addresses student achievement concerns and/or opportunities through the Early Intervention Process (EIP). She involves teacher representatives, specialists and the principal. Data-driven decisions are made as a result of the insights we derive from the additional feedback. Support is then extended to those in need.

The Student Council is designed to develop leadership skills and character. For instance, the Student Council has introduced programs and charitable acts such as food bank collections, support of a child in Haiti, spirit week, a variety show and more. Additionally, they have organized our dances and field day. All students are invited to become Student Council members. Their challenge is to submit a thoughtful letter stating why they want to serve, their ideas and any leadership qualities they have demonstrated. We have never had TOO many members!

PTO meetings include opportunities for teacher representatives, the administrator and the parents to interact in a positive manner. We share school events, discuss opportunities for collaboration and design plans to meet goals.

The Middle School Principal has established a culture of respect and rapport with the students, the staff and the community. The connection to our stakeholders is paramount, making our school community a success through positive leadership. As such, the vision and mission at Portland Middle School is simple: Every child counts. We care and it shows!

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION--REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Math

Test: 4th Generation CMT

All Students Tested/Grade: 7

Edition/Publication Year: 2013

Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

School Year	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009
Testing month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES*					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced	99	98	95	95	92
% Goal + %Advanced	90	86	80	72	70
Number of students tested	110	114	120	115	107
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	99
Number of students tested with alternative assessment	6	4	1	3	3
% of students tested with alternative assessment	5	3		2	3
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-Economic/Disadvantaged Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced	100	95	81	64	63
% Goal + %Advanced	81	84	67	36	25
Number of students tested	21	19	21	14	8
2. Students receiving Special Education					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. English Language Learner Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. African- American Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					

6. Asian Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
7. American Indian or Alaska Native Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
8. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
9. White Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced	100	99	96	98	93
% Goal + % Advanced	95	90	83	77	73
Number of students tested	95	99	111	103	100
10. Two or More Races identified Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
11. Other 1: Other 1					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
12. Other 2: Other 2					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
13. Other 3: Other 3					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES: All six students assessed with the MODIFIED ASSESSMENT were identified through the PPT process. 5 out of 6 Achieved at the PROFICIENT or above level on the Modified Assessment. 3 out of 6 achieved at the GOAL Level.

STATE CRITERION--REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Math

Test: 4th Generation CMT

All Students Tested/Grade: 8

Edition/Publication Year: 2013

Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

School Year	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009
Testing month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES*					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced	99	96	100	96	95
% Goal + %Advanced	91	86	94	88	68
Number of students tested	109	116	114	115	117
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students tested with alternative assessment	3	1	2	2	2
% of students tested with alternative assessment	3	1	2	2	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-Economic/Disadvantaged Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced	94	87	100	92	89
% Goal + %Advanced	82	53	75	62	22
Number of students tested	17	15	16	13	9
2. Students receiving Special Education					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. English Language Learner Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. African- American Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. Asian Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					

% Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
7. American Indian or Alaska Native Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
8. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
9. White Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced	100	97	100	95	95
% Goal + %Advanced	93	89	94	86	72
Number of students tested	93	97	101	101	104
10. Two or More Races identified Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
11. Other 1: Other 1					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
12. Other 2: Other 2					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
13. Other 3: Other 3					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES: All three students assessed with an ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT were identified through the PPT process: one student moved in and moved out during the school year. One student was assigned to take a SKILLS CHECKLIST as this student is multi-handicapped; The third student achieved at the PROFICIENT Level on the Modified Assessment designed by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

STATE CRITERION--REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading/ELA
All Students Tested/Grade: 7
Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

Test: 4th Generation CMT
Edition/Publication Year: 2013

School Year	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009
Testing month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES*					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced	98	98	90	83	80
% Goal plus % Advanced	95	93	81	72	62
Number of students tested	109	112	120	114	108
Percent of total students tested	99	99	100	99	100
Number of students tested with alternative assessment	7	6	1	4	2
% of students tested with alternative assessment	6	5		3	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-Economic/ Disadvantaged Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced	91	100	71	54	33
% Goal plus % Advanced	91	100	48	46	33
Number of students tested	21	18	21	13	9
2. Students receiving Special Education					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. English Language Learner Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. African- American Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. Asian Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus					

% Advanced					
% Goal plus %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
7. American Indian or Alaska Native Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
8. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
9. White Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced	100	99	92	85	82
% Goal plus %Advanced	96	94	84	77	65
Number of students tested	95	99	111	103	100
10. Two or More Races identified Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
11. Other 1: Other 1					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
12. Other 2: Other 2					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
13. Other 3: Other 3					
% Proficient plus % Goal Plus % Advanced					
% Goal plus %Advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES: All seven students were identified by the PPT process to take the MODIFIED ASSESSMENT designed by the Ct. State Department of Education. All 7 achieved at the GOAL Level as defined by the state.

STATE CRITERION--REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading/ELA

Test: 4th Generation CMT

All Students Tested/Grade: 8

Edition/Publication Year: 2013

Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

School Year	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009
Testing month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES*					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced	93	94	96	92	88
% Goal + %Advanced	90	89	93	82	74
Number of students tested	109	115	113	115	117
Percent of total students tested	100	99	99	100	100
Number of students tested with alternative assessment	3	2	3	2	2
% of students tested with alternative assessment	3	2	3	2	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-Economic/Disadvantaged Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced	82	87	81	85	33
% Goal + %Advanced	77	67	75	54	22
Number of students tested	17	15	16	13	9
2. Students receiving Special Education					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. English Language Learner Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. African- American Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. Asian Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus					

% Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
7. American Indian or Alaska Native Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
8. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
9. White Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced	94	95	96	92	89
% Goal + %Advanced	93	91	94	81	77
Number of students tested	93	96	100	101	104
10. Two or More Races identified Students					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
11. Other 1: Other 1					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
12. Other 2: Other 2					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					
13. Other 3: Other 3					
% Proficient plus % Goal plus % Advanced					
% Goal + %Advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES: All three students assigned to take an Alternative Assessment were identified through the PPT process. One student is multi-handicapped and has been assigned a SKILLS CHECKLIST annually by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The remaining two students were assigned to the MODIFIED ASSESSMENT designed by the Connecticut State Department of Education. Both achieved at the PROFICIENT Level on this Modified Assessment.