

U.S. Department of Education
2015 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. Ryan Perry Coleman

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

Official School Name Amherst Junior High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 548 Milan Avenue

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

City Amherst State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 44001-1420

County Lorain County State School Code Number* 045195

Telephone 440-988-0324 Fax 440-988-0328

Web site/URL http://www.amherstk12.org E-mail ryan_coleman@amherstk12.org

Twitter Handle

@RColemanAJH 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*Mr. Steve Sayers E-mail: steve_sayers@amherstk12.org

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

District Name Amherst Exempted Village School District Tel. 440-988-4406

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 Mrs. Teresa Gilles

(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 and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are 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 2014-2015 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 2009 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: 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, or 2014.
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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 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. 5 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	157	151	308
8	160	166	326
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
Total Students	317	317	634

5. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 92 % White
 - 1 % 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 2013 - 2014 year: 1%

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, 2013 until the end of the school year	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2013 until the end of the school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1	674
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.015
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

7. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
3 Total number ELL
 Number of non-English languages represented: 2
 Specify non-English languages: Gujarati, Thai
8. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 22 %
 Total number students who qualify: 141

Information for Public Schools Only - Data Provided by the State

The state has reported that 22 % of the students enrolled in this school are from low income or disadvantaged families based on the following subgroup(s): Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals

9. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
86 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.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>5</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>60</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed |

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	24
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	17
Paraprofessionals	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 26:1

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

Required Information	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	95%	94%
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 2014

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

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

Yes No

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

15. Please summarize your school mission in 25 words or less: To prepare all students to meet the academic, social, civic, and employment needs of the future and to instill a passion for life-long learning.

PART III – SUMMARY

At Amherst Junior High, we believe that all students can learn, but not all students learn in the same way and on the same day. Students are appreciated for their many unique differences, and we enjoy the challenge of maximizing the learning that takes place each day. However, we know that at the junior high level, not all days are as successful as others. Because of this, junior high students are a challenge and a blessing at the same time. As a building, we are steadfast in providing a top-notch curriculum and instructional program, but we are also focused on nurturing students to be well-rounded individuals and prepared for their future. That is why our mission is to prepare students to meet, to the best of their abilities, the academic, social, civic, and employment needs of the future, and to produce the foundation for the development of ethics, values, and the desire for continued learning.

Amherst Junior High (AJH) is a grades 7-8 public school in the Amherst Exempted Village School District, located in the historic community of Amherst, Ohio. Nestled between the South Amherst Quarries two miles to the south and Lake Erie just two minutes to our north, we are proud to be known as the “Sandstone Capital of the World.” Approximately 19,000 people live in the city of Amherst and Amherst Township, with 3,900 students attending the schools in grades K-12. We have “Comet Pride,” as our school mascot is the Comet and our town slogan is “Home of the Comets.” On Friday football nights, our town is covered with “Go, Comets!” signs posted in downtown business windows and in the yards of many community members. Our town is proud of our schools, and our schools feel fortunate to reside in such a terrific community.

Amherst was established by pioneer settler Josiah Harris, who relocated to this area around 1818 and is the namesake of one of our elementary schools, Harris Elementary. Amherst Junior High was built in 2002 and is the newest of five buildings in the district. We are the home of alumni including Henry Stratton, founder of Bryant & Stratton College; Mike Finley, a writer and author of over 110 books; and Jesse Csincsak, amateur snowboarder and winner of the fourth season of ABC’s *The Bachelorette*.

AJH consists of 635 students, and our enrollment is slowly declining each year, which is the same for our district overall. Our district consists of two elementary buildings, one middle school, our junior high, and the high school. Our highest enrollment subgroup is white, non-Hispanic at 80.2%. However, students come from diverse cultural, religious, and family structures. Almost a quarter (23%) of our student population is economically disadvantaged. Our district’s special education population is 14.8%, and AJH is one of two buildings that house a multiple handicap (MH) unit and an emotionally disturbed (ED) unit. All of the special education programs at AJH support students in the general education classroom. Our students achieve success due to the outstanding partnership, flexibility, and commitment of our staff in developing instructional programs tailored for each child.

Our Building Leadership Team is a key component of the positive turnaround our building has made with academic success. Established in 2010, the BLiT consistently comprises 10-12 teachers, administrators, and support staff. We strongly believe in the “i” that is in the initials of BLiT. That “i” stands for instructional, and we stand by the belief that everything we discuss should be focused on the improvement of instructional practices and programs at AJH. If the BLiT is not talking about instructional practices, then we are forgetting about our focus and what is important to our group.

One example of the BLiT making effective changes for students is in the way we closely examined the master schedule and ultimately changed the percentage of time students spend in core academic classes. We had noticed that students were spending an average of 50% of their school day in core classes, while the other 50% of their day was in elective classes, study halls, and lunch. As a staff, we had never considered or even noticed this until the BLiT figured it out. We compared our schedule to the other junior highs in our conference (SWC) and realized that our students were experiencing the least amount of core instructional time in the entire conference. Therefore, the BLiT decided to block our language arts and math classes so that these two periods would each be 76 minutes long. All other periods and classes would remain at 49 minutes. The result of this change is that a student’s school day now consists of 63% of time spent in core academic classes, with an emphasis on math and language arts.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Amherst Junior High, instruction and assessments focus on the Common Core and State of Ohio academic content standards. The previous two years, our ELA and math teachers were proactive in making a smooth transition to the Common Core, collaborating to examine the new standards, create crosswalks, identify power standards, create assessments, and build curriculum maps. The AJH English language arts department is completely committed to the Core and utilizes a variety of resources, including novels, literature anthologies, grammar textbooks, relevant videos, and Scholastic magazines to address the standards in the three levels of ELA offered per grade level. The math department also adheres to the Core standards, offering a total of six math courses and incorporating traditional textbooks as well as interactive software, including IXL and Accelerated Math. All ELA and math courses emphasize the acquisition of foundational skills through careful repetition and review, with teachers explicitly tying new concepts into those already mastered.

We are fortunate at AJH to have science and social studies teachers who are passionate about their curriculums and experts in their respective content areas. However, they also know the importance of developing students' reading, writing, and citing skills in their own classrooms. The science department follows Ohio Content Standards, focusing on earth science in seventh grade and physical science in eighth, with a lab-based approach in both comprehensive and advanced levels. The history/social studies department also follows Ohio Content Standards, centering on world history/geography in seventh grade and American history (pre-colonial through Reconstruction) in eighth, using traditional textbooks as well as online resources and activities in the comprehensive and advanced levels. Science and history courses also integrate relevant memoirs and novels (e.g., Hickam's *October Sky* and Grant's *Blood Red Horse*), incorporate twenty-first century research skills, and emphasize the Core's technical reading and writing skills in their curriculums.

As part of our ongoing quest to improve instruction, our BLiT researched and compared our school data to that of surrounding junior highs as well as to Northeast Ohio schools demographically similar to ours. Through our study, we found a glaring area of weakness in the area of writing. Not only were our students performing lower than students in other schools on short and extended response questions, our building was also below the state average on these questions. This immediately became an area of focus for our entire school. All departments and classrooms began to emphasize writing across the curriculum. The rationale behind this building-wide focus area was shared with all teachers and support staff, and quite frankly, the data spoke for itself. Our ELA department chair gave staff in-services on proper writing techniques, how to help students craft strong topic sentences, and how to create writing prompts from informational text. We established a culture in the building where everyone felt comfortable using our ELA teachers as coaches and mentors for help with writing across the curriculum.

The Common Core emphasizes the importance of citing textual evidence for answers to text-based questions, requiring students to provide clear support for analyses and inferences. With the implementation of the Core, our building goal for writing across the curriculum evolved to include citing across the disciplines as well. Again, our ELA department chair provided in-services on how to write citations and integrate quoted material into a written response. Our staff embraced this new responsibility, and today it is common to see our science teachers requiring students to include quoted material from their text when writing a lab report, or our history teachers expecting students to integrate quoted primary source material into extended responses on tests. Because our teachers recognize that reading comprehension is not just "the language arts teachers' job," we have seen enormous improvement in the accuracy and quality of our students' reading and writing. Frequently, students return to the text at hand to "make sure that's what it really said," an essential reading skill for college and beyond. We feel strongly that our building-wide emphasis on reading and writing has increased student achievement, is preparing our students for high school, and is providing a strong foundation for skills that are vital in college and careers.

Secondary Education:

Clear connections between the core curriculum and college/career readiness are made throughout the year. For example, all eighth graders are encouraged to take a one-day excused absence in order to participate in job shadowing, with shadowing-related activities integrated into students' coursework. Some teachers include practice ACT and SAT questions as bell work to give students early exposure to these college entrance exams. Honors ELA students complete a college research project, culminating in a panel discussion with former AJH students who are now successful college students and can offer suggestions on how to prepare for the rigors of college coursework.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

It is important for AJH students to have a wide range of experiences that help them become well-rounded individuals. However, as a district we also are cognizant of keeping our staffing aligned with district enrollment. We do not spend money simply to have extra programs or offer special electives. Therefore, we constantly analyze how all curriculums and staffing needs can be adjusted to give our students as many opportunities as possible. In other words, we take advantage of the "bang for your buck" philosophy and continually monitor our programs, schedules, and staffing to see how we can continue to give students an array of experiences while being fiscally responsible. That is why our district spending per pupil in 2013/2014 was \$8,703 and the state average was \$9,189. Even though our district/building performs above the state average academically, our per-pupil expenditure is well below the state average.

AJH offers a variety of curricular programs beyond the four core academic classes. In music, students are able to choose from choir, music appreciation, band, and jazz band, along with a strings program that began in the elementary school and is growing into the junior high. One hundred percent of our students participate in our music program, often for the full two years, learning essential teamwork, performance, math, and reading skills in the process.

AJH offers two nine-week visual art courses, open to all students: one focusing on self-identity, where students express their emotions through drawing, print-making, and painting; the other more nature-focused, using multi-media sculpture to identify ideas and ideals. Our art teacher was selected as the 2013 Northeast Region recipient of the Outstanding Art Teacher Award. Students in both grades can also select our nine-week arts technology course, a paperless class where students learn to make presentations and utilize digital software and programs as tools that will be useful in other classes and in their future careers. Only two years old, this technology course helps students become "productive workers and wise consumers of technological products and services." Its teacher won the WVIZ/PBS Innovative Educator Award for Art Education in 2014 for her ability to integrate technology into teaching and learning. The same teacher also runs our AJH digital newspaper club, which gives students the opportunity to write and edit stories, take and upload pictures, and completely compile the monthly digital newspaper emailed to all AJH parents and students. Almost all students participate in at least one visual arts course.

We are also able to schedule classes such as health, physical education A and B, and family and consumer science (including nutrition and personal finance). Beginning next school year, health will be offered as a high school course for which students will earn high school credit. In physical education, we are following the new PE standards, requiring students to create marketing projects that encourage the readers to participate in physical activity. Another project requires students to show knowledge of skill performance and includes research and citing. All students participate in PE, and all eighth graders take at least one health class. Approximately 80% of students take family and consumer science, a popular elective. As part of that course, a local Junior Achievement business leader conducts six lessons that provide students with practical information about personal finance and also assists students in identifying appropriate education and career goals.

In foreign language, we have Spanish I, a high school course worth high school credit. We also have French A and B, and if students complete both sections, they will also earn high school credit. Additionally, we have a World Cultures class where students can explore many different countries, cultures, and customs. With Spanish available to eighth graders and French and World Cultures open to both, approximately 50% of students participate.

All of our “life skills” classes listed above fully support building goals and initiatives. We are blessed to have dedicated teachers in these positions who know the importance of all staff working together on common goals. Therefore, they constantly embed writing and citing into their lesson planning and instruction. They also incorporate as much informational text into their lessons as possible, including recently published articles about topics in their respective disciplines, so that students have more experience with real-world nonfiction reading.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

The needs of AJH students drive instruction. Our goal is to provide a productive challenge in line with the abilities of every child. Instructional content is strategically differentiated through frontloading, curriculum compacting, and adjusting the complexity of assignments. Processes and products differ with the use of resources, such as our one-to-one Chrome books in math classes and mobile iPad carts utilized by all departments.

AJH supports the special education population through a combination of co-teaching within the general education setting and specialized instruction within small groups. All special needs students follow grade level-appropriate curriculum, with the exception of the multi-handicapped classroom. All students on an IEP have a daily 23-46 minute intervention period with their case manager, based on each student’s individual needs. During this time, the Intervention Specialists reteach lessons, assist students in studying for tests, and help students maintain a system of organization. We also have established a strong co-teaching atmosphere within the building. Our regular education and special needs teachers do an outstanding job of collaborating to benefit all learners in the classroom. Because of this success, two of our co-teachers were awarded the Outstanding Educators Team Award in 2011 by the Region 2 State Support Team.

AJH teachers strive to challenge our gifted learners. Our gifted intervention specialist (GIS) is available to meet with teacher-based teams to plan lessons and discuss instructional practices. Two examples of leveled instruction for high ability learners include the Gifted/Honors English program, taught by the GIS, and Algebra I and Advanced Geometry, offered for high school credit. Our Science Olympiad and Academic Competition teams provide additional challenges for gifted learners.

Our mathematics teachers believe students can benefit from additional areas of instruction individually tailored for each learner. AJH teachers utilize IXL, an online program that allows each student to adopt an individualized approach to the math curriculum. Teachers align IXL assignments with mathematics standards they are covering based on student performance during formative assessments. The IXL program is dynamic, supporting adaptive learning for each child, and the teacher can monitor progress and gather data through its detailed reports. For some students, IXL is additional practice that feels like play; for others, it provides critical intervention in weak areas; for the rest, it becomes enrichment when they enter the “Challenge Zone” because they have already mastered the required standards for their particular math class.

PART V – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results Narrative Summary:

We participate in Ohio Achievement Assessments for 7th and 8th grade reading and math. Based on these tests, our building receives a report with letter grades reflecting seven areas: achievement in performance and indicators, gap closing, and value added for students with disabilities, lowest 20%, gifted, and overall. We are proud that AJH received six A's and one B on our 2013/2014 report card. We worked hard to get to that B, which was in our performance index (PI) score of 106.8, including 72.3% of our students scoring advanced or accelerated. We have experienced our fifth straight year of PI score improvement: Beginning with the 2009/2010 school year, our increases have been 99.2, 100.1, 103, 106.3, and 106.8 in 2013/2014.

The assessment data presented in the application tables is fun to dissect since it shows the consistent pattern of scores increasing. The five-year trend clearly demonstrates several areas of improvement. For instance, in the areas of 7th grade math and reading, our 'accelerated and above' scores for all students have increased 23.3%. In those same tested areas, our economically disadvantaged students increased an average of 22.4% for being 'proficient and above.' For students with disabilities, our "proficient and above" kids have increased an average of 33.6% when all four tested areas are considered. One change we have made in the area of special education is that all students are taught grade-level academic standards regardless of their ability levels and learning styles. The only exception is the multi-handicapped classroom. Therefore, students are challenged as work is modified and their instruction is provided in a variety of ways to help them master grade-level learning goals.

To continue closing the achievement gap between our students with disabilities (80% average) and our test scores of all students (96% average), we will continue fine-tuning successful instructional practices, interventions, and co-teaching models. We believe that with the improvement of our special needs students' academic performance over the last five years (+33.6%), we are on the right track. By continuing to implement our best practices, we believe we can narrow this gap to less than 10%.

2. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

At the beginning of the school year, we completely engulf ourselves in the OAA data, relying heavily on students' OAA scores for planning and instruction. For instance, we rank all incoming 7th graders by their most recent OAA math scores, along with a numeric representation of their teachers' ratings of classroom performance, and use the resulting combined data to place students into appropriate math courses. When analyzing ELA data from reading tests, we look for widespread areas of weakness, such as vocabulary acquisition, and communicate with the staff during Teacher-based Team (TBT) meetings to ensure that all teachers are aware of the weak areas and how to address them within their own content areas.

Within each classroom, teachers frequently use formative assessments to guide instruction. Often done as bell work or exit tickets, these short assessments provide immediate data to the teacher regarding concepts students are struggling to understand versus content that has been mastered, so the teacher can make adjustments to the next day's lesson. Teachers discuss formative assessment results with students to clarify why certain skills and concepts might merit extra attention prior to a graded test or quiz.

Another assessment strategy commonly used by teachers is to have students do an item-by-item analysis of questions missed on a recent assessment. On an item analysis, students determine not only the correct answer but also why they might have missed it in the first place, whether due to a reading error, a misunderstanding of the question, a lack of preparation, or some other reason. We also administer a building wide practice OAA where students receive their results, along with an item-by-item analysis of what they missed. Teachers are then able to do a targeted intervention in the areas where students struggled. These reflective activities help students take responsibility for their learning and provide an opportunity for students to learn from their mistakes.

Part VI School Support

1. School Climate/Culture

It is important that as a building we address the social/emotional needs as well as the academic needs of each student. We have two school-wide Positive Behavior Support Programs that help create a climate where learners thrive and grow. In both cases, students are rewarded for positive behavior, which encourages consistent behavior throughout the building. We also have an outstanding Student Council that contributes to the overall tone and culture of the building. These programs allow teachers to focus more on instruction rather than constantly mediating behaviors.

Student Council consists of approximately fifty 7th and 8th graders who organize and facilitate a variety of programs at AJH. Student Council members are divided into eight committees, each with its own focus. Student Council programs include community service, fundraising for causes we passionately support, co-sponsoring dances with the PTO, welcoming new students to AJH, honoring teachers for a job well done, increasing school spirit through spirit weeks, and developing specific leadership opportunities such as a ropes course and our three-hour leadership event.

Agents of Change is a program where a specific group of students share a common goal: to increase tolerance and kindness levels throughout their building while decreasing bullying. The members meet monthly to determine what types of programs they would like to develop in order to reach their goal. The programs Agents of Change have developed include the Agents of Change weekly nominee; Kindness Day with locker quotes and complimentary cookies for each student and staff member at AJH; and cheering on the Amherst Special Olympic participants in May by crafting signs, making shirts, and bringing a positive, supporting group of students to the event.

Another program that we incorporate at AJH is called Caught Being Good, through which students' random acts of kindness and helpfulness are highlighted, such as holding the door open for another person or turning in money that was found. Whatever the Caught Being Good example is, students are recognized and rewarded with a \$5 gift card to Subway, Chipotle, or the local movie theater. Their Caught Being Good behavior is highlighted over the daily announcements so that it sets good examples for others. Because of this, if a student ever has a hallway mishap at Amherst Junior High, there will be several students cheerfully bending over to help that student gather the dropped items.

2. Engaging Families and Community

Communication is a key component in establishing a collaborative relationship with parents to ensure student achievement. Three ways we engage parents include weekly electronic newsletters, open-format conferences, and positive communications home. Each week we send a grade-level email newsletter to all parents and guardians. All teachers contribute by informing parents about upcoming instruction and assessments. The newsletters also include important dates, announcements, and PDF fliers when appropriate. Parents have commented many times about how they read their weekly newsletter "religiously" and appreciate always knowing what is going on in their children's classrooms.

Based upon feedback from parents, we have established a new parent-teacher conference format. The teachers are at tables spread out in the cafeteria and gym, and all parents are welcome to show up at any time to meet with the teacher(s) of their choice. Many parents take advantage of this open-door opportunity. Additionally, our BLiT established a building-wide initiative where all staff members made a minimum of three positive phone calls or emails home. The impact of over 200 unexpected positive communications with students' families was positive for everyone involved. Along with the weekly newsletter and the open-format conferences, such communications have improved student achievement, since parents are constantly aware of their students' instruction and performance and subsequently can intervene and reward as necessary.

Part of being a successful student is becoming a good citizen and making a positive difference in others'

lives. To that end, the students and staff foster a community connection through various service projects. During our “Rake a Difference Day” in the fall, AJH students voluntarily bundle up and do a good deed for members of our community by raking leaves for nearby homeowners. In the spring, our softball players volunteer to visit our elementary school and read aloud to the third graders, providing a positive and memorable experience for both age groups involved. Student Council members visit our local nursing home to make crafts and visit with the residents. On Veterans Day, our students plan and conduct an assembly to remember and honor the veterans of our community, some of whom are in attendance. Several times during the year, students organize the collection of donations for a variety of local nonprofit agencies, including Second Harvest Food Bank and the Neighborhood Alliance. These types of student leadership experiences improve academic achievement by building students’ confidence, providing opportunities for good citizenship, and strengthening their communications skills.

3. Professional Development

At Amherst Junior High, we believe that professional development is an ongoing process established within the culture of the building. Therefore, collaboration among staff is a key focus. A priority built into our master schedule is common planning time within departments. Therefore, we have teacher-based teams (TBTs) that meet routinely each week. All staff members are aware of the building-wide TBT schedule and can attend a specific department meeting if needed. We believe that the best professional development available is in our own building and with each other. Teachers collaborate by sharing ideas, creating lesson plans and assessments, and constantly researching new ideas and best practices to implement in their classrooms.

Another key to professional development at AJH is for teachers to hear about the variety of best practices their own colleagues utilize. Therefore, each week, a best practice is highlighted in the weekly bulletin, giving the highlighted teacher a sense of pride and showing others the wonderful instructional practices taking place in nearby classrooms. Continual recognition of best practices leads to meaningful conversation among staff, as well as a drive to “keep up” with colleagues by striving to incorporate best practices daily. In addition to weekly highlights, our Building Leadership Team has created and published a document that lists best practices for “writing across the curriculum.” BLiT has also done a “12 Days of Best Practices” during December, promoting classroom instruction and adding a positive tone building-wide during the holidays.

Our goal at AJH is to provide professional development opportunities for personal growth and reflection on effective teaching and learning. Therefore, many of our teachers have participated in professional learning communities focused on educational books. Two of our recent book studies (for credit through Ashland University) included *Teach Like a Champion* by Doug Lemov and *Whatever It Takes* by Richard and Rebecca DuFour. The refinement of our instructional techniques from these book studies impacts our high student achievement and collegial conversations to revitalize our staff’s commitment to achieving excellence.

In the areas of school improvement and safety, we have had several professional development experiences through our partnership with the Amherst Police Department. They have provided informational PD lessons about school violence and best response methods, and they have also taken our staff through drills of real-life situations that taught us how to think proactively during emergencies to help keep our students safe. The training they have provided has made all staff feel more informed and better-prepared for unthinkable tragedies.

4. School Leadership

We recognize that our building’s success is dependent upon passion and teamwork. We appreciate that AJH is not just our place of employment--it is our home away from home. Our faculty and staff take great pride in our building and ownership of the various student needs we must address. Leadership is not confined to an office, but permeates the building, beginning with the administration.

The role of AJH administration is to lead by example, while constantly maintaining a focus on student achievement. As facilitators, our principal and vice principal advocate for students and staff, ensure that best practices are utilized and promoted, and create a climate of mutual respect. Constant communication and visibility are hallmarks of our leadership philosophy.

We have established a strong building leadership team focused on improving instruction and achievement building-wide. One example is how the BLiT has chosen short stories (Lexile levels are considered) for every student in the building to read during their language arts classes. The entire building then contributes to the activity by teachers in all content areas creating lessons that align somehow with the short story. This leads to students' much deeper understanding of the text, which is what the Common Core is all about.

Leadership then trickles down to each department, where teacher-based teams are established. The TBTs work collaboratively to interpret data, make instructional decisions, and plan assessments. We are fortunate at AJH to have strong TBTs where teachers are empowered to collaborate on important issues and make decisions. Administration meets with TBTs routinely to discuss data, instruction, and school issues.

We also believe support staff should feel empowered and involved in improving student achievement. For example, our monitors receive and read the novels assigned in core classrooms, so that they can have dialogue and help students with their assignments. Monitors also tutor students and have access to everyone's on-line grade books. One great example of our monitors taking ownership is how one half-time study hall monitor stayed past her time for an entire year just so she could experience a seventh-grade math course, participating in class discussion, completing homework, and taking assessments alongside seventh graders so that she learned the material. Her reward was that she could better help students in her study hall with their math. Because our leadership philosophy is what it is, this person felt a keen sense of her own responsibility for student success and took remarkable steps to ensure she could assist with student achievement.

PART VIII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION--REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: <u>Math</u>	Test: <u>Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA)</u>
All Students Tested/Grade: <u>7</u>	Edition/Publication Year: <u>2013</u>
Publisher: <u>Ohio Department of Education</u>	

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES*					
Proficient and above	95	90	90	87	82
Accelerated and advanced	65	59	51	45	41
Number of students tested	310	333	329	365	311
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	99	99
Number of students tested with alternative assessment					
% of students tested with alternative assessment	1	1	1	1	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-Economic/Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and above	91	77	78	76	65
Accelerated and advanced	47	33	34	31	25
Number of students tested	66	86	64	74	81
2. Students receiving Special Education					
Proficient and above	85	54	64	42	26
Accelerated and advanced	21	14	13	12	5
Number of students tested	39	57	55	59	39
3. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and above	90	92	86	88	79
Accelerated and advanced	62	58	42	38	29
Number of students tested	39	48	36	52	24
5. African- American Students					
Proficient and above	70			71	
Accelerated and advanced	10			21	
Number of students tested	10			14	
6. Asian Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
7. American Indian or Alaska Native Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
8. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
9. White Students					
Proficient and above	96	90	91	87	84
Accelerated and advanced	67	60	52	47	45
Number of students tested	246	263	274	283	258
10. Two or More Races identified Students					
Proficient and above	92	93		83	72
Accelerated and advanced	67	40		42	17
Number of students tested	12	15		12	18
11. Other 1: Other 1					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
12. Other 2: Other 2					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
13. Other 3: Other 3					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES: Please note that the only two years we had greater than 10 students in the African-American subgroup was during the 2010-2011 and 2013-2014 school years. In addition, 2011-2012 was the only year we had less than 10 students in the Two or More Races subgroup.

STATE CRITERION--REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: <u>Math</u>	Test: <u>Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA)</u>
All Students Tested/Grade: <u>8</u>	Edition/Publication Year: <u>2013</u>
Publisher: <u>Ohio Department of Education</u>	

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES*					
Proficient and above	96	97	90	87	84
Accelerated and advanced	57	67	44	41	40
Number of students tested	336	328	365	314	322
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	99	99
Number of students tested with alternative assessment					
% of students tested with alternative assessment	1	1	1	1	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-Economic/Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and above	93	93	87	73	72
Accelerated and advanced	42	47	36	19	33
Number of students tested	72	73	78	79	64
2. Students receiving Special Education					
Proficient and above	80	85	60	60	53
Accelerated and advanced	16	21	8	9	8
Number of students tested	50	53	63	45	51
3. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and above	96	90	94	77	74
Accelerated and advanced	51	49	42	29	26
Number of students tested	49	39	53	31	31
5. African- American Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. Asian Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
7. American Indian or Alaska Native Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Number of students tested					
8. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
9. White Students					
Proficient and above	97	97	90	89	85
Accelerated and advanced	62	69	44	44	42
Number of students tested	265	269	282	261	271
10. Two or More Races identified Students					
Proficient and above	93		83	83	71
Accelerated and advanced	40		50	25	29
Number of students tested	15		12	12	14
11. Other 1: Other 1					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
12. Other 2: Other 2					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
13. Other 3: Other 3					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES: Please note that the only time we had greater than 10 students in the African-American subgroup was during the 2011-2012 school year. In addition, 2012-2013 was the only year we had less than 10 students in the Two or More Races subgroup.

STATE CRITERION--REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: <u>Reading/ELA</u>	Test: <u>Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA)</u>
All Students Tested/Grade: <u>7</u>	Edition/Publication Year: <u>2013</u>
Publisher: <u>Ohio Department of Education</u>	

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES*					
Proficient and above	96	92	95	86	88
Accelerated and advanced	66	56	54	52	55
Number of students tested	310	333	329	365	311
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	99	99
Number of students tested with alternative assessment					
% of students tested with alternative assessment	1	1	1	1	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-Economic/Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and above	91	80	88	77	72
Accelerated and advanced	53	37	33	39	33
Number of students tested	66	86	64	74	81
2. Students receiving Special Education					
Proficient and above	79	63	71	47	46
Accelerated and advanced	26	14	20	12	18
Number of students tested	39	57	55	59	39
3. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and above	95	94	95	87	92
Accelerated and advanced	59	50	36	50	50
Number of students tested	39	48	36	52	24
5. African- American Students					
Proficient and above	70			86	
Accelerated and advanced	30			29	
Number of students tested	10			14	
6. Asian Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
7. American Indian or Alaska Native Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Number of students tested					
8. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
9. White Students					
Proficient and above	98	92	95	86	88
Accelerated and advanced	68	59	56	52	57
Number of students tested	246	263	274	283	258
10. Two or More Races identified Students					
Proficient and above	92	93		92	83
Accelerated and advanced	67	33		67	44
Number of students tested	12	15		12	18
11. Other 1: Other 1					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
12. Other 2: Other 2					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
13. Other 3: Other 3					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES: Please note that the only two years we had greater than 10 students in the African-American subgroup was during the 2010-2011 and 2013-2014 school years. In addition, 2011-2012 was the only year we had less than 10 students in the Two or More Races subgroup.

STATE CRITERION--REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: <u>Reading/ELA</u>	Test: <u>Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA)</u>
All Students Tested/Grade: <u>8</u>	Edition/Publication Year: <u>2013</u>
Publisher: <u>Ohio Department of Education</u>	

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES*					
Proficient and above	96	97	91	90	89
Accelerated and advanced	76	83	63	57	59
Number of students tested	336	328	365	314	322
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	99	99
Number of students tested with alternative assessment					
% of students tested with alternative assessment	1	1	1	1	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free and Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-Economic/Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and above	88	93	88	75	78
Accelerated and advanced	60	68	58	38	44
Number of students tested	72	73	78	79	64
2. Students receiving Special Education					
Proficient and above	74	85	65	56	59
Accelerated and advanced	32	49	24	24	22
Number of students tested	50	53	63	45	51
3. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and above	92	95	94	90	84
Accelerated and advanced	73	69	66	45	45
Number of students tested	49	39	53	31	31
5. African- American Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. Asian Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
7. American Indian or Alaska Native Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Number of students tested					
8. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Students					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
9. White Students					
Proficient and above	97	98	91	90	90
Accelerated and advanced	78	86	63	59	61
Number of students tested	265	269	282	261	271
10. Two or More Races identified Students					
Proficient and above	93	0	92	92	86
Accelerated and advanced	60	0	92	92	43
Number of students tested	15	0	12	12	14
11. Other 1: Other 1					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
12. Other 2: Other 2					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					
13. Other 3: Other 3					
Proficient and above					
Accelerated and advanced					
Number of students tested					

NOTES: Please note that the only time we had greater than 10 students in the African-American subgroup was during the 2011-2012 school year. In addition, 2012-2013 was the only year we had less than 10 students in the Two or More Races subgroup.