

U.S. Department of Education
2016 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. Brian Valek

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

Official School Name Kennedy Junior High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2929 Green Trails Drive

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

City Lisle State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60532-6262

County DuPage County

Telephone (630) 420-3220 Fax (630) 420-6960

Web site/URL http://www.naperville203.org/kjhs E-mail bvalek@naperville203.org

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/KJHSPRincipal 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, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Dan Bridges E-mail dbridges@naperville203.org

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

District Name Naperville Community Unit School District #203 Tel. _____ (630) 420-6311

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Terry Fielden

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. 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 public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) 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 2010 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: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 14 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 21 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. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 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	174	156	330
7	154	158	312
8	160	149	309
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	488	463	951

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 33 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 55 % White
 - 4 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 10%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	59
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	30
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	89
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	927
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.096
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 9 %
Total number students who qualify: 86

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
113 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>14</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>12</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>1</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers	39
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	24
Paraprofessionals	14
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

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

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	0%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

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. 2008

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

Our Mission is to educate students to be self-directed learners, collaborative workers, complex thinkers, quality producers and community contributors.

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

Though Kennedy Junior High is not a magnet school, we house the district's magnet program for academically talented learners. Students are identified through a consistent process that synthesizes performance on cognition tests, demonstrated mastery of grade-level standards, and teacher feedback. Approximately 2% of the district's 6th-8th grade population is served by this program.

PART III – SUMMARY

Kennedy Junior High School is located in Lisle, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. The school is one of five middle schools in Naperville Community School District #203 and has a student body of over 950 students. Our sixth, seventh, and eighth graders come from four feeder elementary schools as well as hosting representatives in our gifted magnet program from throughout the district. As we are situated geographically in the center of the district, our students matriculate to both of the district's high schools.

Kennedy has previously been a Blue Ribbon recipient in 2002 and 2008. Each of those recognitions has helped to foster a culture in excellence in all we do. Not only do we see students excel in the classroom, we also have experienced significant success in athletics, performances in the arts, and through our philanthropic efforts in which our students have given back to their community through service and acquisition of resources for those in need. Kennedy Junior High School is the flagship for our district and suburban area. The successes of our students are renowned for their association with excellence.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Kennedy Junior High School's core curriculum has evolved to meet the changing needs of our students over the past quarter century. Throughout our school's history, curriculum has not only enhanced our students' skills but also grown them as thinkers and expanded their understanding of their role as world citizens.

Literacy skills are embedded across the curriculum, but our Language Arts courses play a significant role in growing our students' communication skills. Each student has at least 80 minutes per day of Language Arts. The classes are structured around workshop models for reading and writing, and student choice is greatly encouraged and supported. The workshop models feature frequent discussion through peer responses and structures such as Socratic Seminars; these structures also increase the frequency in which staff conference with students about what they read and write. In addition to course provided resources, each Language Arts classroom has its own library of up-to-date young adult novels for student choice. Our teachers, themselves, are avid readers and have fostered a climate that encourages personal reading. We more often have to ask a student to put a book away in order to return to a lesson than we do have to encourage students to read. Our Learning Resource Center has been a significant support to classroom literacy efforts, as our LRC staff holds monthly book chats, reading clubs, and author visits. Students ready for an additional challenge can enroll in Project Idea, a parallel to grade-level courses that increases expectations for texts and production of writing.

Our accelerated pathways in math enable over a third of our 8th grade class to annually complete the equivalent of algebra. As research shows that completion of advanced mathematics in high school as one of the greatest predictors of college success, a large portion of our students are able to pursue a greater number of rigorous courses for college preparation. Students are able to achieve at these high levels due to our approach that begins even prior to sixth grade. Any student entering our school as a sixth grader who is not at grade level in math is invited to a summer 'Math Camp' in which they learn to use tools for problem solving and review important concepts to be ready for the middle school curriculum. These camps are taught by the same sixth grade staff the students will encounter, so rapport building and assessment is enabled before the first day of school. Our honors and gifted classes provide both enriched and accelerated curriculum. Students in our magnet program end middle school having completed both high school geometry and algebra.

Interventions for students behind their grade-level peers in literacy and math are available through our Strategic Reading and Strategic Math programs. Each of these courses is taught by a content area-specialist and provides additional instruction to close gaps, reteach concepts, and further progress monitor students' growth. Besides providing exposure to ancillary resources, manipulatives, and other tools, each course employs technology to help address deficiencies. Students enrolled in either of these courses gain an additional 200 minutes per week in supported intervention.

Our social science curriculum is structured using a variety of means for students to look at our world. The sixth grade component examines ancient world cultures and explores how cultures form and the products, norms, and symbols they produce. In seventh grade, students explore world geography and make connections to different cultures and significant world events. Eighth graders spend significant time studying the Constitution and analyzing the roles and responsibilities of American citizens through a study of our history.

Our science curriculum is being revised to reflect the Next Generation Science Standards. Though standards will change, our students have a firm foundation in the scientific method as they approach a variety of topics related to earth sciences, biology, physics and chemistry. Revisions to the curriculum will address the recursive nature of investigation and inquiry. Students' ability to use technology to record observations is being heavily emphasized as well as focusing on their ability to communicate their understanding to others.

Students are encouraged to further their success in academics through participation in a variety of academic related contests that have them apply their learning to speaking, writing, problem-solving, or creating.

Our curriculum greatly supports college and career readiness by exposing students to rigorous literacy skills through each course. Teachers have high expectations for students' ability to support their ideas through writing. Technology is also another mechanism we use to prepare our students for the ever-changing demands of the 21st Century; in 2016-2017, each student will be provided his/her own Chromebook to help them grow in their ability to be self-directed in their learning.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The core subjects are not the only components of our students' day in which they are exposed to learning that prepares them for the rigors of college and careers. Students are given access to these other areas twice a day, providing further opportunities for academic and social-emotional growth that aligns with learning in English Language Arts, math, science, and social science.

All students in our school take physical education unless there is some condition that prevents participation. Our PE curriculum is structured along learning about overall fitness and lifelong activity rather than emphasizing specific games, sports, or skills. Even though we do have traditional units connected to popular American sports, each of these units has a distinct component that illustrates how participation improves an area of muscular fitness, cardio-vascular endurance, or flexibility. Technology plays a significant role in helping students learn to monitor their growth in fitness-related activities, and students spend at least one day a week in our fitness center using a variety of machinery for strength or cardio training as well as wearable devices that record the proportion of time in targeted heart zones. Students learn about the many strands of their personal fitness, assess their growth, and reflect upon those methods that contributed to their improvement. As a result, our students are living the benefits of lifelong activity.

Participation in our arts program enables students to learn the benefits of self-expression, the discipline of dedication to the pursuit of a passion, or the cross-curricular benefits of participation. All sixth grade students take a course in music appreciation in which they learn about the elements of music as well as producing compositions on acoustic guitars and a variety of other non-traditional instruments. This class also exposes students to music from other cultures, genres, and histories as a way of understanding current musical influences. Students can then further their passions in their involvement in elective band, chorus, or orchestra. These activities help students further kindle their interests as well as influencing their success in academics. For example, in band students learn about the connections between music composition and mathematics. Our music programs also benefit from access to technology, which is used to enable students to be self-directed in their growth in skills or to provide a means for self-assessing and determining opportunities to improve performances. In addition to music, students can also access the visual arts for opportunity for self-expression. Like music, our art program incorporates elements of technology in which students use tools such as Photoshop to create works with greater sophistication. In some instances, this exposure to technology has instigated potential career paths for some of our students.

Many students elect to take a two year rotation in World and Classical Languages, studying either French or Spanish. In these courses students learn about culture, tradition, and history in addition to linguistic and literacy skills. Students completing these courses enter high school ready to take the second year of either language, further improving their chances to take an AP language course by their senior year of high school.

Project Lead the Way is an opportunity for our students to engage with STEM topics over the course of the three years. While all students take a one quarter survey course on design and engineering, others elect to take trimester courses during 7th and 8th grade to allow further learning on robotics and energy. In addition, students can explore further STEM topics through summer learning in our district.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

The staff at Kennedy does their best to meet the differentiated instructional needs of our student body. Housing our district's gifted magnet program, we have some students who enter our school already

surpassing the standards of the standards set for their grade level peers, while other students who attend may be significantly discrepant from their peers in their literacy or numeracy skills. Regardless of the individual student's ability, our focus is on providing consistent opportunities for growth aligned with learning progressions embedded in the Common Core State Standards.

Self-reflection is a tool we use with all students across ability levels to engage in each discipline in our curriculum. On a daily basis, teachers are expected to clearly communicate the intended learning target for each lesson. Teachers use those targets as a touchstone for student reflection as part of each lesson as well as collectively when completing a unit. Students are asked in a variety of ways to reflect and self-assess whether they have attained the instructional outcomes for the lesson and to collectively consider those targets in preparation for assessments. These reflections enable students to engage in conversation with their teachers about their understandings and challenges, and to take ownership in setting learning goals in each class. Many staff also use these reflections as the basis of student driven communication with parents, as the students inform their parents on their own growth and learning no matter what level of instruction they participate in.

These same reflections enable teachers to differentiate their instruction. As our access to technology and other resources has grown, teachers have used the feedback from these reflections to help them identify opportunities to differentiate for student learning needs. For example, several teachers have employed a flipped structure in their teaching to better meet individual needs. Our 8th grade geometry teacher has thus structured his class so students are exposed to background knowledge and practice the evening before a class so he can focus on problem-solving strategies with students in the classroom. Those students who need greater guidance are enabled to get more individualized attention, while those needing minimal support can access previous lesson content instantly. Differentiation also extends to the choices students are able to make to guide their learning. Our English Language Arts teachers have great exposure to current young adult literature and can help students identify texts by interest, reading level, genre and theme to support growth in reading.

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

Assessment data is examined at both a student and school level to make instructional decisions, determine allocations of staffing resources, and to plan scheduling for the entire building. Our data comes from a variety of sources: standardized tests such as PARCC, common district assessments, and progress monitoring tools. Each of these different types of assessments provides us with data that is examined by teams or groups of teachers in our planning.

At a whole school level, student data is examined by our school improvement team that looks at trends in student performance over time. We use the Performance Series, a computer adaptive assessment administered three times a year, to monitor growth in reading and math skills. Data from this assessment is examined by the school improvement team to identify groupings of students who are experiencing limited growth and may benefit from additional instructional strategies for support. This assessment also allows us to look for trends with subgroups defined by gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or learning disabilities. Even though our students come to us from a variety of different starting points with their literacy and numeracy skills, this data helps understand which students are demonstrating expected growth, which are exceeding those expectations, and which are falling off pace.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) and grade level teams are two smaller sets of professionals who would review student data for either instructional or intervention purposes. Our PLCs are structured around grade-level content assignments. These teams of teachers look at data from common assessments, standardized tests, and growth measures and compare student performance against their own instructional methods. Discussions identify areas to reteach, re-plan instruction or design enrichment opportunities for students. Grade-level teams are comprised of teachers from various subjects who teach the same group of students. These teachers compare this data to a student's classroom performance when discussing the individual's academic or social-emotional concerns.

In some instances, concerns noted from both types of meetings leads to the identification of students needing academic interventions in math or literacy. If so, the enrollment in one of our Strategic Math or Strategic

Reading programs takes place for the students needing support. Teachers in these programs also regularly confer with their colleagues on participant progress and suggest instructional methods that can be adapted in the classroom.

Through formal or informal methods, some students demonstrate mastery of standards beyond what the regular curriculum provides. In these instances, these students participate in enrichment activities structured on the Depth of Knowledge model in which they are required to extend their thinking on the topics being presented. We also have several instances in which students can enroll in honors classes or the gifted program and be exposed to more rigorous curriculum taught at an accelerated pace. Entry into each of these programs is based on their performance on standardized tests as well as teacher classroom assessments.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our school's positive environment has been responsible for our continued history of success. From the opening of our doors in 1990, students have been heartily welcomed into the building.

One of the most important ways we have encouraged and motivated our students have been through a staff, regardless of role, who are passionate about adolescents and their commitment to a climate that is supportive and compassionate. All personnel, be it administrators, teachers, support staff, administrative assistants, or custodians are expected to interact with students respectfully while being cognizant of the diversity that exists within our school. Students encounter dozens of adults each day who greet them warmly, demonstrate care and consideration, and who support their efforts in and out of the classroom. Extra-curricular events and performances are well attended by teachers and other staff encouraging and acknowledging students' talent, hard work, and persistence.

The deep recognition of the individuality and strengths of our students fosters a positive learning environment. Teachers are easily able to maintain respectful classrooms that are open to multiple points of view and varying influences from different life experiences, cultures, and faiths. Students can comfortably take risks sharing their ideas and expressing themselves knowing that their ideas and contributions will be considered without judgment or ridicule. As a result, students are exposed to a greater variety of perspectives in their classes from their peers.

This same culture of support is extended to our faculty and staff. Decision making is frequently vetted by all parties who have at least the opportunity to identify how proposed changes to scheduling or procedures will impact the work they do. Teams of teachers have regular access to administrators who visit their meetings and engage with them in discussions about challenges in instruction, needs for resources, or opportunities to grow programs. Other groupings of staff, such as our student support personnel, office administrative assistants, also have regular opportunities to meet with the principal and discuss working conditions.

Staff value has been enhanced by a deliberate effort to share leadership throughout the building. Teachers and other certified staff are recruited by the principal to serve on a variety of building or district committees. In addition to their participation, these staff members are also charged with enhancing staff understanding or providing professional learning on these topics. Over the past several years, building professional development has migrated from being a sole function of administration. Department leaders from each content area help plan professional development by analyzing the district strategic plan and reviewing survey feedback to design learning activities for teachers. These adult learning events are also differentiated to allow for variances of staff expertise or needs from assignment.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The excellence demonstrated by the staff and students of Kennedy Junior High School is a direct relationship of the positive partnership formed with our parent and external communities. This rapport has been built strategically by direct communication between the school and these parties.

For over two decades, our school has maintained a partnership with members of the Judd Kendall Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3873. Our contact has provided service opportunities for students to perform in support of our veterans while being exposed to firsthand participants in historical events that help inform our students of their duty as citizens. Each year, students from our building conduct fundraisers to donate money towards Hines Veterans Hospital and participate in beautification projects at the post headquarters in the community. Through participating, students learn the value of providing service. In return, each year members of the post return to Kennedy to serve as speakers for Veterans Day events as well as speaking to students in our social studies classes. The connection between their organization and our school

community has been mutually beneficial as well as raising our students' understanding of the many sacrifices made to provide for our country.

Our relationship with our parent community has proven to be of even greater importance to our school. Families are frequently invited to provide feedback on a variety of issues related to their students' attendance. In addition, we have enhanced our relationship by redefining how our parent volunteer group, the School Family Community Partnership (SFCP), can inform staff professional development and school improvement planning. Through our recent efforts to become more culturally responsive to our school community, parents have been informed of and participated in activities connected to staff learning. Recently, we did a book study of Carol Dweck's *Mindset* to identify common themes of how we set expectations for students and ourselves. SFCP has also spearheaded efforts to better understand the diversity of our school. In the fall of 2014, they collaborated with the social science department to survey students and their families about which cultures they identified with and how they were connected to those cultures. The results were compiled in a report posted on our school webpage. In addition, survey results were used to redesign our entrance to welcome visitors in languages and customs of our students' home environments. The committee also helped plan a cultural evening event in which families shared unique features of their backgrounds and a second event that celebrated the individuality of students by sharing a gallery of their interests, passions and talents. The SFCP has helped us raise our community's consciousness of the unique backgrounds and life experiences of our families as well as publically valuing their diversity.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development at Kennedy Junior High School has evolved over the past five years to model learning practices we want teachers to emulate in their classrooms. Topics and activities allow for differentiation of skill and ability and enable staff to be self-directed in their student of topics. Professional development is designed by teacher leaders and executed by staff whose have expertise related to given topics. Design is built by synthesizing the objectives from district's strategic plan, application of school improvement goals, and feedback from staff surveys.

Our daily schedule allows for job-embedded professional development. Teachers have two planning periods per day, one being reserved for staff collaboration. Our building uses the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model to assemble teachers in the same content area and grade level to meet to review student assessment data in order to plan instruction, re-teaching, interventions and enrichment.

In addition to these frequent opportunities for collaboration, our staff includes a learning support coach (LSC) who is available to staff for throughout the entire day. As a non-evaluator of staff, our LSC can meet with teachers to provide objective feedback in lesson design, student data review, implementation of technological tools, and feedback on instruction. This has been a critical role as we have implemented new curriculum in English Language Arts and math and are preparing for our first year of science curriculum aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards.

4. School Leadership:

Kennedy Junior High School is led by an administrative team of one principal and two assistant principals. Though a distinct delineation of roles exists to address administrative tasks, the team collaborates daily to address issues related to school climate, student learning, professional development, and engagement with the community. Leadership is also shared in the building with members of the staff through several core teams that have a distinct focus on specific areas of our school that contribute to our success.

Our Rising Star team is charged with managing the school improvement process. This group is assembled of classroom teachers, special education personnel, our learning support coach, and the administrative team to conduct protocols related to the process of continuous improvement in areas of school climate, instructional practices, professional development, and student achievement. The team employs student performance data as well as school community feedback from surveys administered to identify tangible opportunities for growth and write goals for the staff to execute.

The Building Leadership Team (BLT) is comprised of leaders from each of the grade-level academic teams, the athletic director, and representatives from student services. The purpose of this team is address issues related to school climate. Topics range from the master schedule structure, testing schedules, distribution of technology, celebrations to recognize student achievement, and planning activities to engage students in our school community both during and after the school day. The team provides significant input on scheduling and how our determination of the internal structure of our school impacts student learning, whether it be the sequence of courses, structures of academic teams, or the placement of Professional Learning Community (PLC) time on a weekly schedule.

Department coordinators meet twice a month to help align staff professional development with student learning needs identified by data review, district strategic blueprint initiatives, or addressing best practices to help learners meet standards. This team designs learning opportunities that include institutes, monthly department meetings, and weekly PLC collaboration. One of the most significant impacts department coordinators have had is to help advance our professional learning to allow for personalization of topics among staff and the ability for teachers to explore information in a self-directed manner. The team has collaborated to design a professional learning repository in our learning management system that contains articles about initiatives, links to resources, documents for protocols for staff discussion, and exemplars that teacher can access at any time.

Alignment of the work of all of these teams helps ensure that specific issues related to student learning, safety, and health are at the forefront of staff activities and professional learning.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The practice that has had the greatest influence on our success has been the deliberate maintenance of positive relationships among all stakeholders in our school community. Frequent opportunities are structured to gather feedback from staff, students, and parents that inform decision making and keep leadership abreast of concerns related to learning and school climate.

All staff, regardless of role, have the opportunity to provide input on issues that relate to the school. Several regular, formal events provide a channel for communication that employ technology to increase efficiency. After each institute, staff respond to a survey identifying areas of training that were most beneficial and next steps they think the building needs to take to continue our growth. Results from these surveys are used by department coordinators to assess training and plan future events. Each November, certified staff assess the principal's performance using the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership. Results of this survey are used in designing principal professional goals and shared with the staff to ensure transparency exists. Ultimately, our goal is to make feedback visible to staff to demonstrate its inclusion in goal setting and planning from leadership.

Parents also have several opportunities to build rapport with the school community. Major events at the school include a component in which parent feedback is solicited. As part of this process, we also seek to capture information from those families who chose to participate as well as those who did not. Parents can also join one of two committees to help provide feedback and influence school climate. Home and School addresses events that contribute to a positive climate for social-emotional growth, while the School Family Community Partnership serves as a conduit for communication to and from family stakeholders. Each of these groups uses feedback from parents and the community to plan events that address needs identified.

In addition to our adult stakeholders, students are also given the opportunity to provide input that helps building leadership monitor initiatives or determine areas of need. A regular event called the Principal's Council invites students from all backgrounds to meet directly with the principal in order to share feedback on their experiences as a student. Students are asked to reflect upon which specific practices being studied through staff professional development have had improved their access to learning and align with their college and career goals. Feedback from these meetings is then shared with staff to maintain a process of continued feedback.

Our efforts to grow and support relationships with stakeholders have been the most important practice in maintaining our school's success. No matter if topics relate to academics, assessment, the social-emotional environment, or new opportunities to grow, our direct links with others enable the frequent maintenance and adjustment of practices and efforts to meet the needs of our school community.