

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Greg Grana

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

Official School Name Woodlawn Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6362 Gilmer Road

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

City Long Grove State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60047-5171

County Lake County

Telephone (847) 353-8500 Fax (841) 949-8237

Web site/URL http://www.kcsd96.org/w/ E-mail ggrana@kcsd96.org

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iTqL4vuAY http://www.kcsd96.org/campusuite25/modules/blog.cfm?grp_id=13569 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*Mrs. Julie Schmidt E-mail jschmidt@kcsd96.org

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

District Name Kildeer Countryside School District 96 Tel. (847) 459-4260

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. Marc Tepper

(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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 7 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	121	96	217
7	106	107	213
8	106	120	226
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	333	323	656

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 23 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 11 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 58 % White
 - 6 % 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: 7%

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	15
(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)]	45
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	633
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.071
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
22 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Ukrainian, Telugu

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10 %
Total number students who qualify: 62

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
53 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.

- 8 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 7 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 19 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 28 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 10
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	2
Classroom teachers	31
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	21
Paraprofessionals	24
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1

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	96%	96%	95%	96%	97%
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. 2009

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

Our school and district mission statement is "every child, every school, every day." This mission guides every decision we make each day.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Woodlawn Middle School is an educational institution where innovation, a rigorous curriculum and best practice for learning come together in order to ensure each child achieves his or her maximum potential. Woodlawn Middle School is located in Long Grove, Illinois, and is one of seven schools in Kildeer Countryside Community Consolidated School District 96. The district includes one early childhood/kindergarten center, four elementary schools, and two middle schools that serve the residents from Long Grove, Buffalo Grove, Kildeer, Vernon Hills, and Lake Zurich--all being northwest suburbs of Chicago. Our students come from primarily middle and upper-middle income families in single-family households of business and professional people representing a wide diversity of cultural heritages and family backgrounds.

The Woodlawn faculty is made up of a combination of veteran staff and eager new teachers who collaborate and bring our student achievement levels to incredibly high places. When Woodlawn opened in 1999, the staff that opened this building came in with a “whatever it takes” attitude and that esprit de corps is still a part of our professional fabric today. The Woodlawn staff embraces their highly collaborative nature and works each year on solidifying this essential aspect of our Professional Learning Community. Our sound academic foundation has led to consistently increasing academic and social performance. When any change is recommended, the Woodlawn staff rises to the challenge with a level of support for one another that is unprecedented. Since our first Blue Ribbon Award in 2009, Woodlawn has been at the forefront of numerous awards both within our district and at the state and national levels. Support staff, technology coaches and teachers have been recognized for outstanding performance. In addition, in the State of Illinois, the Those Who Excel Awards have recognized Woodlawn staff in the areas of administration, educational specialists and our middle school literacy coaching team. In 2015, through the work done primarily at Woodlawn, Apple Computers recognized our district as an Apple Distinguished Program for Innovation, Leadership and Educational Excellence.

Our students are exposed to a rigorous core curriculum in four areas of learning: Math, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts. Additionally, we offer Spanish as a foreign language for 7th and 8th graders and Options for 6th graders. Physical Education and Health are a priority at Woodlawn to promote healthy living. Our students also get a quarterly rotation of Creative Arts (CARTS) which include: Art, Communications, Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS), and Music. This base curriculum ensures that our students have a well-rounded, challenging, and positive middle school experience. After our regular school day ends, all students have the opportunity to participate in clubs and activities sponsored by our Woodlawn faculty members. Some of these clubs include Ski Club, Math Counts, Science Olympiad, and Culture Club. Other opportunities include Illinois Elementary School Association (IESA) sanctioned sporting and academic events, band, orchestra and chorus. Woodlawn students direct and perform a student-driven musical and put on an outstanding talent show. For those students in need of additional academic support, Woodlawn has after school assistance programs that meet a wide range of student needs. These supports include after school support with the content teacher, leveled study halls, and an After School Assistance Program (ASAP) specifically for assistance in reading and math. During the school day and extra curricular activities, students are supported with social emotional learning embedded throughout all opportunities.

Winning the prestigious National Blue Ribbon School award in 2009 has had an extremely positive impact on our school and the school community. Achieving the Blue Ribbon Award gave us a strong sense of pride and accomplishment, but also encouraged all staff to maintain high levels of learning for both teachers and students. Woodlawn Middle School works to provide meaningful professional development, connecting teacher capacity to the instructional needs of our students. This spirit has carried over throughout our district, as community members share in our continued success. Most importantly, people move into the Woodlawn boundaries and talk to me about our high academic scores and the fact that we are a Blue Ribbon Award winning school. This award has validated the innovative work we do. Our growth mindset ensures that we are never satisfied with our performance. Even after winning the Blue Ribbon once, we continued to improve practice by working to become a Kagan school, embedding Thinking Maps into all core areas of instruction, and building the capacity of coaches to differentiate professional development for all staff members. At Woodlawn, we recognize the importance of building the leadership skills of all staff members.

All teachers are given the opportunity to share in the leadership, regardless of years of experience. Additionally, parents and community members are actively involved in our curricular information, social events, and district committee discussions.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Woodlawn, each content area team has collaborated to unpack, power, and pace their current learning targets that are then made visible to parents via Curriculum Frameworks on the district website. These Curriculum Frameworks dictate the standards that will show up on student report cards as we operate under a standards based reporting system. From the Curriculum Frameworks, benchmark assessments and common formative assessments are created by teachers with the help of instructional coaches to ensure that every student in every class is guaranteed the same curriculum. Our goal in all of the core curricular areas remains the same: students should be developing the skills that will enable them to be college and career ready. Many of our students transition from eighth grade to high school, placing into advanced courses in all content areas as the result of our rigorous curriculum.

Our Language Arts (LA) classes operate on a daily block schedule using a balanced literacy approach as a means to help students master and extend on the literacy targets of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). While students in both LA and Advanced LA at each grade level are expected to master or extend on grade level standards, the advanced class use texts in the next grade level's complexity band to achieve their goals. Five years ago, teachers collaborated with all the middle schools in the area to develop pacing guides, curriculum maps, and learning progressions based on the structure of the CCSS, and we have been implementing these new standards for the past four years. Over the course of these years, we have constantly tweaked and refined the work that was originally done. Currently, students work first to determine Key Ideas and Details in a text: what the text says both explicitly and implicitly. Then, students analyze the Author's Craft and Structure: the strategies the author employs to craft his piece. Finally, the students evaluate the worth of a text, comparing it to other pieces is the Integration of Knowledge and Ideas. Students learn to hone their narrative and analytic writing skills using mentor texts. Tier One interventions and differentiation are employed inside the classroom to meet all students at their current level of learning.

Social Studies teachers are currently delving into inquiry models in order to help students to read and write like historians. The C3 Framework and newly adopted Illinois social studies standards are in the process of being unpacked, scaled, and paced. The social studies curriculum focuses on helping students to develop literacy and critical thinking skills using content knowledge. Students read primary and secondary source documents critically, analyzing what is said and what is unsaid and determining how a source's bias might affect the message being delivered. Because the goal in social studies is to develop skills to enable students to independently navigate history resources independently, the Social Studies teachers communicate frequently with literacy coaches and Language Arts teachers to build a common language and to develop lessons surrounding Common Core argumentation skills required in the CCSS.

Science teachers are in the second year of full implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Using a hands-on approach, science classrooms use the NGSS as a guide to design, develop, construct, and test models based on scientific ideas and principles. This year the science department incorporated 3D printers to engage students in real-world engineering challenges. Students use drafting programs when designing on the 3D printers, which helps solidify the 21st Century Skills that they will need in the future. Science teachers embed the CCSS for Science and Technical Subjects to assess students' abilities to develop and support scientific claims. Students continue to develop their disciplinary literacy skills by reading and thinking about texts as scientists do.

Additionally, the math teachers are in constant collaboration with other schools in the consortium as well as the high school while implementing Common Core State Standards. They are currently working on developing assessment tools together to ensure that all schools entering high school possess the same solid background. The math classes are currently broken up into three different pathways at each grade level: at level, advanced, and honors. The focus of all courses is to help students tackle equations and word problems using a variety of methods in which students must employ higher level thinking skills. Additionally, students are asked to demonstrate grit and critical thinking skills to solve real-world math related problems.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Woodlawn, students are able to experience a variety of non-core subjects. The non-core curriculum areas that all students at Woodlawn take are housed in two teams: the Creative Arts (CARTS) team and the Wellness team. CARTS is made up of art, communications, family and consumer sciences (FACS), and music classes. All students rotate through each of the four CARTS classes each year on a quarterly basis. In art, the students learn about visual design and have an opportunity to see their projects come to life using 3D printers. Art class gives the students experience with the skills they will need to navigate the increasingly visual world. Through the exploration of a variety of artists and mediums, students develop their digital literacy skills. Communications class centers around the verbal communication, argumentation, and presentation skills they will use in high school, college, and beyond. FACS class builds a solid basis for students in the areas of nutrition and home management so that they can employ time management and be self-sufficient in their personal lives. Music class gives the students the skills needed to appreciate creative endeavors as an audience, participant, or consumer.

The other non-core curricular team that all students have access to daily is physical education (PE)/health. Woodlawn students take PE all three years and rotate into health class two times each year during the PE time. The PE and health curriculum focuses on building the physical fitness and overall health awareness that students need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. PE teachers differentiate instruction based on students' strengths, helping individuals to set personal fitness goals that are achievable with consistent effort. The student counselor often co-teaches with the health teacher to tackle challenging but important topics including suicide prevention and sexual harassment. By being a more visible presence in classes, the counselor develops relationships with all students, making it easier for students to come to her if needed.

There are several other non-core areas that students have access to, but these areas do not necessarily impact all students. All sixth grade students take an Options class that helps them transition into middle school and functions as a home for Social Emotional Learning Targets. Additionally, Options serves as an advisory for sixth grade students, providing students with community building activities and helping them to problem solve real-life middle school student issues.

Because Options is only a sixth grade class, students in seventh and eighth grade have the opportunity to take Spanish class and develop their capacity to study another language. The majority of students studying Spanish in seventh and eighth grades are able to take a placement test that allows them to start Spanish II as a freshman in high school. Those students who already are native Spanish speakers and have been enrolled in our district's biliteracy program during elementary school continue to hone their literacy skills in Spanish during Heritage Language class. In this class, students work on the Common Core reading, writing, and speaking targets in their first language: Spanish. If a student needs help with organization or executive functioning, he or she is enrolled in Study Skills. Similarly, small group resource classes are available for our special education students whose goals necessitate additional help with core coursework. Students without an IEP whose data suggests the need for Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention in reading or math are enrolled in Learning Extension and Academic Progress (LEAP) for reading or Math Intervention (MINT) until progress monitoring data supports pulling back on how much support he or she may need.

The one area in which students have choice is whether or not they take band and/or orchestra. If students elect to take band or orchestra, they attend after school lessons along with lessons during the day, which require the students to leave class on a pre-planned rotation. Band and orchestra classes offer the students a chance practice their instruments and perform publicly.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Our school firmly believes in the idea of best practices and not first practices. Teachers employ a myriad of research-based instructional strategies based upon student need and learning styles: explicit vocabulary instruction, direct instruction, small group instruction with flexible grouping, inquiry, and project based learning. An example of the way we implement best practices can be found in the implementation of our vocabulary program. Because research supports explicit teaching of vocabulary increases students' ability to independently tackle complex text, our literacy coach helped Language Arts teachers pioneer a school-created vocabulary program using the research of Beck and McKeown. The teachers involved students in

word conversations, word games, and repeated exposures to the same words before asking students to apply these words in their own speaking and writing. The Language Arts teachers and coaches then worked to build the capacity of the other content area teachers to use best practices in the area of vocabulary instruction as well. These instructional strategies not only help our growing population of English Language Learners but are effective for all students to develop their understanding of Tier 2 words on a deeper level.

Additionally, in our 1:1 iPad environment, teachers embed technology into their daily lessons, using it as a tool for students to collaborate, share, and respond to the work of their classmates. Recently Woodlawn was recognized as an Apple Distinguished School and were featured in Tech and Learning magazine highlighting the innovative ways students were utilizing technology to increase student learning. For example, last spring 8th grade students used the Puppet Pals app to create modernized versions of Romeo and Juliet to demonstrate mastery of narrative writing targets and 8th grade Common Core Reading Target Analyze to learn how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new. Students analyzed the works of their peers online which helped to create an authentic purpose for writing.

Differentiated lessons based on student data enable teachers to group students according to readiness, interest, and informational processing skills. These instructional methods ensure that all students are using grade level texts to master grade level targets. Teachers are able to provide some students with additional scaffolding while also helping other students to extend and go above and beyond the learning target. Students who continue to struggle with Tier 1 interventions are tracked on our Woodlawn Watchlist and given more intense Tier 2 or 3 interventions that are tailored to meet their skills deficits. Their achievement continues to be monitored even after they make growth and no longer need these intense interventions.

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

Teachers use district created benchmarks to plan instruction with students' needs in mind. Teachers who work on the assessments are given professional development on assessment design to ensure that the tools used to measure student learning are both valid and reliable. Backwards planning allows for meaningful conversations at our content meetings about scaffolding the learning to ensure students master the skills on the assessment by the agreed upon benchmark window. After creating the benchmark together, teachers meet in teams to create small, non-intrusive common formative assessments (CFAs) for the skills leading up to mastery of learning targets. These CFAs help teachers maintain a schedule to ensure they reach the benchmark by the specified date. Learning progressions--also teacher created--lay out a hierarchy of skills needed on the path to target mastery. Pre-assessments often dictate where teachers will begin instruction in the learning progression. Teachers build in intervention days after each CFA in their calendars where they can reteach to those who need it or extend for those ready to move forward. These days are crucial. Collaboration plays a pivotal role in assessment writing and instructional planning, but and it is also a critical part in the data analysis.

To maintain high levels of achievement, teachers analyze student data together for two specific purposes: to discuss instruction and to plan intervention based on individual student data. Teachers look at data first as a way to see how their instruction helped students in their classrooms. If students didn't learn it, we didn't teach it. If one teacher has much higher student results than the rest of the group, teachers are able to discuss the instructional practices the teacher with the higher data used. In the past, teachers have observed in one another's classes with learning walks. Afterwards, teachers reflect on students' responses to various learning strategies. Teachers create data walls using CFAs and create lessons for students who are already mastering a target and need extension, students who are developing but not yet mastering the target, and for students who are still not showing evidence of mastering the target.

Parents and students are heavily involved and constantly informed in the assessment of the student's learning. Because we employ a standards based reporting system, parents are able to use the online grade book to check on their students' progress on individual learning targets throughout the school year. Opportunities for individual students to reflect and set goals occur in the classroom and with parents during student-led conferences. The more students are involved in their own learning, the more they can move forward to achieve their goals.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our staff always puts the needs of its students first. Additionally, every staff member at Woodlawn is valued and considered to be a part of our family. Woodlawn staff know that if somebody is in need, all he or she needs to do is reach out and help will be sent from all directions. We care about one another as people which in turn carries over to our interactions with our students. For example, teachers are committed to ensuring that all students feel safe and respected so that they can learn at high levels. Our district established a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee that developed SEL Targets based on the five pillars of social emotional learning developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) that could be embedded into the curriculum of all subject areas. By modeling and teaching social emotional learning inside the curriculum, a positive school culture is created. We firmly believe that building strong relationships among staff and students eliminates most discipline problems and creates an environment where all students can learn.

Recently, when an entire grade level of students was struggling with consistently exhibiting the high levels of positive behavior expected of our students, our principal called together a group of students to problem solve and reflect on how to improve behavior overall. By providing students a voice in the problem solving process, the students felt more ownership over the expectations and were able to act as student leaders for their grade level to encourage positive decision making. These students served as leaders in other areas as well. For example, they helped sixth grade students during orientation which in turn continued to develop stronger bonds between our sixth and eighth graders.

Additionally, our Problem Intervention Team (PIT), which consists of the social workers, psychologist, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, and interventionist, meet regularly with the teams of teachers to discuss individual students' social, emotional, and academic needs. By problem solving together, faculty acts proactively to help those students who might be struggling. Parents are involved in the process as well to continue to build a positive relationship between school and home. After collaborating on a plan for an individual students in need, the team meets frequently to discuss the collected data to ensure that the plan is working and if adjustments need to be made.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Woodlawn engages the community stakeholders in a variety of ways. For parents new to the district and parents of incoming 6th graders, Woodlawn has two separate nights to introduce the parents to the school and help them prepare their children for middle school. These meetings are completely separate from the Back-To-School Night that all parents are invited to so that they can meet their child's teachers. Because we are in a one-to-one environment, technology can be a stumbling block for many parents, so throughout the year, parents are invited to attend one of several parent coffees or special help sessions during conferences to get them up to speed on the technological avenues through which we deliver content. These opportunities for parent involvement increase student achievement because they give the parents the knowledge and tools they need to hold their students accountable at home. Parents with a working knowledge of the curriculum and how it's delivered as well as the expectations of the school become partners with the staff.

Furthermore, Woodlawn has opportunities for parents to become involved. We have a very active PTO that focuses on raising money to improve the resources and materials available to students by running special promotional activities before and after school like dessert day, a Halloween party, and Spring Fling Dance. The PTO meets with the administration twelve times a year to collaborate on plans for the building and keep parents informed. The district also sponsors a Parent-to-Parent Network which examines issues that affect both the school and broader community. When the district was making the switch to a standards based grading system, it formed a committee that included parents and community members to examine the pros and cons of the new reporting system. The principal also publishes a weekly blog, keeping the parents and community in the loop about what's happening in the school.

Additionally, we like to help to educate parents on how to best help their children grow as learners at home.

This year Woodlawn will host three literacy night events for our Title One students where parents and students can gather to learn new reading strategies and take home books for their home libraries as part of a grant we had written. In January, for example, parents and students focused on the visualizing strategy. To practice this strategy, we used a hands-on approach with students and parents who had the opportunity to create visual artwork of texts during read alouds. All of these avenues for community involvement help to build a solid foundation between school and home.

3. Professional Development:

The professional development plan at Woodlawn ensures that all students receive a guaranteed and viable curriculum. One way schoolwide goals are achieved is through instructional coaching. At Woodlawn, teachers are provided with job-embedded professional development via the help of a technology coach, literacy coach, informational literacy coach, math coach, and science coach. These coaches work with content area teams and individual teachers. The real benefit of the coaching program can be seen in the day-to-day business of the school. Coaches go to content team meetings to help the grade level teams develop their curriculum and implement district and school initiatives. Coaches also meet with individual teachers to develop lessons, assessments, and rubrics to better serve the student population. They model lessons for teachers and/or co-teach. In short, they are in the trenches with the teachers. When our school leadership team asked for more training concerning differentiation, the coaching team was able to support all of the teams at their meetings to give them an overview on differentiation strategies and then followed up with individual teachers and content teams depending on each group's needs. In this manner the coaching team functions as up-to-the-minute professional development that can adjust to needs as they arise in the building, on teams, or with individual teachers. To ensure that our coaches are able to support teachers at high levels, they continue to receive training through a monthly coaching academy program where they are able to hone their craft and problem solve with experts in the coaching field. This year, for example, all coaches took a course titled High Impact Adult Learning that focused on strengthening one's presentation skills when working with larger groups of teachers.

In addition to coaching, the district has provided opportunities for all faculty to receive Kagan training, Write Tools training, and Thinking Maps training. These initiatives align with the academic standards because they provide teachers with a common language so that students can easily make connections between their classes. Furthermore, the Kagan structures that all teachers implement ensure that every child has equal participation in the day's events. With the help of the instructional coaches who receive intense training before the teachers, teachers receive differentiated job-embedded professional development inside their own classrooms with their students. These initiatives ensure that all teachers share a common language which helps maintain consistency from class to class and grade level to grade level for students. Teachers have embraced life long learning and this growth mindset, in turn, rubs off on their students.

4. School Leadership:

The school leadership team consists of classroom teachers, administration, coaches, and specialists. This group of professionals is dedicated to supporting the goals and initiatives of both the school and the district. If the reasons for these decisions and initiatives are not clear, they provide clarity for the staff by communicating the rationale behind decisions that are made with a consistent voice and tone. When it falls to the leadership team to make decisions, they do so in the best interest of the group as a whole. When problems occur, as the inevitably will, the leadership remains solution focused and makes positive presuppositions. They strive to be proactive and positive in their approach to new ideas rather than reactionary and negative. They are also tasked with being a representative for the concerns of their teams and sharing those concerns with the decision makers so that positive decisions can be made.

In order to ensure that policies, programs, relationships, and resources stay focused on student achievement, the leadership team approaches every meeting and decision with the mantra "what is best for kids" in mind. Recently, the district asked the teachers to focus more on differentiating in the classroom in response to assessment data. The district trained the entire staff in Kagan Structures and Thinking Maps to provide tools for teachers to differentiate. This professional development was a big undertaking in a one year span, so the leadership team worked diligently to ensure that the staff stayed focused on what was best for students even though they felt a bit overwhelmed at times. Even with the growth of the district's English Language Learning population increasing substantially in the last decade and with the increase in

the number of low income students at Woodlawn qualifying our building for Title One services, our data has continued to rise in part because of how leadership has handled the new initiatives and change. Woodlawn performed well above the state average on the PARCC exam and even had 23% of the students exceeding expectations overall, which was higher than the state and district averages. This continued increase in scores, even as we become a school with more diverse needs, can be attributed to the solid leadership skills of administration, instructional coaches, and teachers.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

You cannot sustain what you do not believe in. At Woodlawn Middle School, we keep student learning at the forefront of our daily lives and to a person, we believe in our Professional Learning Community (PLC) system and how we execute it. Our staff believes in our PLC because it fosters a collaborative culture and helps us to always do what is best for kids. Along the journey, our veteran staff has experienced the benefits first-hand of going through the process of becoming a true PLC. In the early years of our PLC journey, the staff was inspired when they saw the significant academic growth of our students. This academic growth paved the way for continued improvement in all areas of our PLC. When the shift occurred, we took a group of educators who were hard working, collegial professionals and moved them into a system where collaboration and trust is at the core of our success.

Woodlawn has always been a good school, but a change occurred about four years ago that has made us great. Because we went through the PLC transition, our culture became one of trust and commitment to learning. No longer do we have initiatives that are met with resistance; instead, they are discussed and embraced, which allows us to begin the process of implementation. We have created a culture of collaboration, allowing many professionals to examine the work and share ideas about which educational practice works best. Staff members are encouraged to learn from each other, gaining new knowledge through in-house professional development. All teachers have embraced the notion that they are facilitators of learning, sharing the responsibility for learning with their students and colleagues.

We operate under the belief that there is always a way to improve our educational practices. The efficient, systematic approach to analyzing data continues to challenge the way we approach our instruction. There is an open door policy amongst teachers that encourages visits into colleague's classrooms, promoting learning, sharing and best practices. Trust between teams, content members, all staff and our administration, allows us to keep our focus on the students and learning. New staff members, regardless of experience, quickly indoctrinate themselves into our positive, focused culture of teaching and learning. We believe in what we do, how we do it, and where we will be going in the future. We are the epitome of a Professional Learning Community.